



**PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF ORGANISATIONAL MISFIT: A
GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN EMPLOYEES**

BY

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2013

DECLARATION

I Mervyn Kenneth Williamson declare that

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Signed: 

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother

MRS WINNIE WILLIAMSON

You have inspired me

To follow my dreams

And to believe that

With God

All things are possible

You are blessed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My source of strength and inspiration came from my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ who empowered me with the Holy Spirit. All honour and glory is given to Him above.

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ACRONYMS

AA	Affirmative Action
ASA	Attraction-Selection-Attrition
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
COR	Conservation of Resources
DA	Demand-Abilities
EE	Employment Equity
FFM	Five-Factor Model
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
I/O	Industrial/Organisational
KAI	Kirton's Adaption-Innovation
MBA	Masters of Business Administration
MBTI	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
MDF	Multidimensional Fit
OB	Organisational Behaviour
OCB	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour
OCP	Organisational Culture Profile
PE	Person-Environment

PG	Person-Group
PJ	Person-Job
PO	Person-Organisation
PP	Person-People
PT	Person-Team
PV	Person-Vocation
R&D	Research and Development
SEU	Subjective Expected Utility
SV	Supplies-Values
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

STATEMENT OF CLARITY

The term 'cause' has been used liberally throughout the thesis. While the researcher is aware that the term 'cause' in the strictest sense should be used in scientific studies investigating cause-and-effect relationships, its meaning in the context of this qualitative grounded theory study pertains to the perceptive causal attribution by individuals rather than causal in a scientific sense.

ABSTRACT

Research into person-environment fit has focused on fit and the many positive benefits that have been associated with achieving high fit. Misfit on the other hand, has been given scant attention. To date, not much is known about what exactly misfit is and how individuals experience this phenomenon at work. Moreover, there has been a paucity of studies that have explored misfit in countries outside of North America, the United Kingdom and Western Europe. This study aimed to address this gap in the literature by exploring how South African employees perceive and experience misfit at work. A further objective was to develop a theoretical model that explains the processes of becoming a misfit, its antecedents, coping behaviours and consequences.

The study embraced a qualitative research design using a constructivist grounded theory approach. Following a theoretical sampling process, a sample of 40 employees was selected and subjected to in-depth, face-to-face interviews in which they were asked to relate their experiences of misfitting in the South African organisational context.

The findings were reported in relation to five guiding research questions. South African employees displayed a unique understanding of what misfit is when compared with certain Western Countries, thus lending support to the notion of a context-specific or cultural element in perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon. Misfit was perceived as both an internal psychological experience and an outward assessment of an individual based on external characteristics such as demographics. Participants emphasised race and gender as the major causal factors of misfit in the South African workplace. An unexpected finding emanating from this research was that a person's HIV/Aids status was not considered a significant factor in influencing their sense of misfit. Generally, misfit was perceived to have a deleterious effect on both the individual employee and the organisation. On discovering that they did not fit in, South African employees do not immediately leave the organisation for fear of being permanently without a job as a result of the high unemployment rate in the country. Instead, they remained and engaged in a variety of coping behaviours to deal with the condition. It was strongly emphasised that exiting the organisation was deemed to be the last resort. This study further

unearthed a wide range of strategies and interventions that South African managers could use to effectively manage their misfitting employees in order to creatively harness their potential.

The emergent theoretical framework, entitled “a model of employee misfit” describes the processes of becoming a misfit, its causes, coping behaviour and consequences. The findings of this study make a significant contribution to misfit research, theory and practice.

KEY WORDS: Misfit, Person-Environment Fit, Fit, Constructivist Grounded Theory

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study of organisational misfit as perceived and experienced by employees in the South African context. It also articulates the problem statement, the study purpose, research questions and the objectives. In addition, a brief overview of the research design and methodology used, the significance of the study and its original contribution are offered. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters that will form the fundamental structure of this thesis.

1.2 Background to the Study

The concept of person-environment fit, hereafter PE fit or fit is fundamental to research in industrial/organisational (I/O) psychology, organisational behaviour (OB) and human resource management (HRM) (Edwards, 2008; Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006; Edwards, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1998; Kristof, 1996). PE fit is broadly defined as the congruence, match, similarity or correspondence between the person and various aspects of their work environment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Pervin (1968, p. 56) posited that “a ‘match’ or ‘best-fit’ of individual to environment is viewed as expressing itself in high performance, satisfaction, and little stress in the system, whereas a ‘lack of fit’ is viewed as resulting in decreased performance, dissatisfaction, and stress in the system.”

A plethora of research has demonstrated that employees who exhibit high levels of fit are generally satisfied with their jobs, perform better, are committed to and remain with their organisations much longer (Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, *et al.*, 2005; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Consequently, many organisations desire to enhance PE fit. The research has typically focused on the impact of selection and socialisation practices on raising fit levels in employees (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Cable & Judge, 1997; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Chatman, 1991; Cooper-Thomas, Van Vianen, & Anderson, 2004; Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005; Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009).

In one of the most widely cited theories in person-organisation (PO) fit research, the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework, Schneider (1987a, p. 445) posited that “people are differentially attracted to, selected by, and retained by organisations when they have similar characteristics to other people in the organisation.” Organisations that are populated by people with similar characteristics achieve a state of homogeneity. When individuals discover that they do not fit or are misfits, they tend to leave the organisation. However, it is unclear whether these employee misfits always leave the organisation (Wheeler, Buckley, Halbesleben, Brouer, & Ferris, 2005; Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablinski, 2007). Billsberry, Ambrosini, Marsh, Moss-Jones, & Van Meurs (2005a, p. 12) argued that misfits will not always leave an organisation, but remain, “acting as centres of rebellion, disaffection, and malcontent in order to express feelings of stress, dissatisfaction and frustration.”

Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009, p. 1) defined a misfit as “a person who differs from the social or organisational norm, either in terms of their demographic status, personal attributes, or their work-related behaviour.” While the literature on PE fit as a positive and desirable state has flourished, misfit on the other hand, has been given scant attention by researchers (Talbot, 2010; Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009). Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010, p. 38) observed that the area of misfit had

been unfailingly disregarded by academic scholars since the emergence of the fit concept. Similarly, Judge (2007) lamented the dearth of scholarly work directed at uncovering what exactly misfit means to individuals in the workplace and subsequently recognised that there indeed exists several research opportunities in the field. This oversight is somewhat surprising considering the fact that results from several large-scale surveys clearly demonstrate that employee misfits are ubiquitous and represent a critical challenge to organisations in different parts of the world. A synopsis of a selection of studies that highlight the prevalence and significance of misfit in many organisations follows:

- CareerBuilder, a global leader in human capital solutions, commissioned a study on a sample of 5231 United States (US) workers representing a broad range of industries in November 2009. The results showed that 4 out of every 10 workers surveyed felt that they did not fit in with their co-workers. They cited many reasons for this feeling of alienation, such as having to work alongside new colleagues, as a result of changing workforces brought about by restructuring or downsizing (CareerBuilder, 2009).
- In an Ipsos Reid online poll undertaken on a sample of 540 Canadian employees in August 2008, it was found that a significant number were having trouble fitting in at work. More than 12% of the employees surveyed said that they felt like an outsider; 9% stated that they did not fit in well with their workplace culture and 3% felt that they were complete misfits (CanWest News Service, 2008).
- An internet survey conducted among British office workers in 2007 tentatively established that Britain can best be described as a country of proficient misfits (McSmith, 2007). The investigation indicated that Britain's workplaces are populated with personnel who perennially occupy positions ill-suited to their personalities and other attributes. More specifically, it was reported that these misfits or non-conformists examined

in the survey included individuals who were kind, passive and sensitive occupying highly aggressive and competitive positions in the banking industry or highly forceful persons who had found their way into extremely creative jobs in arts, drama or fashion as a substitute (McSmith, 2007).

- A study by Roseman (1987), conducted on a sample of 7000 supervisors, representing various fields, found that 20% judged themselves to be misfits in their jobs. Various reasons were cited as contributing to this situation, including their poor relations with upper management and employees.

The concept of misfit has also drawn a great deal of attention from practitioners, business consultants and the popular media. Much of the hype has centred on the negative consequences associated with misfits. A brief summary of some of the major contributions follows:

- Leigh Branham, in her book titled: *The Hidden Reasons Employees Leave: How to Recognise the Subtle Signs and Act before it's too Late*, indicated that one of the seven reasons that employees leave their organisations is because of a mismatch between the person and their job, in other words, person-job misfit (Branham, 2005).
- In *The Truth about Managing People*, Stephen P. Robbins noted that organisations who hire candidates that do not fit in with their culture end up with a group of employees who lack motivation and commitment and are dissatisfied with their jobs and organisations. He went on to argue that these employees will perform at a lower level than employees whose values align with that of their organisations. Robbins concluded that employee misfits have considerably higher turnover rates than employees who perceive a good fit with their jobs and organisations (Robbins, 2008).
- Management consultant, Jeannine Guerci, observed that misfits display awkward attitudes and behavioural tendencies. For example, she pointed out

that these individuals are typically belligerent, often triggering futile arguments and confrontations with co-workers and management. Moreover, these misfits exhibited an “air of arrogance causing other employees to feel insulted, excessive control, adjustment issues with other employees, fault-finding attitudes and procrastination” (Guerci, 2009, p. 1). She further stated that “if these misfits are not dealt with on time, deleterious consequences may result such as the marginalisation of work performance of fellow employees, damage to the organisation’s reputation and the undermining of teamwork” (Guerci, 2009, p. 1).

- Chris Joseph of Demand Media noted that a poor employee-job match is one of the primary causes of maladjustment in the workplace. The negative effects of maladjustment include low morale, high stress levels and poor performance. A poor job match may occur when an employee is transferred to a position that offers fewer responsibilities. The employee may feel that his/her new role is demeaning and may have difficulty adapting. In other cases, poor job match may arise when employees are promoted to a new position for which they are poorly prepared. They may find themselves overwhelmed by their new roles, thus becoming frustrated and failing to adjust adequately without mentoring (Joseph, 2011).
- Lou Adler, of the Adler Group of Recruitment Consultants, similarly observed that the primary reasons for having to replace staff due to non-performance are weak job fit and a lack of managerial fit (Adler, 2009).

Despite the surge in interest in the phenomenon of misfit in recent years, many questions have still not been satisfactorily answered. For example, what exactly is this phenomenon called misfit? How do people define and understand it, especially in different country contexts? What causes individuals to misfit at work? Do all employees who are misfits eventually leave their organisations as stated in the

many practitioner-based studies highlighted above? Wheeler *et al.* (2007, p. 215) observed that “the area of misfit is wide open to researchers.”

Against this background, this present research study heeds the call for more research into the concept of misfit by exploring South African employees’ perceptions and experiences of misfit, using a qualitative grounded theory approach.

1.3 Problem Statement

One of the most critical and challenging questions emanating from the PE fit literature is the question of what exactly misfit is (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010). This area of research has been marked by significant differences in the understanding and usage of the term (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010; Harrison 2007; Wheeler, 2010). To date, no readily available, universally accepted definition of misfit has been agreed upon, thus making it difficult to generalise findings from one study to another (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008). Billsberry and De Cooman (2010) and Billsberry *et al.* (2005a) have noted several reasons for this state of confusion: (a) the existence of multiple definitions; (b) colloquial uses of the word; and (c) a failure to explore what misfit really means to individuals at work.

A further factor highlighted by Billsberry and De Cooman (2010) has been an abiding tautness in the discourse concerning manner in which the terms fit and misfit are articulated. Firstly, fit and misfit have been used as a measure of similarity or difference. For example, Chatman (1989, p. 339) defined PO fit as “the congruence between the norms and values of the person and the organisation.” Consequently, based on Chatman’s (1989) definition, misfit was assumed to be the incongruence between the person and the organisation based on these values or norms (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010). Secondly, fit and misfit have also been conceptualised as a psychological attitude – as noted in Section 1.2, individuals

who perceive that they fit organisations will remain and those that do not fit in or misfit will leave (Schneider, 1987a).

According to Billsberry and De Cooman (2010, p. 1), “those speaking of fit or misfit as a measurement of similarity or difference respectively, between the person and environment are adopting an external or outside-in approach to its conceptualisation”. This outside-in approach has formed the basis of some empirical studies that sought to examine the consequences of misfit in the workplace (for example, Cluskey & Vaux, 1997; Cools, Van den Broeck, & Bouckenooghe, 2009; Ford, 2012; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005; Naus, Van Iterson, & Roe, 2007). Alternatively, those who refer to misfit as “a psychological attitude are embracing an internal or inside-out methodology” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 1). The differences between these two approaches represent a fundamental philosophical difference of an epistemological nature between a positivist stance as espoused by the outside-in approach and an interpretivist position representing the inside-out methodology (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010). This has led to the genesis of two distinct and separate streams of misfit research that basically examine the same construct, albeit from a different angle, thus accentuating the confusion among research scholars and practitioners alike.

Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010) emphasised the need to clearly define what we mean by fit and misfit. Her view was reiterated by Wheeler (2010) who, in a conference paper, highlighted the need to explore the similarities and differences between PE fit, lack of PE fit and misfit. He supported the notion that fit and misfit may be considered highly personal and idiosyncratic experiences. He outlined what he thinks people do when experiencing fit and misfit in terms of conservation of resources (COR).

While Wheeler previously felt that misfit represented a lack of fit (for example, the polar opposite of PE fit), he now leans towards the idea that misfit represents a distinct construct. Pursuing this line of research, scholars in the United Kingdom

(UK) have presented a series of conference papers examining how individuals perceive fit and misfit using qualitative methods (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010; Talbot, Billsberry, & Marsh, 2007). For example, Talbot and Billsberry (2010) explored the differences between fit and misfit using causal mapping and concluded that although fit and misfit have common causal factors, there are other factors that are unique to fit and misfit. They suggested that misfit should be seen as a qualitatively distinct construct from that of fit and recommended further qualitative research to explore how people perceive and experience misfit in the workplace (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010).

To further compound the misfit definitional conundrum, Billsberry and De Cooman (2010), in a conference paper, introduced a translational element to the conceptualisation of misfit. The insight gained “from a collaboration between British and Belgian researchers indicates that fit and misfit in British English certainly do not mean the same as fit and misfit translated into Dutch” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 2). Furthermore, it appears that “Dutch does not offer any direct analogues of British English interpretations of the words, especially misfit” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 2). This led these authors to ask whether people from different countries who speak different languages actually experience these phenomena in the same way as people in Britain or other English-speaking countries. They noted that researchers “were using the same words but meaning different things” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 2).

Misfit was seen as “a negative, unwanted and unpleasant condition akin to a disorder such as stress or anxiety” by the English researcher, whereas the Belgian researcher’s understanding had “fewer emotional connotations and was more about being an outsider of a group, for example, a non-conformist” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, pp. 2 – 3). Thus, it was suggested that misfit is perhaps “not understood similarly across national, cultural and linguistic borders”. The authors recommended that further research be undertaken in different country contexts to shed light on this significant issue (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 5).

Misfit has thus far been predominantly investigated in countries such as the US, UK and Western Europe (for example, Devloo, Anseel, & De Beuckelaer, 2011; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Robert & Wasti, 2002; Simmering, Colquitt, Noe, & Porter, 2003; Talbot, 2010, Wheeler *et al.*, 2005; Wheeler *et al.*, 2007). These countries have developed economies and apart from a few language differences, share similar social and cultural norms and possibly similar organisational experiences. Further investigating misfit issues in these countries might be likened to “re-inventing the wheel” and thus not eliciting a richer and deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Instead, it might be fruitful to explore the phenomenon in a country that has hitherto been under-researched. South Africa fits this profile.

Despite being a developing country, it has become a major player in the global economy. It offers a unique social and cultural context. Its inimitable history, having successfully emerged from a period of institutionalised racism known as apartheid, to a constitutional democracy, provides fertile ground to explore issues such as misfit in the workplace. During apartheid, job reservation forced the majority of employees (Black, Coloured and Indian) into job roles that they were ill-suited to. In addition, the fair treatment of all employees was largely non-existent (Bendix, 2010; Finnemore, 2009).

The post-apartheid era has brought its own unique challenges. Several pieces of new labour legislation around employment equity (EE), affirmative action (AA) and black economic empowerment (BEE) were introduced after the 1994 democratic elections in order to redress workplace imbalances that existed under apartheid. However, many organisations are still controlled by the white minority population and merely pay lip service to this legislation by making token appointments to fulfil the required quotas. As a result, previously excluded population groups (Black, Coloured and Indian) are still working in positions that they are ill-suited to (Bendix, 2010; Finnemore, 2009).

This suggests that South African organisations may be a breeding ground for employee misfits and that such employees by relating their experiences of misfit, may offer an indigenous, idiosyncratic view of the phenomenon. This research study aims to explore this gap in the research and literature by exploring how South African employees perceive and experience misfit.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature by firstly, exploring how South African employees perceive and experience misfit at work and secondly, by developing a theoretical model of misfit as experienced by these employees.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

- How do South African employees define and understand misfit?
- What are the factors that influence South African employees' sense of misfit?
- What are the consequences of South African employees' misfit?
- How do South African employees cope with their misfit?
- How can South African organisations effectively manage their employee misfits?

1.6 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore how South African employees define and understand misfit,
- To explore the factors that influence South African employees' sense of misfit,
- To explore the consequences of South African employees' misfit,
- To explore how South African employees cope with their misfit,
- To explore how South African organisations effectively manage their employee misfits,
- To explore other study related factors surrounding employees' experiences of misfit in the South African workplace, and
- To develop a model of misfit as experienced by South African employees.

1.7 Overview of Research Design and Methodology

The field of misfit has thus far been dominated by studies that have investigated the consequences of misfit using quantitative methods (Chan, 1996; Cools *et al.*, 2009; Devloo *et al.*, 2011; Ford, 2012; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005; Trautman, Voelcker-Rehage, & Godde, 2011). However, more recently, there have been calls for investigations that shed light on how individuals perceive misfit at work using qualitative approaches (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008; Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). It has been convincingly argued that, since misfit is a relatively new area of investigation and not much is known about it, qualitative methodology appears to be the most appropriate in terms of capturing the essence of what misfit really

means to employees (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). Indeed, one of the major benefits of qualitative research is its potential to provide an in-depth understanding of respondents' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Cresswell, 2002; Babbie, 1989; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Bryman & Bell, 2007). Against this background, the researcher decided to adopt a qualitative approach when investigating the research questions in this study.

One of the primary objectives of this study was to develop new theory based on the contextualised data acquired from the study participants. Grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006) was considered the best qualitative method to achieve the stated aims of this study. More specifically, this study adopted a progressive adaptation of the original Glaser and Strauss (1967) version of grounded theory, namely, constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the role of the researcher and the researcher's past experiences of the phenomenon under investigation when interpreting the data obtained from the respondents (Charmaz, 2006).

A pilot study on three employee misfits provided valuable input towards the adaptation and refinement of the interview schedule and protocol. The sampling strategies used in the main study were based on the recommendations of Glaser and Strauss (1967). During the initial stages of this study, a purposeful sampling strategy was adopted. Potential subjects were identified for the purposes of accumulating rich, in-depth data that could satisfactorily address the research questions. Thus, the major criteria used to screen respondents were whether they were currently experiencing or had previously experienced misfit at work. As the data collection process proceeded, purposeful sampling was superseded by a theoretical sampling strategy. Glaser (1978, p. 36) described theoretical sampling as "a process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses the data and decides what data to collect next and where to find it, in order to develop new theory as it emerges."

In order for grounded theory studies to have any credibility, data collection and analysis should be carried out simultaneously (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This requirement is critical because of the need to continuously adjust the direction of data collection and pursue fresh evidence as it emerges from the data (Silverman, 2005). To adhere to these guidelines, after the respondent had been interviewed, the recorded data were transcribed, analysed and categorised within a stipulated time frame.

The information acquired from one interview subsequently informed the next interview and this process of data collection and comparative analysis continued until saturation of the various categories had been achieved. It was difficult to accurately estimate the appropriate sample size at the outset of this study due to the evolving nature of qualitative research. At the point of saturation, a total of 40 respondents had been interviewed, including the three who participated in the pilot study. Due to the fact that statistical inferences and generalizability of results are not the primary objective of qualitative research, smaller samples are in most cases considered adequate to acquire rich and in-depth data from respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Marshall, 1996).

The coding procedure used for this study involved three fundamental types of codes that are characteristic of many grounded theory studies: open coding, axial coding and theoretical coding. At the commencement of data analysis, open coding was used. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 101) described open coding as “the analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data.” To this end, the interview transcripts were exhaustively analysed on a line-by-line basis so that data could be coded to produce an exhaustive coverage of categories of misfit issues tapped by the interview questions. On completion of open coding, there was a need to establish commonalities among the various categories generated. This was undertaken through the use of axial coding, which has been described by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 123) as a “process of linking categories at the level of properties and

dimensions.” Finally, theoretical coding was used to integrate and refine the various categories with the objective of developing new theory and in this case, a theoretical model of employee misfit grounded in South African employees’ perceptions and experiences.

1.8 Significance of the Study

There is a paucity of research in the area of misfit (Judge, 2007; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010; Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010). This study responds to numerous calls for more research into individual misfit in the workplace. Conducting research on the perceptions and experiences of employee misfit will contribute to the expansion of knowledge on this issue. There is very little literature on employee perceptions and experiences of misfit outside of the UK, US and Western Europe. Thus understanding how South African employees understand and experience misfit will make a notable contribution to existing research, theory and practice in the fields of OB, I/O psychology and HRM.

As highlighted in section 1.3 above, the South African organisational context represents fertile ground for the development of misfits. The legacy of apartheid, coupled with attempts to transform the workplace in the post-apartheid era, has resulted in many employees being placed in organisations and positions where they do not fit in. This dynamic presents major opportunities for scholarly research into the misfit phenomenon. No research has specifically examined misfit in the South African organisational context. The findings of this study have the potential to significantly contribute to South African OB, I/O psychology and HRM research by providing a local country-contextual theoretical understanding of what misfit means to individuals, its causes and consequences.

This study further has the potential to contribute to the OB, I/O psychology and HRM literature by exploring an employee perspective of how organisations currently deal with their misfits and how they can creatively harness the potential of

their misfitting employees, rather than encouraging them to exit. Previous research has not looked at misfit from this particular angle.

The results of this study also have the potential to make a notable contribution to the building of theory in OB, I/O psychology and HRM through a specific country-context investigation of misfit. As mentioned earlier in section 1.3 above, misfit has predominantly been examined in the UK and US and to a lesser extent Western Europe. By exploring misfit using a grounded theory approach in a heretofore under-researched context such as South Africa, this study aims to produce a new and richer theoretical understanding of this phenomenon.

The emerging new country-context sensitive theory could play an important role in refining and enhancing existing misfit theory. Research on organisational fit and misfit has been criticised by several scholars on the basis that it has not been grounded in sound theoretical frameworks (Edwards, 2008; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010; Wheeler, Halbesleben, & Shanine, 2013). This study has the potential to make a meaningful contribution in this regard by developing a model of employee misfit based on South African employees' perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon. The theoretical model generated from this study is likely to stimulate greater interest and substantially improve the interpretation of results of misfit research in the future.

The findings of this study will also have several important implications for OB, I/O psychology and HRM practice. With the number of misfits steadily increasing in many organisations in different parts of the world, it is imperative that managers develop a deeper understanding of what misfit means, its causes and resulting behavioural reactions so that they can effectively deal with this phenomenon in the workplace. The results of this study will provide managers with information that will facilitate early detection and strategies to creatively harness the potential of misfitting employees.

1.9 Original Contribution

The present research addresses a notable void in the literature by firstly, exploring individuals' perceptions and experiences of misfit in the workplace and, secondly, by developing a theoretical model of misfit based on employees' experiences. There is a paucity of research that explores what misfit actually means to individuals, and its possible causes and consequences. Moreover, there is dearth of research on misfit in countries outside the US, UK and Western Europe. This study makes a notable contribution by exploring misfit in South Africa, a country with a unique history and socio-cultural context. It is worth noting that this research study is the first to explore misfit in South Africa. The findings of this study will hopefully make a meaningful contribution to expanding knowledge in the area of misfit.

1.10 Organisation of the Literature Review

As highlighted in Chapter Three (section 3.5), in grounded theory studies, the role and timing of the literature review does not align itself with the generally accepted practices that are characteristic of traditional research (Charmaz, 2006; Dunne, 2011; McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007). While some progressive grounded theorists (for example, Charmaz, 2006; Dunne, 2011) accept that it is appropriate to undertake a preliminary literature review to acquaint oneself with the area under study, the literature review is said to endure as the data is collected and subjected to analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Daniel, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In the current study, the researcher conducted the literature review in two stages. The initial review is presented in Chapter Two of this thesis and assisted the researcher to understand the major developments in the field of fit and misfit and to establish the existing gaps that warrant further investigation. Moreover, this early review provided input into the framing of the problem statement and research questions. The researcher concurs with Daniel (2009, pp. 99 – 100) who asserted

that “understanding the literature helped to strengthen the arguments made in the discussion of findings section of this study and helped to improve the overall credibility and understanding of the researcher about the topic.”

As the data were collected and analysed and as the findings unfolded, it became necessary to conduct a second literature review (included in Chapter 5, section 5.9). The research findings influenced the direction and depth of the second review. In addition, this second review entailed a review of the related theoretical concepts pertaining to employee misfit. As highlighted in Chapter Three (section 3.5), the researcher deemed it pragmatic to adopt the “middle-ground” approach as espoused by Dunne (2011), which partially satisfies the traditionalists who abstain from conducting an early review (for example, Glaser, 1998) and the progressives who favour an extensive initial review of the literature (for example, Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Glaser (2007), Glaser and Holton (2007) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) support the notion that the literature review in grounded theory studies may be a cause of theoretical sensitizing. The literature pertaining to employee misfit also “served as a source of theoretical sensitizing; that is, the ability to think about data in theoretical terms by repeatedly suspending judgement on possible outcomes” (Daniel, 2009, p. 100). Similar to Daniel’s (2009, p. 100) experience, “this sensitivity continued to grow as the researcher became more aware of the phenomenon being investigated and revealed in the data.”

1.11 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Outlined the background to the research, the problem statement, purpose, research questions and objectives. In addition, a brief overview of the research design and methodology was presented, followed by a discussion of the

significance of the study, its original contribution and the organisation of the literature reviews.

Chapter Two: This chapter presents the first literature review of the study. It begins with a discussion of PE fit. The misfit construct is then explored – its conceptualisation; the difference between fit and misfit; a review of the theoretical models underpinning misfit; and a review of research examining the causes and outcomes of misfit. It concludes by highlighting the current gaps in the extant literature and justifying the need for the current study using a qualitative grounded theory approach.

Chapter Three: Presents in detail the research design and methodology used. The chapter starts with a restatement of the research problem for ease of reference. A discussion on the rationale for using a qualitative grounded theory approach follows. Details of the research design are presented, followed by brief discussion on the place of the literature review in grounded theory studies. This chapter continues with a detailed discussion of the participation selection criteria and procedures, the pilot study, and data collection instruments and procedures. A discussion of how the data will be analysed is then presented, together with an overview of the analytical tools used in the development of grounded theory, such as theoretical sampling and the constant comparison method. The criteria that will be used to evaluate the study results are listed and expanded upon. The chapter concludes with a discourse on the relevant ethical issues to consider in qualitative grounded theory research.

Chapter Four: Describes the results of the grounded theory study and highlights pertinent comments from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with employee misfits. The chapter begins with a brief description of the demographics of the study participants. A description of the categories resulting from the initial/open coding, axial coding and theoretical coding follows. The chapter concludes with a description of related study factors relevant to the research.

Chapter Five: Provides a discussion of the results presented in Chapter Four. The discussion is structured around the six objectives previously highlighted in section 1.6. An additional review of the literature is also provided in keeping with the tenets of grounded theory methodology in order to further expound the theory that was developed from the study findings, described in the previous chapter.

Chapter Six: Evaluates the study based on Glaser's (1978, 1992) four criteria. The chapter continues with a discussion of the limitations of the study, followed by the implications of the research. Recommendations for further research are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study and concluding remarks.

The references used in the study and the related appendixes are included immediately after Chapter Six.

1.12 Summary and Conclusions to Chapter One

This chapter served as the introductory and overview chapter. The background to the research problem was presented, followed by a systematic account of the gap in the extant literature, justifying the need to address the research problem. The research purpose, research questions and objectives were stated so as to provide a blueprint against which the research results would be measured. This introductory chapter further presented a brief overview of the research design and methodology, a plan for the organisation of the literature review, followed by an explanation of the study's original contribution. It concluded with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first literature review of the study. Its initial focus is in the area of PE fit. Thus, the chapter starts with a discussion of the various types of fit falling under the rubric of the umbrella term of PE fit. The chapter then reviews a few notable attempts at integrating these multiple conceptualisation into a single comprehensive framework. A discussion of how PE fit is currently measured with a specific focus on its direct and indirect measures follows. Up till now, PE fit remains a poorly understood concept. In the past, a few attempts had been made to unravel this conceptual conundrum. This chapter reviews these attempts by specifically focusing on the two dominant paradigms that have influenced fit research hitherto.

The chapter then continues with a discussion of how the concept of misfit has been defined in the literature both in terms of common, everyday language and in academic writing. It highlights the fact that the current state of definitional inconsistencies and confusion surrounding misfit may be linked to the two disparate approaches that have characterised misfit research to date.

The chapter then proceeds with a discussion of the factors that influence an individual's sense of misfit and the impact of misfit on both the individual and the organisation. Finally, the researcher presents the many lacunae that are perceived to exist in the literature on misfit, thus justifying the need for the current study. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusion.

2.2 Person-Environment (PE) Fit

2.2.1 Understanding PE Fit

PE fit has been broadly defined as “the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched” (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005, p. 281). Within this broad definition, several types of PE fit have been distinguished (Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Kristoff, 1991; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

2.2.1.1 Supplementary Fit

A significant distinction in the PE fit literature is between supplementary and complementary fit (Edwards & Shipp, 2007). According to Muchinsky and Monahan, 1987, p. 269), supplementary fit is achieved when “a person fits into some environmental context because he or she supplements, embellishes or possesses characteristics which are similar to other individuals in this environment.” Essentially, this type of fit may occur when a person decides to join a company that has employees who have similar values, personalities or characteristics. Researchers have equated this type of fit to that of interpersonal similarity (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Kristoff, 1996).

2.2.1.2 Complementary Fit

Complementary fit on the other hand, may occur when “the characteristics of an individual serve to ‘make whole’ or complement the characteristics of an environment” (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987, p. 271). The environment in this case may have a deficiency or shortcoming and may require a specific type of person with the necessary attributes for its effectiveness. According to Muchinsky and Monahan (1987, p. 271), “the weakness or need of the environment is offset by the strength of the individual and vice versa.” Edwards and Shipp (2007, p. 212) offer a

clear and somewhat useful explanation by stating that “complementary fit involves the extent to which the person and the environment each provides what the other requires.” An example of complementary fit could pertain to the matching of an employee to his/her job, in other words, ensuring a congruence between the knowledge, skills and attributes of an employee to the specific requirements of the job. This type of fit forms the fundamental basis of personnel selection decisions (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

The fundamental principle of complementary fit resides in the fact that the needs, weaknesses or demands of the environment, is offset by the strength of the individual and vice versa. Research scholars have further distinguished complementary fit in terms of whether the demands or needs are enforced by the environment or the individual concerned (Caplan, 1987; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Edwards, 1991; Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Kristof, 1996). The fit between the environmental demands and individual abilities represents demand-abilities (DA) fit (Kristof, 1996) and the match between the individual needs and environmental supplies is referred to as needs-supplies (NS) fit (Kristof, 1996). According to Edwards and Shipp (2007, p. 212), in DA fit, the demands of the environment may originate from “the task, work role or broader social context” and individuals’ abilities refer to his/her “knowledge, skills, abilities and resources (for example, time and energy).” In NS fit, the individual’s needs refer to “the biological needs, psychological needs, desires, goals and motives” (Edwards & Shipp, 2007, p. 212).

It has been noted that the literature often uses the concept of supplies-values (SV) fit instead of NS fit (Choi, 2004; Edwards, 1996; Shaw & Gupta, 2004; Taris & Feij, 2001; Taris, Feij, & Van Vianen, 2005). Edwards (1996, p. 294) defines SV fit as “the match between a person’s values and the environmental supplies available to fulfil those values.” Thus, SV fit specifically pertains to the congruence between the environmental supplies and the values of an individual whereas NS fit is considered a much broader concept and may include various needs, for example, psychological and physiological.

2.2.1.3 Levels of PE Fit

PE fit can also be considered according to the various levels of the work environment that an individual is embedded in (Kristof, 1996; Yang, Levine, Smith, Ispas, & Rossi, 2008). Person-group (PG) fit occurs when there is a match between the individual and other members of the immediate work group (Judge & Ferris, 1992; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Vogel & Feldman, 2009; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). This type of fit may encompass both the matching of personality traits, values, goals and other characteristics of group members (supplementary fit) or group members' strengths compensating the weaknesses of others (complementary fit).

Person-job (PJ) fit exists when there is congruence between an individual's knowledge, skills and ability, and the demands of the job or the needs of an individual and what is provided by the job (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). These two different perspectives of PJ fit (that is, DA fit and NS fit) were originally investigated as two distinct types of fit, however, they are now combined into an overall understanding of PJ fit (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Scroggins, 2007; Vogel & Feldman, 2009).

Person-supervisor (PS) fit is understood to occur as a result of dyadic relationships between supervisors and their subordinates and has been defined as a match between an employee's values or personality and that of his/her immediate supervisor (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Lee, Reiche, & Song, 2010; Van Vianen, 2000). The fit between a person and another individual, labelled person-individual (PI) fit or person-people (PP) fit has also been identified in the literature (Van Vianen, 2000; Tsui, Porter, & Egan, 2002).

PO fit refers to the match between the person and the organisation (Chatman, 1989, 1991) and has primarily been synonymous with supplementary fit (Edwards & Shipp, 2007). Previous research on PO fit has accentuated individual-organisational

similarity, for example, individual personality-organisational climate congruence, individual-organisational value congruence and individual-organisational goal congruence (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010).

At the broadest level, there exists person-vocation (PV) fit, which has been referred to as “the congruence between individuals’ interests and abilities and the characteristics and requirements of their vocation” (Holland, 1985a as cited in Vogel & Feldman, 2009, p. 70).

2.2.1.4 Content of Person and Environment Dimensions

PE fit is further convoluted by the assortment of content dimensions used to operationalise it. Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005, p. 289) posited that “the decision on what dimensions or characteristics to use is somewhat determined by the broader conceptualisation of fit being explored.” It has been noted that researchers focusing on supplementary fit have customarily used a wide range of content dimensions (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). For example, PO fit, which is primarily studied through a supplementary lens, uses values, goals, personality or attitudes as content dimensions.

Research on DA fit has almost entirely been based on people’s knowledge, skills and attributes, and job or company demands. However, it has been observed that due to the increasing appreciation of the significance of individual personality traits on job performance, a limited number of studies have extended the DA fit to incorporate personality traits and values (Edwards, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001 as cited in Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). In a similar manner, studies examining NS fit, which has historically stressed peoples’ needs and preferences, are now allowing for the use of value preferences as a content dimension (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005).

Bretz and Judge (1994) recognised the need to consider a broad range of content dimensions in a single study in order to obtain a deeper understanding of PO fit. As a consequence, they developed a questionnaire that included knowledge, skills and abilities, and reward contingencies (for example, salary), value orientations and culture, personality and organisational image. Edwards and Shipp (2007) suggested that, the content dimensions on which the individual and work environment were usually compared, can be positioned on a continuum that stretches from global to facet with domain levels in the middle. These dimensions of comparison can be arranged hierarchically for supplementary, DA and NS fit.

Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010) have reported that there have been a considerable number of attempts to present new content dimensions in the past few years. These scholars have noted that studies focusing on PG fit have extended to incorporate “team demands and individual abilities, goals, values, working style preferences and ethics” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010, p. 10). It has also been stated that research on PO fit is starting to embrace “organisational demands and individual abilities and cognitive styles, as well as ethics as a specific form of value match” and PJ fit is beginning to take in “values and cognitive or working styles preferences” (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010, p. 10).

2.2.1.5 Integrating the Multiple Perspectives of PE Fit

Kristof (1996) suggested a comprehensive definition of PO fit that included supplementary as well as complementary perspectives of fit. In her seminal paper, she defined fit as “the compatibility between people and organisations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both” (Kristof, 1996, p. 4 – 5).

Since Kristof’s (1996) multiple conceptualisation of PO fit framework, there have been a few of authors who have attempted to integrate the different perspectives of PE fit into one comprehensive model. Edwards and Shipp (2007) suggested a

model that integrated the various perspectives of PE fit highlighted previously (sections 2.2.1.1 to 2.2.1.4). The model presented was in a form of a huge cube demarcated into 45 parts, each signifying a level of the environment (that is, individual, group, job, organisation and vocation), a perspective in the form of supplementary, needs-supplies and demand-abilities fit, and a level of content dimension specificity (that is, global, domain or facet) (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010). According to Edwards and Shipp (2007, p. 218) their integrative conceptualisation of PE fit model makes several noteworthy contributions to our understanding of PE fit:

- Firstly, it incorporates and adds on to the different conceptualisations of PE fit articulated up to this point, thus increasing the categories of fit open to investigation. Hitherto, conceptualisations of fit had been “limited to two (Edwards, 1991), three (Cable & DeRue, 2002, Kristof, 1996), or four (Bretz & Judge, 1994),”
- Secondly, the framework brings to the forefront the types of PE fit that have been previously disregarded. For example, it has demonstrated that PJ fit “can refer not only to DA fit and NS fit (Edwards, 1991) but also supplementary fit in which the environment involves other people in the same job as the focal person,”
- Thirdly, the framework raises the accuracy with which the PE fit construct can be conceptualised and measured. For example, “the meaning and operationalization of value congruence differs, depending on whether the value dimensions are at the domain level (Adkins, Ravlin, & Meglino, 1996; Cable & Judge, 1996; Meglino, Ravlin, & Atkins, 1989; Saks & Asforth, 1997) or facet level (Ashkanasy & O’Connor, 1997; Cable & Edwards, 2004; Finegan, 2000; Kalliath, Bluedorn, & Strube, 1999),” and

- Finally, the distinctions demarcated in the framework have significant consequences for creating hypotheses regarding the effects of fit on work outcomes.

Ostroff and Schulte (2007) presented another viewpoint by applying the principles of levels of analysis theory to articulate a framework that considers the construct of PE fit from several perspectives and across different levels of analysis. They argued that various subtypes (or levels) of fit exist based on individuals' interaction with different hierarchical levels of the environment, for example, PI, PJ, PG and PO PE fit. This distinction appears consistent with Edwards and Shipp's (2007) levels of PE fit and Kristof's (1996) types of fit.

Ostroff and Schulte (2007) further argued that PE fit can also be conceptualised on the basis of three general modes of fit, namely, person-person, person-situation and situation-situation or system fit. The rationale behind this distinction is grounded on the premise that the environment may be categorised on the basis of the characteristics of the people residing in it or on the basis of its context. This person-based and situation-based approach to describing the environment may result in the person-person general mode and person-situation general mode respectively. The situation-situation general mode or system fit refers to the alignment of various systems, processes or structures within the organisational environment (internal fit) and the alignment of various organisational systems, structures and processes within aspects of the external environment (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007).

By crossing the general modes with the subtypes of PE fit, Ostroff and Schulte (2007) distinguished between additional subtypes of PE fit under various general modes of PE fit. To further explain, each general mode of PE fit may be subdivided into various subtypes based on the hierarchical level of the person and situation components representing the environment in the general modes of person-person, person-situation and situation-situation. For example, within the general mode of person-person fit, a person's attributes (for example, personality) may be compared

to a colleague's attributes, resulting in a person-person fit at the individual level. Likewise, within the general mode of person-person fit, a person's attributes may be compared to members of his/her group, thus resulting in person-person fit at the group level. Similarly, in the general mode of person-person fit, a person's attributes may be compared to the attributes of members inhabiting an organisation, thus resulting in person-person fit at the organisational level. The very same logic may be applied to deriving subtypes of PE fit within the person-person and situation-situation general modes (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007).

Ostroff and Schulte (2007) further proposed the integration of composition and compilation processes with different general modes of PE fit across various levels of analysis. It has been argued that this proposed integration results in the creation of various permutations of P and E elements at different levels of analysis. Moreover, by undertaking the proposed integration, a more comprehensive view of PE fit that is generalizable across different content domains is realised (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007). Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010, p. 11) assert that compositional fit places weight on "the fit between an individual's characteristics and a higher level characteristic that is functionally similar, such as individual values and group or organisational values, or individual attributes and structural-technical components of the organisation." In contrast, compilational fit stresses "how the pieces of the lower level combine create a higher level construct, for example, team members with complementary skills coming together to form a well rounded team" (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010, p. 11).

2.2.2 Measurement of PE Fit

Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007, p. 138) argue that "the method of assessing PE fit will in large part determine the strength of the results." The literature, however, reveals the lack of consistency in the measurement of the PE fit construct (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Verquer *et al.*, 2003). The fact that PE fit may be viewed through many different lenses has somewhat influenced the development

of the different research design and measuring strategies that were used in studies to date (Ostroff, 2007). Strategies for measuring PE fit may vary widely from the extreme of using an overall global and subjective measure to a more specific scale that elicits objective data. The central issue around the measurement of PE fit relates primarily to how the factors of the P and the commensurate factors of the environment E are assessed. In this regard, the factors of the P and E may be assessed independently either by the same person or with another person assessing the environment. Based on the underlying logic governing this crucial matter, two primary approaches have been identified in the literature, namely, direct and indirect measures of PE fit (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Ostroff, 2007).

2.2.2.1 Direct Measures of PE Fit

In the direct measure of PE fit, the P factors and the E factors are not assessed independently (Kristof, 1996, Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005 & Ostroff, 2007). The individual in this form of fit is asked explicitly to state whether he/she believes that a good fit exists with another person, job, supervisor, group, organisation or vocation. This direct measure of fit relates to a person's subjective judgement of how well he/she fits in with the environment (Cable & Judge, 1997; Ostroff, 2007). Direct measures of PE fit have often been labelled as perceived fit, based on the fact that the person's subjective judgement or perceptions of fit are involved (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Judge, 1996; French, Rogers, & Cobb, 1974; Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 2002). The term "molar" has been used more recently in the literature to describe this direct perceived approach to measuring fit (Edwards *et al.*, 2006).

The utility of using direct measures to assess PE fit has been questioned by organisational scholars and researchers alike (Edwards, 1991). Notwithstanding the fact that direct measures of fit have been shown to be good indicators of several attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Arthur

et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Verquer *et al.*, 2003), it has been the subject of severe criticism. For example, Kristof (1996, p. 11) listed several areas that have raised concerns when using direct fit measures to assess PE fit:

- Firstly, the use of direct measures may confound the effects of the P and the E, thus averting a true assessment of its independent effects,
- Secondly, the use direct measures may conceal the precise assessment of commensurate measures of the P and the E when questions do not clearly address the type of characteristics to be deliberated on, and
- Finally, the use of direct measures may result in some form of consistency bias when used in research that explores the effects of PE fit on a variety of outcome variables, for example, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to leave the organisation.

Despite the above mentioned drawbacks, direct measures of PE fit had been successfully used in several studies previous studies up to this point (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Judge, 1996, 1997; Saks & Ashforth, 2002).

2.2.2.2 Indirect Measures of PE Fit

Indirect measures of PE fit focus on separate assessments of the P factors and the E factors (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Ostroff, 2007). The separate assessment of the E may be undertaken by the same person or another independent person, for example, supervisor, subordinate or colleague. These indirect measures of PE fit have also been called “atomistic” to stress the fact that there are separate assessments of the individual and the organisation (Edwards *et al.*, 2006). When the assessment of the environment is undertaken by the same person, it is usually referred to as perceived indirect fit (subjective indirect fit) as this approach to measurement assesses the perceptions that the individual has of the environment.

Alternatively, when the assessment of the environment is conducted by an independent person, this approach is referred to as objective indirect fit. The focal person and the other person are independent of each other and thus the assessment of the environment is from a different source. Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007, p. 134) posit that the actual environment can be assessed in a number of ways:

- “With the use of objective organisational characteristics, for example, pay systems,”
- “With the use of aggregated ratings of the organisation, for example, employees’ aggregated view of the organisational climate,” and
- “With the use of an independent other person’s view of the organisation, for example, a supervisor’s view of the organisational characteristics.”

Apart from the many positive qualities of perceived indirect measurements when compared to direct measurements, Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007), argue that perceived indirect fit is still subject to halo, consistency and single-source biases. However, the potential for common method bias may be reduced if the characteristics of the individual and the organisation are collected at different points in time (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007). A meta-analysis undertaken by Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005) revealed that the indirect approach to PE fit assessment generally results in lower criterion variables when examined as a moderator in the PE fit – outcome relationships. Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005, p. 318) contend that “these results appear to be consistent with the findings of Verquer *et al.* (2003) that stated that ‘individuals’ overall assessment of direct fit is the best predictor of outcomes.” Although perceived direct fit assessments display stronger effects, this does not necessarily imply that it is an ideal method as it has been shown to have a propensity to introduce common method bias that may confound the results (Krsitof-Brown *et al.*, 2005).

As highlighted in this section, the use of indirect measures of fit involves the separate assessments of P and E factors. This process may involve “the calculation of an index of fit (for example, correlation) or misfit (for example, algebraic or squared difference score) based on independent ratings of personal and organisational characteristics” (Meyer, Hecht, Gill, & Toplonytsky, 2010, p. 460). However, this particular approach had been criticised on the basis that it was based on the assumption that “the measured or computed similarity (or difference) between the person and organisation is responsible for observed relations with an outcome measure” (Edwards, 1994; Edwards & Parry, 1993 as cited in Meyer *et al.*, 2010, p. 460). Edwards (1993, 1994), Edwards and Van Harrison (1993) and Edwards and Parry (1993) introduced the techniques of *polynomial regression* and *response surface analysis* as a substitute for the difference score approach.

Polynomial regression is a technique that uses separate measures of P and E and its associated higher order terms as the predictor variables (Edwards, 1993, 1994). These higher order terms comprise the quadratic terms (P^2 and E^2) and the interaction terms ($P \times E$). This technique may be best illustrated in the form of an equation: $P + E + P^2 + (P \times E) + E^2 = y$, where P - person, E - environment, P^2 - quadratic term for person, ($P \times E$) - interaction term, E^2 - quadratic term for environment and y - criterion variable. The relations between P, E and y variables may be represented in the form a three-dimensional surface plot (response surface). In contrast to difference scores, polynomial regression avoids collapsing the P and E measures into a single score that represents fit. This may have an effect of reducing many of the shortcomings associated with the use of difference scores, thus producing more accurate assessments of fit relationships. In this regard, studies have demonstrated that polynomial regression techniques have consistently produced larger effect sizes than difference score methods (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). In addition, studies have revealed that fit depicting high levels of P and E represents a more favourable position than fit having low levels of P and E and that excess of E conditions produce less of a decrease in criterion variables than deficiencies of the E (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Taris & Feij, 2001). This

finding is in contrast to results of fit calculated using difference scores where this attribute has not been distinguished.

2.2.3 Clearing the Conceptual Maze

Despite its existence for over a century, the construct of PE fit remains plagued with definitional inconsistencies and conceptual ambiguities (Edwards, 2008; Harrison, 2007; Judge, 2007; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2012; Ostroff, 2012). In recent years, the writings of Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2013) and Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010) have attempted to shed light on possible causes of this state of confusion.

2.2.3.1 The Fit Paradigms

Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2013) have noted that the field of fit has been characterised by two separate paradigms that may have influenced the direction that research has taken. The first paradigm, branded as the PE fit paradigm, is rooted in interactional psychology, meaning that a person's behaviour is a result of the interplay between the internal characteristics of the person (for example, values) and the external characteristics of the environment (for example, organisational culture). An overriding feature of this paradigm is that fit is assessed through an explicit comparison between the characteristics of P and E. This calculated form of fit provides researchers with little insight into individual's actual experiences of fit. In actual fact, individuals are never questioned openly about their feelings or thoughts about how well they fit in (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013).

The second paradigm has been labelled perceived fit. This paradigm regards fit as a psychological construct that resembles something inside an individual's mind that affects his/her thoughts and feelings towards co-workers, job or organisation. When assessing perceived fit, people are questioned openly about how well they fit in with their co-workers, jobs or organisations.

Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2013) have noted that there has been considerable debate on which type of fit is more significant; perceived fit or the more calculated forms of fit. They suggest that researchers should acknowledge that they are conspicuously dissimilar domains that should be treated as distinct concepts rather than rivalry over which one is more precise (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013).

2.2.3.2 Defining Conditions for PE Fit

Krsitof-Brown and Guay (2010) have identified two conditions that should be considered important to our understanding of how fit is conceptualised. The first condition refers to the concept of commensurate dimensions and entails ensuring that the same content is considered in P (for example, personal ethical values) and E (for example, organisational ethical values) when determining the fit or proximity of P and E. The second condition concerns whether fit is understood to occur when there is an exact correspondence (that is, an identical match) between levels of P and E characteristics. Based on these two conditions, Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010) presented a continuum of various conceptualisations.

The most restrictive definition, known as the exact correspondence view of fit is placed at one end of the continuum. When adopting the restrictive definition, fit is viewed as the exact match between commensurate P and E dimensions and the level of mismatch in either direction (for example, $P < E$ or $P > E$) represents the degree of misfit. This view has an advantage of reducing the confusion around the questions of what fit is and what it is not. As a consequence, anything that diverges from perfect match on commensurate dimensions cannot be considered fit. A major drawback of this view is that it diminishes fit to “a calculated mathematical relationship between P and E” and as a result does not satisfactorily reveal “laypeople’s understanding of fit or correlate highly with reported perceptions of fit” (Krsitof-Brown & Guay, 2010, p. 5).

Placed at the centre of the continuum, is a less restrictive definition of fit, branded as the commensurate compatibility view of fit. According to this view, fit may occur when there is some type of relationship between commensurate P and E dimensions. Thus, fit may occur when there is compatibility between P and E dimensions rather than only exact correspondence as prescribed in the restrictive view and once the range of compatibility has exceeded, misfit is deemed to occur. This view has the advantages and disadvantages of both the exact correspondence and the least restrictive view discussed below, albeit to a smaller degree. According to Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010, p. 5), “using commensurate P and E variables specifies the relevance of P and E, but fit could be said to occur when $P = E$, $P > E$ or $P < E$, depending on the specific concepts involved.”

At the opposite end of the continuum is the least restrictive view, also referred to as the general compatibility view of fit. In terms of this view, fit may transpire when there is compatibility between P and E on conceptually relevant, instead of commensurate dimensions. It has been noted that the boundaries of this construct are inexplicit. As a result, fit could be argued to exist in a countless assortment of P and E permutations (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010).

2.3 Misfit

2.3.1 Regular and Common Understanding of Misfit

In common parlance, the term misfit has been used very broadly to denote “a person who differs from the social or organisational norm” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, p. 1). The *Collins English Dictionary* defines a misfit as “a person not suited in behaviour or attitude to a particular social environment” (Collins English Dictionary, 2012); similarly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes a misfit as “a person, whose behaviour or attitude sets them apart from others in an uncomfortably conspicuous way, for example, a motley collection of social misfits” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012).

In some instances, the word misfit has been used as a verb which means “to fail to fit or be fitted” (Collins English Dictionary, 2012). The literature is awash with many colloquial terms that have been associated with misfits such “mavericks”, “oddballs”, “troublemakers”, “eccentrics”, “non-conformists” and “square pegs in round holes”. These labels carry negative connotations, thus creating the impression that misfits are people who have some undesirable traits and should be avoided at all costs.

2.3.2 Misfit in the Organisational Context

2.3.2.1 Conceptualising and Defining Misfit

Talbot and Billsberry (2008, p. 1) note that “there is no readily available definition of fit, let alone misfit.” According to Harrison (2007), “it is now well-established, that problems with the definition of ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’ have dogged organisational fit research since its inception” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 1). Billsberry, Ambrosini, Moss-Jones, and Marsh (2005b) and Billsberry and De Cooman (2010) suggest four reasons for these difficulties:

- The prevalence of numerous descriptions of the terms fit and misfit both in the academic literature and common vernacular,
- An oversight on the part of researchers to explore what fit and misfit actually mean to individuals experiencing these phenomena,
- The initial writings on PO fit studies utilised many substitute terms such as; similarity, congruence, correspondence, equivalence or match when attempting to explain fit, and
- There have been opposing views on how fit or misfit should be conceptualised in the literature (Billsberry, 2007; Billsberry & De

Cooman, 2010; Piasentin & Chapman, 2006). Firstly, the concept of fit has been understood in some quarters to be a mathematical calculation of the similarity between particular attributes of a person and the corresponding characteristics of the environment. This perspective found support in Chatman (1989) who suggested that PO fit may be conceived as the congruence or similarity in values between an individual and his/her organisation and by implication, misfit as the dissimilarity in values.

This mechanical and abstract approach to fit and misfit conceptualisation has elicited several unanswered questions. The smaller the difference in scores indicates a move towards fitting in and the perfect fit is achieved when there a zero difference between the individual and the environment. Misfit on the other hand, is understood to occur when there is a difference in scores with the higher scores indicating severe forms of misfit. This particular viewpoint however, fails to satisfactorily explain what score equates to fit and how large a score qualifies one of being a misfit. Moreover, this perspective does not shed light on how individuals perceive fit with themselves and the environment. Edwards *et al.* (2006) noted a serious need for research that seeks to explain how people experience fit in the workplace.

Secondly, fit and misfit has also been perceived to be a psychological attitude. In this regard, Schneider (1987a) advocated that employees who fit in well with the people in their organisations will tend to remain in them and by implication, those who misfit will eventually leave. Cable and DeRue (2002) examined the composition and meaning of employees' fit perceptions and concluded that people form different perceptions of fit and these may predict a broad array of organisational outcomes. Research scholars have argued that a strong case can be made for conceptualising the phenomenon of fit as a psychological attitude (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a;

Billsberry *et al.*, 2007; Kristof, 1996; Krsitof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2002).

According to Billsberry and De Cooman (2010), the difference in the aforementioned approaches is a philosophical difference in terms of epistemology, that is, interpretivism versus positivism. These authors' further postulate that, those people who discuss fit or misfit in terms of a psychological experience or attitude inadvertently assume an internal-external or inside-out approach. This inward-looking search for the essence of the fit or misfit experience takes cognisance of a person's innermost feelings, emotions, desires, thoughts and other subconscious patterns of behaviour (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010).

Alternatively, those subscribing to the quantitative, mathematical slant have been adopting an external-internal or outside-in approach to their understanding of fit or misfit. In this approach, aspects of the person and the environment are compared in an unemotional way, thus reducing fit or misfit to a calculated number (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010). Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume that the current definitional inconsistencies that have plagued the fit literature up to this point had its genesis in the opposing philosophical traditions that have previously dominated the fit discourse.

With reference to the workplace, Billsberry, Van Meurs, Coldwell, and Marsh (2006, p. 1) define misfit as "occurring when the compatibility [between the individual and the organisation] is detrimental to both parties." Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009, p. 1) note that "in everyday language, people use the term misfit to describe a person who differs from the social or organisational norm, either in terms of their demographic status, personal attributes, or their work-related behaviour." They go on to provide examples, such as, "solo colleagues, such as the only Pacific employee in a workplace, the only employee to have (or not to have) a

university degree, the only openly gay employee, or the colleague who does not ‘do’ casual Fridays” (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009, p. 1).

2.3.2.2 Differentiating Between Fit and Misfit

According to Harrison (2007), “misfit, is generally assumed to be a lack of fit where P is not equal to E” (Talbot, 2010, p. 7). This lack of fit according to Edwards and Cable (2009), may not be deleterious, as in some instances, “optimum affective outcomes result where there is not an exact congruence between the P and E variables, for example, where what is supplied by the organisation exceeds what the individual needs” (Talbot, 2010, p. 7). This raises questions about how misfit has traditionally been conceptualised.

According to the purists, it is conceivable that misfit is the polar opposite of fit, with a scale having a perfect fit at one end along a linear continuum and misfit at the other. Conceptualising misfit as a continuous variable (that is, a lack of fit) underpinned a plethora of empirical studies examining its effects on work attitudes and behaviours (for example, Chan, 1996; Cluskey & Vaux, 1997; Dbaiibo, Harb, & Van Meurs, 2010; Lovelace & Rosen, 1996; Naus *et al.*, 2007). In a theoretical paper, Billsberry *et al.* (2006) suggest that “misfits are not polar opposites of those individuals that fit and they propose that it is not necessarily the case that when the factors which cause fit are absent, misfit occurs. Misfits, they argue, are conscious of their misfit, either being wrongly appointed or becoming misfits during the course of their appointment” (Talbot *et al.*, 2007, pp. 5 – 6). This view was supported by Talbot *et al.* (2007) in their exploratory study on the construction of fit and misfit. They found that although misfit and fit have some common causal factors, there were many factors that were unique to misfit; thus they concluded that it is possible that misfit may be a different construct from that of fit.

Based on their assessment of the literature, Wright & Cooper-Thomas (2009) propose three ways in which misfit may be construed:

- Misfit as more than or less than comparative other – In this type, an individual is considered not to fit in if he/she has a larger or smaller amount of some essential characteristic, attribute, skill or knowledge comparative to other people in the company. In this category, fit and misfit can be conceptualised as being at the opposite ends of a linear scale. Chan's (1996) study has been used as an example to illustrate this principle. In this study, Chan (1996) explored the concept of cognitive misfit on a sample of 253 entry-level Singaporean civil service engineers. Each of participant's cognitive style of problem solving was examined and compared to the predominant style demand of the work environment. It was reported the participants exhibited a variety of cognitive styles conveniently illustrated on a continuum ranging from adaptive to innovative styles. Misfit was understood to exist when an individual with an adaptive cognitive style was employed in an environment that required a high degree of innovation and the level of cognitive misfit was predicted to intensify with increases in the level of individual adaptive style. Equally, cognitive misfit was reported to arise when an innovative cognitive style participant was working in an environment that made high adaptation demands and the intensity of cognitive misfit rises with the escalation of individual innovative style (Chan, 1996; Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009).
- Misfit as greater or less than ideal other – This second classification of misfit refers to individuals who have either a larger or smaller quantity than the ideal level that is expected on some parameter that is considered significant. This ideal level could arise from some social norm or in some instances, standards set by the organisation or regulatory bodies. Jansen and Kristof-Brown's (2005) study on the impact of being in or out of synchrony with the overall pace of the social environment in the workplace has been used to substantiate this classification. Examining a sample of 409 employees from a furniture production company in the Mid-Atlantic region

of the US, it was reported that misfit occurred when either the individual participant surpassed the pace considered the accepted norm in the social environment at work or in instances where the social environment exceeds the pace of the individual participant (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005; Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009).

- Misfit as a qualitatively different dimension – In this third category, an individual is known to misfit, however, researchers are unable to quantitatively measure by how much an individual's characteristics differ from the social norm in the direction of either greater than or less than. The idea that misfit may be viewed as a qualitatively different construct has received support from members of the erstwhile Fit Project Team in the UK (Billsberry *et al.* 2006). Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009) cited an example of research undertaken by Lovelace and Rosen (1996) to illustrate this third classification of misfit. Lovelace and Rosen (2009) explored perceptions of fit and misfit among a diverse group of managers working in the US. One of the objectives of their study was to get the respondents to describe specific signs, events or experiences which may have aided them in forming their fit or misfit perceptions of their organisations. A particular respondent quoted an example of an incident where he was employed in new product development and had to attend a meeting to discuss a new project for a client. At this meeting, it was decided that he and his team were incapable of producing the samples in the way the marketing manager had promised the client, but instead, using another method which could impact negatively on performance. On hearing this, the marketing director then instructed the marketing manager to conceal these change of plans from the client. The respondent was appalled by this cover-up and subsequently felt that he could not fit at this organisation based on ethical grounds (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996; Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009). In this example, the extent of the misfit was not quantitatively determined, but instead, assessed using qualitative techniques.

Based on their above analysis, Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009, p. 7) provide a definition of misfit that they hope will provide a foundation for future research:

Person-Organisation misfit refers to a mismatch between the individual and the organisation, and relates to individual factors that are more than, less than, or qualitatively different from the comparable factors at the organisation level.

Do people have an overarching sense of misfit or are perceptions of misfit clearly linked to salient features of the work environment? This question has captured the attention of organisational scholars in recent years (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Talbot, 2010; Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a). Researchers have taken their cues from the way fit has been conceptualised and investigated to address this conundrum.

2.3.2.3 Contribution of Fit Research to the Understanding of Misfit

The fact that fit has been understood to be a complex, multidimensional construct comprising various types of fit such as person-job (PJ), person-group (PG), person-people (PP), person-organisation (PO) and person-vocation (PV) has not been disputed. However, what has generated criticism is the way fit has been studied. By far the most dominant approach hitherto has been to examine the fit between an individual and a single aspect of the work environment. For example, Edwards and Billsberry (2010) noted that Chatman (1991) chose to direct her efforts in exploring values and unequivocally demonstrated that the match of individual and organisational values positively influences job satisfaction, organisational commitment and tenure.

Likewise, in misfit studies, Chan (1996) focused on the degree of misfit between a person's cognitive style of problem solving and the style demands of the work context (cognitive misfit) and examined its impact on job performance and turnover. These studies are based on a "theoretical deconstruction of fit or misfit" a

concept used by Edwards and Billsberry (2010, p. 477) to describe the mainstream of research on organisational fit that entails comparing one aspect of an individual with a single aspect of the work environment to predict job outcomes. What has emerged from these studies is such a perplexing assortment of descriptions, classifications and conclusions that have triggered a section of the academic community to vigorously wonder what exactly is this item nonchalantly described as fit (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010).

Kristof-Brown, Jansen, and Colbert (2002, pp. 985 – 986) note that, “although this trend has advanced our understanding of various types of fit, it has unintentionally compartmentalised our thinking.” As a consequence, organisational fit researchers have little knowledge of the unique influence of different types of fit on work outcomes or how individuals integrate fit-related information (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002). It can be argued that the myopic approach of examining the fit between a person and a single aspect of the environment contradicts the fact that in reality people rarely interact with only one aspect of the environment, but are simultaneously nested in multiple dimensions of the environment. According to Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006, p. 193), “this nested view suggests that many of the consequences attributed to fit are not simply the result of fit or misfit with a single aspect of the environment. Instead, broad consequences such as satisfaction, commitment, stress, adjustment and withdrawal are more realistically affected by the compilation and interaction of fit assessments across multiple aspects of the environment.”

The few studies that have investigated multiple types of fit have found that each type of fit (for example, PJ, PG or PO) may have a unique impact on individuals’ attitudes and behaviour. In the job search and selection context, Cable and Judge (1996) asked job applicants to rate their perceived fit with organisations and with jobs in those organisations. The results demonstrated that both perceived PO fit and PJ fit predicted job offer acceptance, with PO fit showing the greater influence. Kristof-Brown (2000) examined recruiters’ perceptions of both PO and PJ fit

simultaneously. She reported that both contributed uniquely to hiring recommendations.

A study by O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) on a sample of accountants showed that the fit between their skills and those demanded by their jobs in terms of job profiles (PJ fit) as well as the congruence between their values and that of their organisations (PO fit) had independent effects on work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to quit. Likewise, a longitudinal field study undertaken by Saks and Ashford (1997) to examine the relationships between job information sources, applicant perceptions of fit and work outcomes found that PJ and PO fit had unique effects on employee attitudes while being highly correlated ($r = 0.56$). Perceptions of PJ fit were positively associated with commitment, identification with the organisation and job satisfaction, and negatively related to stress symptoms and intentions to leave the organisation. PO fit perceptions were negatively related to intentions to leave and employee turnover. These results further demonstrate the importance of both PJ and PO fit as fundamental to the multidimensional fit construct.

Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) investigated the relationship between employees' perceptions of PJ and PO fit in a study of a national trucking company in the US. The results showed that both types of perceived fit had a unique impact on job satisfaction and intention to quit. PO fit was a better predictor of intention to quit than PJ fit. There was, however, little difference in their relative influence on job satisfaction. The results further demonstrated that perceived PO fit had a positive relationship with contextual performance and that there was no significant link between PJ fit and task performance. Taken together, these results support the view that employees are able to distinguish the fit between their jobs and the organisation.

Many studies focus on simultaneously examining the effects of PO and PJ fit, and by sheer oversight or intentionally, ignore the other dimensions of fit such as PG,

PP or PV fit. This omission was addressed to a certain extent by Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2002) who examined the concurrent impact of PJ, PG and PO fit on work satisfaction in an experimental policy-capturing study. Using hierarchical linear modelling, they demonstrated that, when considered simultaneously, all three types of fit had important and independent effects on individuals' job satisfaction. This validated the findings of previous studies (for example, Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

In addition, the findings suggest that people's past work experience determines how much emphasis they place on the various dimensions of fit. For example, an individual with a varied work experience will tend to place a larger weight on PO fit when making fit assessments. The results further suggest that people are not programmed to mechanically access information on PJ, PG and PO fit by simply combining this information by typically using simple addition and integration. Instead, it was proposed that the processes of integration may be far more intricate. For example, it was submitted that, besides the main effects, there may exist two-way and three-way interactions between PJ, PG and PO fit and these could be used to clarify the added variances achieved in the dependent variable of work environment satisfaction. Overall, these results suggest that there could be some sort of compensatory mechanism in operation wherein people experiencing low fit in one particular area of the environment may compensate with higher degrees of fit in others. Moreover, it was noted that fit in numerous areas of the environment may increase its overall impact on job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002).

Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2002) introduced an alternative explanation of how individuals combine different types of fit to form an overall fit perception. They question the widely-held assumption that people combine information on various dimensions of fit in a simple, additive manner. Instead, they argue that information is often integrated using more intricate configural cue processing, resulting in "multiplicative interactions among different types of fit such that various combinations of fit have stronger affects on the criterion than under simply additive

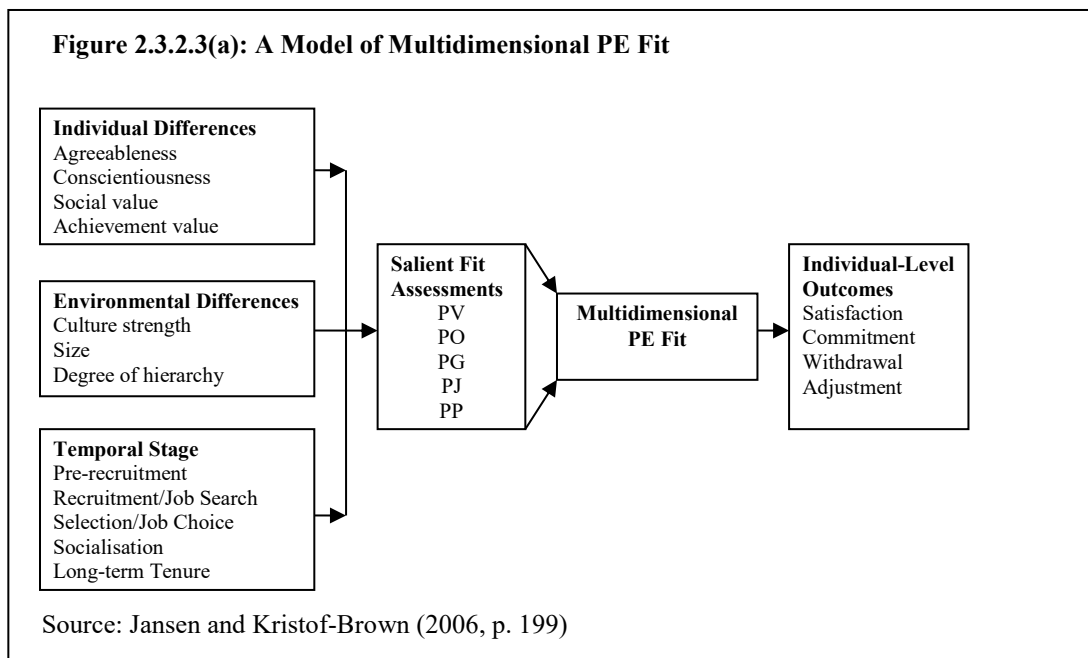
conditions” (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002, p. 986). It is noteworthy that Kristof-Brown *et al.*’s (2002) policy-capturing study was the first to prove unique effects for the three distinct types of fit (that is, PJ, PG and PO) in a single study and offer an alternative explanation of how people combine different types of fit to form overall fit perceptions.

Edwards and Billsberry (2010) identified two ways of disentangling the definitional problems intrinsic to the deconstructed mainstream approach. The first is to reconstruct fit from the various dimensions that have been theoretically separated out to form a multidimensional fit construct. Edwards and Billsberry (2010, p. 478) note that one of the primary motivations underpinning this method was to “move the field back to people’s overarching sense of fit (or misfit) by attempting to unite the various forms of fit.” The second method identified by Edwards and Billsberry (2010, p. 478) is to “study ‘fit’ as an undeconstructed construct”; this pertains to a person’s overall sense of fit (also known as perceived/*Gestalt* fit).

Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) supported the need for a multidimensional view by producing a framework that made a significant contribution to the understanding of multidimensional fit. In their theoretical model, they suggested that the five dimensions of fit (that is, PJ, PG, PP, PO, and PV) combine to form an overall multidimensional fit. They express this notion in the form of a formula that states that overall PE fit is the arithmetic sum of its various dimensions, that is, $PE\ Fit = PV + PJ + PO + PG + PP$ (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006).

Jansen & Kristof-Brown (2006) further noted that not all the dimensions have the same impact when determining an individual’s experience of overall fit and proposed that the influence of each dimension on the total experience of fit may well depend on the salience of each of these dimensions. Accordingly, a significant attempt at gaining a meaningful understanding of the multifaceted PE fit construct may lie in ascertaining those factors that could either escalate or reduce the salience of a specific dimension of fit. A wide range of individual, environmental and

temporal factors were identified as critical in determining which dimensions of fit will have the utmost impact on the experience of PE fit (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). A breakdown of these factors and their impact on the various dimensions of PE fit have been encapsulated by Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) in a multidimensional model as reproduced Figure 2.3.2.3(a) below.



The multidimensional PE fit framework in Figure 2.3.2.3(a) clearly illustrates that the five dimensions of fit (PV, PO, PG, PJ, and PP) combine to form an overall experience fit before impacting on work outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, withdrawal and adjustment. A notable feature of this model is the listing of the various individual, environmental and temporal factors that could affect the salience of the different dimensions of fit.

In terms of individual differences, research suggests that a person's previous work may be an important factor in determining how much weight is placed on the various aspects of fit (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002). It was reported that people who had previously been employed in a large number of companies tended to place

more focus on PO fit. On the other hand, those individuals who had a far greater work experience placed a higher emphasis on PJ fit (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002). Scaffolding on the aforementioned work of Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2002), Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) proposed that people high on agreeableness will focus on more interpersonal dimensions of fit (for example, PP, PG). In contrast, individuals high on conscientiousness will place a greater value on task-related dimensions of fit (for example, PJ).

Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) suggested that the strength of the organisational culture and the size and degree of formality of the environment were important environmental factors affecting the salience of fit dimensions. For example, it was noted that PO fit will be more salient in a company that has a robust culture. On the other hand, in an organisation that has a weak culture PG fit will become more prominent (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006).

It has been advocated that the different dimensions of fit will become more salient at different points in a person's work life-cycle (Adkins *et al.*, 1994). At the pre-recruitment stage, PV fit assumes prominence because at this point the debate is primarily around career counselling matters. During the job search and recruitment phase, a greater emphasis is placed on fitting in with job-related dimensions of the environment. As a consequence, PJ fit assumes primary importance. On arriving at the selection and job search stage, the job applicant is subjected to a variety of selection tools aimed at determining PJ fit. After the preliminary screening of PJ fit has been carried out on the job applicant, assessing for PO fit will be more than likely to kick in. The goal of achieving an ideal fit of the job incumbent is seldom realised at the selection stage. A considerable number of organisations rely on the benefits of socialisation as a technique to improve the level of fit of their new employees. Socialisation has been known to improve PJ fit through subjecting new incumbents to various training programmes to upgrade their skills. In addition, socialisation has been successful in improving PO fit by exposing the incumbent to

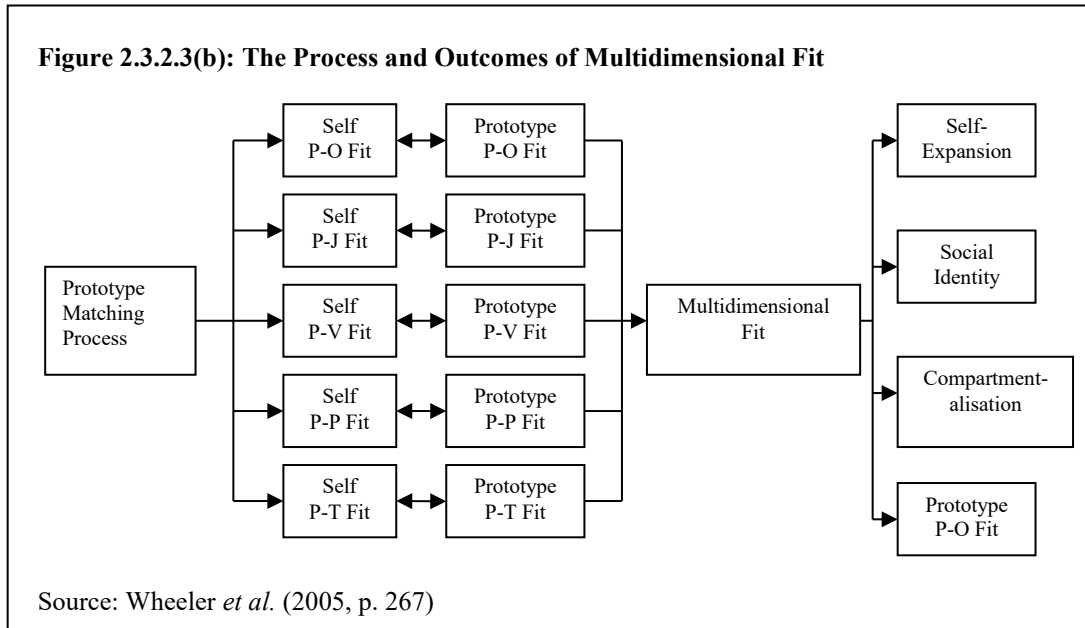
the organisation's vision, mission, values and culture (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006).

Wheeler *et al.* (2005) also support the notion that people assess their fit in multidimensional terms. Responding to a need to develop a comprehensive theory that clearly elucidates the combined effects of the multiple dimensions of fit identified, they proposed an integrative theory of multidimensional fit (MDF). Wheeler *et al.* (2005, p. 296) suggest that scholars should consider each dimension of fit as “describing a portion of the self-concept” rather than studying it as a “mutually exclusive construct”. They provide various examples that illustrate meaningful associations between the different dimensions of fit and the self-concept. For example, PO fit may involve a person's values or beliefs, which are strongly linked to their self-concept.

Wheeler *et al.* (2005) further introduced the concept of prototype matching as a mechanism to explain how individuals assess their fit across multiple dimensions in relation to the self-concept. The prototype matching process refers to “a social cognitive decision-making process in which individuals engage to guide behaviour in complex social situations” (Cantor, Mischel, & Schwartz, 1982; Niedenthal, Cantor, & Kihlstrom, 1985; Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994 as cited in Wheeler *et al.*, 2005, p. 276).

According to Cantor *et al.* (1982, p. 45 as cited in Wheeler *et al.*, 2005, p. 277) “research regarding prototype matching seeks to explain how the naive perceiver construes, categorises, and gives meaning to classes of social situations.” Cantor *et al.* (1982), Niedenthal *et al.* (1985), and Setterlund and Niedenthal (1993) as cited in Wheeler *et al.* (2005, p. 277) are of the opinion that, “in new or novel situations, individuals rely upon a set of features that are associated with the typical person likely to be found in a specific social setting. These sets of features associated with the situation are referred to as prototypes, and prototypes act as frames of reference that guide the expected behaviour of individuals.”

Wheeler *et al.*'s (2005) multidimensional fit framework is reproduced in Figure 2.3.2.3(b) on the next page.

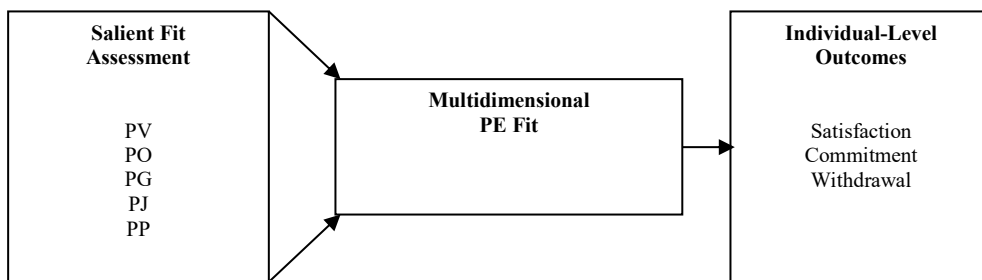


The framework presented in Figure 2.3.2.3(b), illustrates the process and outcomes of multidimensional fit as understood by Wheeler *et al.* (2005). When assessing his or her fit, an individual engages in prototype matching by comparing him or herself on various dimensions to the corresponding prototypes. The resulting dissonance (either over or under) on each fit dimension will combine to form multidimensional fit. Multidimensional fit in turn will impact on a person's self-esteem, social identity, and so forth.

Edwards and Billsberry (2010) set out to show that that the notion of multidimensional fit might not be an accurate description of the process of forming fit perceptions. They critiqued Jansen and Kristof-Brown's (2006) model on the basis that it failed to satisfactorily explain how the various dimensions of fit combine to form the multidimensional construct. They further set out to question whether people do indeed form an overarching sense of fit as proposed by Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) and Wheeler *et al.* (2005) or whether individuals'

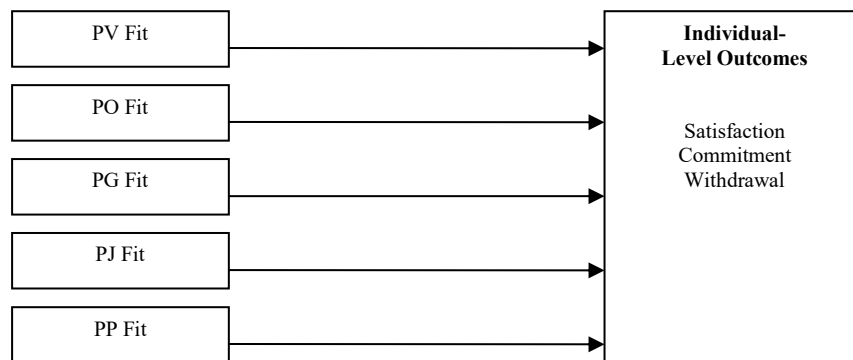
perceptions of fit are closely linked to salient features of the work environment. In their study exploring the nature of multidimensional fit, Edwards and Billsberry (2010) tested Jansen and Kristof-Brown's (2006) model (reproduced in Figure 2.3.2.3(c) below) against an alternative model (presented in Figure 2.3.2.3(d)).

Figure 2.3.2.3(c): Jansen and Kristof-Brown's (2006) higher multidimensional PE fit model showing long-term tenure relationships



Source: Edwards and Billsberry (2010, p. 479)

Figure 2.3.2.3(d): An alternative model of long-term tenure multidimensional fit assuming no overarching sense of fit



Source: Edwards and Billsberry (2010, p. 479)

The alternative model in Figure 2.3.2.3(d) proposed by Edwards and Billsberry (2010) is based on the findings of Kristof-Brown *et al.*'s (2002) study. In this alternative model, there is an absence of an overarching sense of fit; instead, the various dimensions of fit operate as separate predictors of job outcomes. This model lends support to the deconstructed approach to fit.

Testing these two models in an on-line survey on a sample of 1 875 US employees, Edwards and Billsberry's, (2010) findings support the alternative model with the separate dimensions of fit influencing the outcomes of commitment, intention to leave and satisfaction directly. These findings suggest that individuals who are employed in organisations for more than a year do not have an overarching sense of fit. In response to these results, Edwards and Billsberry (2010) succinctly pointed out that an individual engages in a complex set of cognitive process when deciding whether they fit in or not. At some tipping point, an individual conducts an evaluation of his/her predicament by searching "internally" for answers. This tipping point sets off a series of reactions and process in the mind of the individual.

The affected employee undertakes fit assessments with the various facets of the work environment within which he/her is embedded. These facets can pertain to a person's job, their co-workers or group members as well as the culture, goals, or values of the organisation they work for. The assessment of each of these dimensions is done independently by the affected individual and is used as such when making judgments about their level of fit. These various fit assessments of the job, co-workers and organisation are not combined by the individual to form an overarching sense of fit. This principal is exemplified by the research results of Edwards and Billsberry (2010) that showed that the individual dimensions of fit independently influence a variety of outcome variables such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and intention to leave. Moreover, this finding may shed light on why people find it challenging to speedily and accurately respond to a question of how well do they fit in. A far more enthusiastic and instantaneous

response is received when employees are questioned about their fit with their jobs, co-workers or organisations (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010).

Based on the classic argument put forward by Schneider (1987a, p. 442) that “while people may be attracted to a place, they may make errors, and finding they do not fit, they will leave”, Edwards and Billsberry (2010, p. 489) argue that “in effect, the overarching sense of fit becomes relevant during employment when it is in the negative that is, people leave when they become a misfit.” Talbot and Billsberry (2007a) have tentatively shown that “people who label themselves as ‘misfits’ have a clear understanding of their misfit” (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010, p. 489).

Bretz, Rynes, and Gerhart (1993) as cited in Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 559) make the assumption that “people are aware of how well they fit and are able, given the right cues, to express it.” Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 559) further note that, due to the elusiveness of the fit construct “people might not be fully conscious of their own fit.” Wachtel (1977) as cited in Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 559) argues that “peoples’ sense of fit is held at accessible, sub-threshold levels of consciousness.” This is deemed to be an intermediary type of consciousness and can be accessed to a certain extent with some effort. On the other hand, misfit is thought to be held at the conscious level, thus making it a lot easier to access (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005b).

Billsberry (2008, p. 1) in a conference paper titled: “Broad Sketches on Misfit as an Organisational Psychopathology” observes that “there is considerable doubt as to whether fit represents anything more than a generalised feeling towards the employing organisation.” He quotes Judge (2007), who questioned whether “fit is illusory and mostly a general impression that may say as much about a person’s general attitude towards his or her organisation” (Billsberry, 2008, p. 1).

Based on the premise that fit is “little more than a generalised measure of employees’ relationships with their employers”, Billsberry (2008, p. 1) suggested that fit can be seen as a measure of organisational wellness. He cogently argued that

if fit is viewed as a measure of wellness, then misfit may be viewed as an illness. Using this medical analogy he pointed out that “adopting this definition of misfit that positions the condition as an illness or as a psychopathology opens up a completely new research agenda” (Billsberry, 2008, p. 2).

Fit has also been examined as an undeconstructed construct. As pointed out earlier, this form of fit is known as perceived or *Gestalt* fit. Scholars in the UK have explored how deconstructed dimensions of fit (for example, PJ, PG and PO) relate to undeconstructed (perceived) fit. For example, Billsberry *et al.* (2005b) explored members’ perceptions of organisational fit in a non-directive way in a study conducted on a sample of university employees in the UK. Specifically, they examined whether the existing list of PE fit domains (or dimensions) is complete by constructing a taxonomy of people’s fit at work. This was accomplished using a combination of causal mapping and storytelling, an approach deemed appropriate for exploring a member’s sense of fit (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005b).

According to Daniels, De Chernatony, and Johnson (1995) and Huff (1990), “causal mapping is an often-used method to elicit perceptions, tacitly held beliefs and taken for granted assumptions” (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a, p. 3). The causal mapping process begins by requesting the participant to participate in a face-to-face interview at a location that is discrete and free of any distractions. The participant is informed about the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview at the outset. At the start of the interview, the participant is requested to reflect on issues that influence their fit and to unpack any factors that emerge. The participant is allowed to do so without any prompting from the researcher. As the items emerge and are discharged, the participant is asked to impart any stories, anecdotes or critical incidents that pertain to the issues unpacked. The participant is encouraged to share as many of these anecdotes as possible no matter how ridiculous they may appear to him/her. These stories assist the participant to meaningfully interpret his/her experiences and to inspire him/her to “open- up” and speak their mind (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a). The combination of casual mapping and storytelling in the same

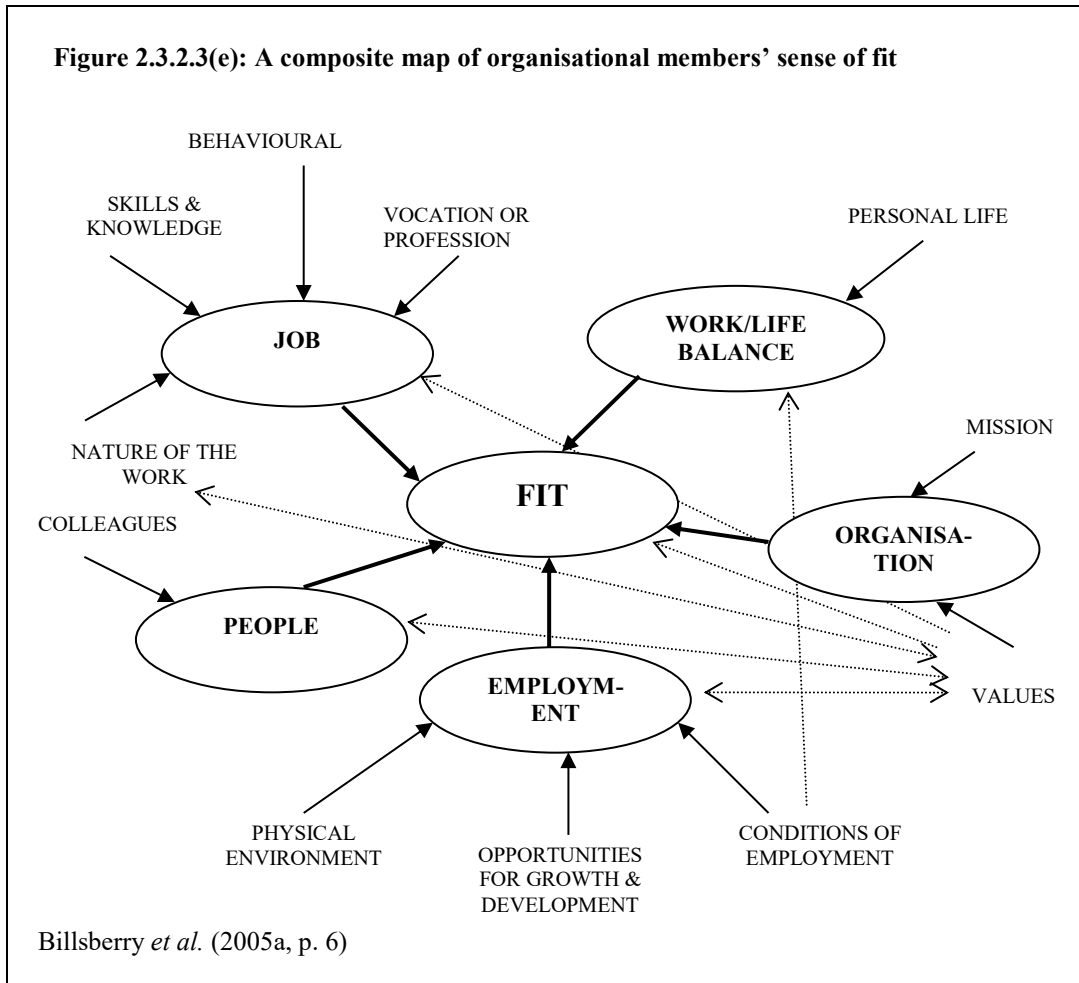
interview could assist in the acquisition of context-specific factors that relate to fit or misfit. This may ultimately assist in forming an exquisite portrait of this elusive fit construct (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a).

After analysing the results, it was reported that “five domains typically emerged as primary concepts linked directly to the central construct of ‘fit’” (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a, p. 4). These five domains pertain to the participants’ perceptions of fit with:

- “The people they work with,”
- “The requirements of the job,”
- “Organisational level matters,”
- “Conditions of employment,”
- “Work/life balance” (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a, p. 4).

The above first three domains have been recognised in the extant literature as PP fit, PJ fit and PO fit, respectively. However, the final two domains (that is, conditions of employment and work/life balance) have received scant attention. A particular strength of the causal mapping technique is that it “encourages participants to develop each domain and to surface various factors influencing it” (Billsberry, Ambrosini, Van Meurs, Coldwell, Marsh, & Moss-Jones, 2007, p. 2).

Thus, emanating from resulting maps and associated transcripts, the five domains were broken down into 13 sub-domains. These domains and sub-domains were put together in the form of a composite map as depicted in Figure 2.3.2.3(e). The dotted lines show the closely related domains and sub-domains.



Commenting on the results of their study, Billsberry *et al.* (2005a) observed that notwithstanding the fact that the sum total of all the domains highlighted in Figure 2.3.2.3(e) above appear germane to individuals' sense of fit, two emerge as predominantly significant. These include the individual's line manager and organisational values. It was reported that both these subdomains were cited whenever participants referred to the events triggering them to misfit. Remarkably, none of the participants recounted turning into a fit after previously being a misfit, thus persuading Billsberry *et al.* (2005a) to make an assumption that individuals do not initially join organisations being a misfit. Instead, they either fit in or appear impersonal on entering the workplace. As time proceeds and circumstances change, an individual employee could transform into a misfit.

The results of this study were also reported by Billsberry *et al.* (2007) in a conference paper titled: “What is this thing called fit?” Thus, the two studies by Billsberry *et al.* (2005 and 2007) lend support to the widely held view that a person’s sense of fit and misfit are highly complex multidimensional constructs (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a).

Talbot and Billsberry (2010) conducted a study to explore the differences between fit and misfit. Using causal mapping on a sample of 38 employees occupying a wide range of jobs, they found that the participants experienced misfit with some areas of the environment, yet fitted in strongly with other areas. According to Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 3), “this finding is relevant to the ways in which PE fit is measured and backs Edwards’ (2002) and Harrison’s (2007) concerns that combining various fit measurements into an overall fit score may give misleading results.”

Based on the above discussion, it is now widely accepted that people fit with several aspects of their work environment including the job, co-workers, teams, the organisation and vocation (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Wheeler, *et al.*, 2005). How these multiple dimensions of fit combine or whether they do combine to form an overarching sense of fit is still the subject of considerable research interest. Turning specifically to misfit, Talbot (2010, p. 8) notes that “the PE fit literature has tended to posit that misfit occurs where there is a lack of congruence between the person and the environment and as such, misfit is assumed to arise out of a mismatch between the individual’s and the organisation’s values, personality, skills or needs for example.”

Misfit and fit are assumed to be affected by many of the same PE fit dimensions. These dimensions of fit (PJ, PO, PV fit and so forth.) have been shown to be independent of one another (for example, Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002; Wheeler *et al.*, 2005). Based on this underlying logic, Talbot (2010, pp. 8 – 9) argued that misfit could be multidimensional and presented a series of propositions including

“people will describe their perceptions of PE fit and misfit according to known dimensions of PE fit and these dimensions will be independent of each other” and “Fit and misfit are multidimensional, that is, they are caused by multiple PE dimensions.” These propositions were tested by Talbot (2010) on a sample of 38 individuals using an idiographic causal mapping technique in one-on-one interview sessions. The findings partially supported the propositions suggesting that “fit and misfit are multidimensional, but mostly comprised of PJ, PO, PG, and person-supervisor (PS) dimensions of fit and people’s fit and links to their community” (Talbot, 2010, p. 9).

Billsberry and De Cooman (2010) in a conference paper titled “Definitions of Fit and Misfit in Northern Europe: Insights from a Cross-National Study” added a translational element to the definitional confusion in the misfit literature. They provocatively argued that the term misfit might “not be understood similarly across national, cultural and linguistic borders” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 5). The second author, Rein De Cooman (a Belgian resident, fluent in Dutch, French and German) spent a month in 2010 engaged in collaborative research on fit and misfit issues at the second author, Jon Billsberry’s (England resident, fluent in English only) UK laboratory. Although these authors were using the words ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’, during their communication, they meant different things.

The word misfit in particular generated considerable differences in the actual understanding of the term. For example, Jon Billsberry understood misfit to be “a negative, unwanted and unpleasant condition akin to a disorder such as stress and anxiety” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 2). He further likened misfit to a psychopathology (that is, an enduring and negative state of mind). In contrast, Rein De Cooman’s understanding of misfit had “fewer emotional connotations and was more about being an outsider of a group; a non-conformist” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 2). Notwithstanding the shortcomings of this study, the results highlight an aspect of misfit research that was not previously explored, namely,

how different people from different national, cultural and country borders define the concept differently.

Despite a recent increase in research exploring misfit, it remains a mysterious concept. As pointed out by several scholars (for example, Billsberry *et al.*, 2007; Billsberry *et al.*, 2005b; Talbot and Billsberry, 2007b), one of the main reasons has been the paucity of research on a member's own sense of misfit. The researcher is of the opinion that in order to gain more clarity on the definition, conceptualisation and boundaries of misfit, scholars need to invest more time and effort in understanding how individuals perceive and experience misfit, especially in countries where little misfit research has been undertaken.

It is possible that misfitting employees in such countries may have an idiosyncratic understanding of what the term misfit means, thus further enriching our knowledge in this field. Investigating how misfit is universally understood may make the term less elusive and more identifiable to those interested in researching this area in the future. This research study aims to fill this gap by exploring how employees perceive and experience misfit in South Africa, a country that has hitherto been neglected by organisational misfit scholars.

2.3.2.4 Factors Influencing Individuals' Sense of Misfit

In a conference paper titled: "What are the causes of organisational misfit?" Hollyoak (2010, p. 1) states that "we know quite a lot about fit, but very little about misfit." She goes on to argue that a decisive step into the future is to vigorously explore the essence of misfit and how it might be accurately defined. Thereafter, the decisive challenge will be to look at the attributed causes of not fitting in at work (Hollyoak, 2010). Notwithstanding these observations, research investigating the causes of misfit is still in its infancy.

2.3.2.4(a) Causal Mapping Studies

In the past few years, a group of researchers from the Fit Project in the UK have presented a series of conference papers that have attempted to present the factors that could possibly influence a person's sense of misfit at work. Talbot and Billberry (2007a) explored the differences between fit and misfit on a sample of 10 employees from a UK university's human resources (HR) department through in-depth interviews, in which causal mapping and a projective device known as the "Blob Tree" were used to elicit responses. The 10 causal maps produced were coded by looking at similar concepts across maps. The majority of participants identified "flexibility in their role" and "their hours of work" as factors that are important in assessing their sense of fit.

Turning to the causes of not fitting in, a large number of the respondents mentioned that, "frustration caused them to feel that they do not fit although this was not always caused by the same stimuli" (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a, p. 3). In addition more than one participant cited "a lack of feedback and decision making, meetings, others' negative behaviour, unfair treatment and politics" as factors causing them not to fit (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a, p. 3).

The analysis of the data identified 63 root causes of fit; these are reflected in Table 2.3.2.4(aa) on the next page. Twenty-seven percent pertained to people's jobs (for example, enjoying the job and nature of role), 25% related to the organisation (that is, the organisation's culture, policies, working practices, and so forth.), 16% stemmed from the individuals themselves (for example, previous experience, long term plans, religious faith, and so forth.), 11% pertained to colleagues, 11% applied to the work environment, 8% related to managerial issues and 2% to psychological states.

In the case of misfit, 44 root causes were identified by the participants, of which the majority originated from the organisation (36%) (that is, the organisation's culture,

policies and procedures) and management (25%) (that is,, managerial action or inaction for example, lack of support). Other root causes of misfit identified by the respondents stemmed from the individual (18%), colleagues (11%), and their jobs (9%).

Table 2.3.2.4(aa): Root causes of misfit and fit

Root Cause	Misfit (N = 44) %	Fit (N = 63) %
Organisational	36	25
Managerial	25	8
Individual	18	16
Colleagues	11	11
Job	9	27
Environment	-	11
Psychological States	-	2

Source: Talbot and Billsberry (2007a, p. 3)

Talbot and Billsberry (2007a, p. 3) note that “although the root causes described above are the prime causes for the individuals under study fitting or not fitting at work, they are not the only causes. There are chains of causes leading people to feeling that they fit or not.” Within these chains of causes, the respondents identified 168 causes of fit and 141 causes of misfit. These findings are summarised in Table 2.3.2.4(ab) below.

Table 2.3.2.4(ab): Causes of misfit and fit

Cause	Misfit (N = 141) %	Fit (N = 168) %
Organisational	33	27
Managerial	26	8
Individual	9	11
Colleagues & Team	11	10
Job	3	29
Environment	-	5
Work-Life Balance	-	4
Psychological States	18	6

Source: Talbot and Billsberry (2007a, p. 3)

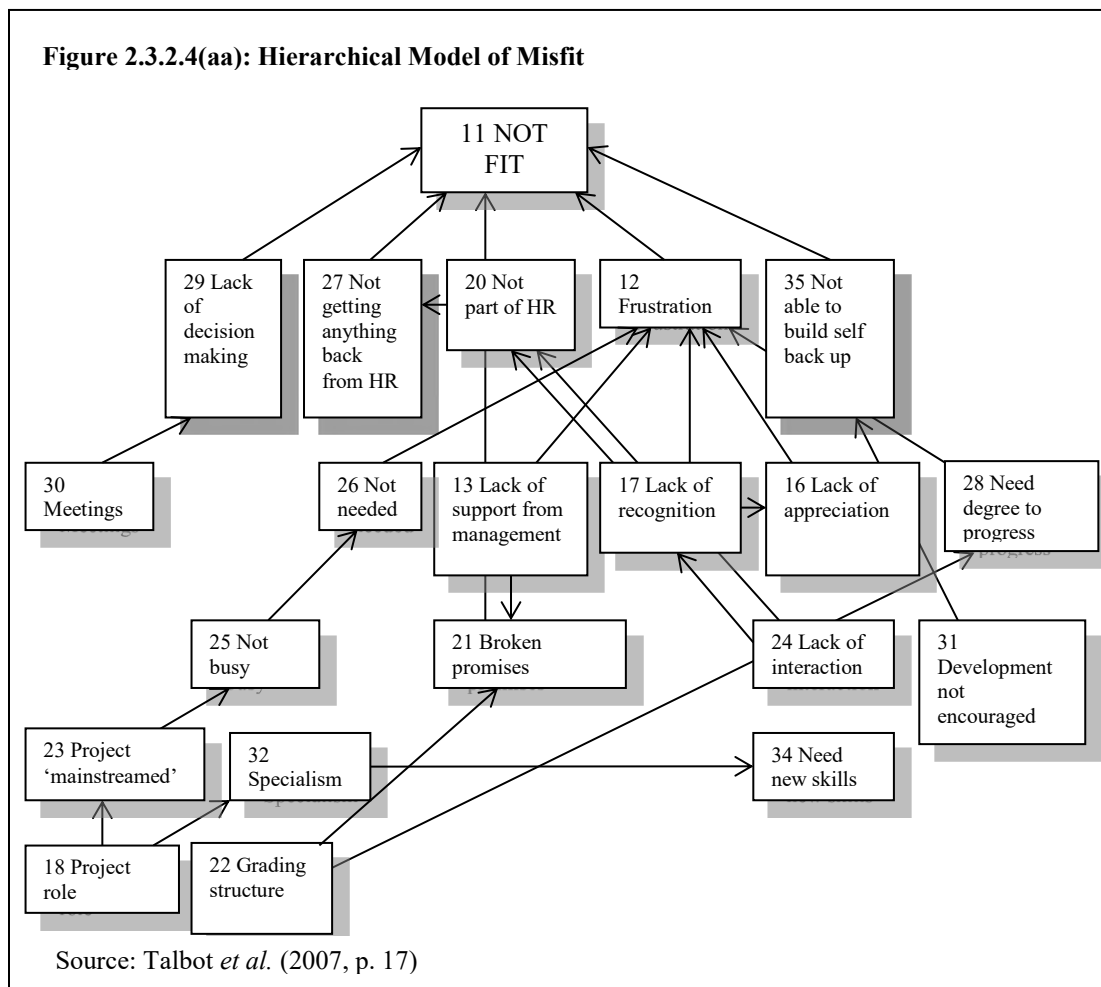
Table 2.3.2.4(ab) illustrates that 18% of the causes of misfit are related to psychological states or emotions. According to Talbot and Billsberry (2007a), the most-often cited emotion was “frustration”, mentioned by 70% of the respondents. Interestingly, psychological states (for example, positive emotions) comprised only 6% of the causes of fit. The nature of the individual’s work was infrequently mentioned as a cause of misfit (3%) in comparison to fit (29%). Of the total of 141 concepts presented as causes of misfit, seven also referred to factors causing fit and 18 were extreme opposites. The remaining 116 concepts (82%) were cited only in relation to misfit. With respect to fit, a total of 143 concepts were mentioned only in relation to fit (85%) and did not pertain to misfit (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a, p. 4).

In summary, Talbot and Billsberry (2007a, p. 4) established that “the antecedents of both fit and misfit are complex and numerous, confirming Billsberry *et al.*’s (2006) findings.” It was established that certain group of the attributed causal factors were common to both fit and misfit. In many instances however, there were factors specific to fit and misfit respectively thus creating an impression that there is very little overlap between these factors. More specifically, it was concluded that factors originating from the organisation and co-workers influenced both individuals’ perceptions of fit and misfit. On the other hand, the job factors had a robust impact on a person’s fit perceptions and a minor influence on misfit (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a).

The factors emanating from a person’s work environment and the phenomenon of work-life balance had a significant affect on fit but an insignificant or no influence on misfit. Contrary to popular belief, managers had an inconsequential role in engendering feelings of fit in employees. It was reported that managers were responsible for 8% of the root causes and 8% of the total causes of fit perceptions. In terms of misfit however, managers played a substantial part, being accountable for 25% of its root causes and 26% of its total causes (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a). It has yet to be established why certain factors gravitate towards influencing fit

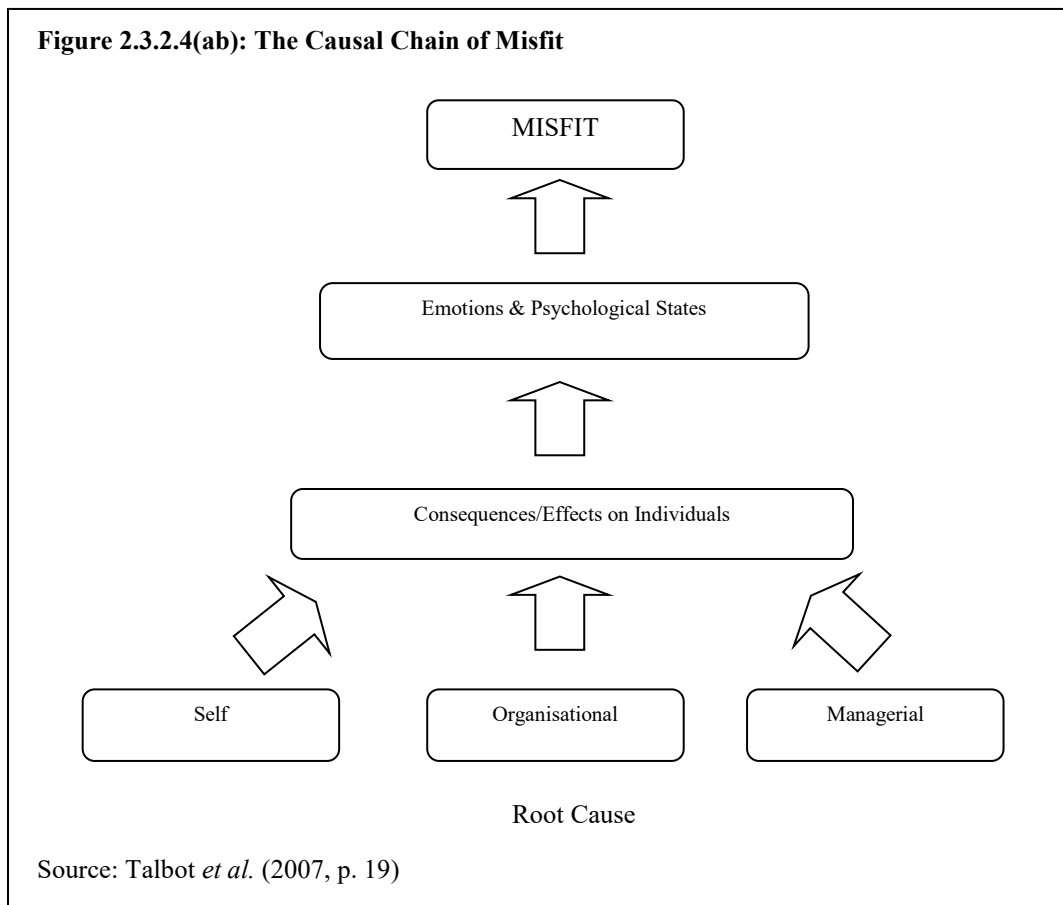
perceptions and a separate set of factors incline towards misfit. Perhaps this pattern lends support to Billsberry *et al.*'s (2005a) view that misfit might indeed be a qualitatively different construct to that of fit. In this regard, Talbot and Billsberry (2007a, p. 4) echoed similar sentiments by stating that “not all domains of fit are related to misfit and that individuals report largely different causes of fit and misfit, suggesting the two are separate states.”

The results of this study were also presented by Talbot *et al.* (2007) in a conference paper titled: “The Exploratory Study into the Construction of Employee Fit and Misfit.” A notable feature of this paper is the presentation of two hierarchical models reflecting causal maps for fit and misfit respectively. The causal map for misfit is reproduced in Figure 2.3.2.4(aa) below.



The hierarchical model reflected in Figure 2.3.2.4(aa) above, illustrates the causal chain that leads to people feeling that they do not fit in. For example, at the base of a misfit causal map, one typically finds organisational factors. Talbot *et al.* (2007, p. 8) provide an example of the grading structure in an organisation. In their study, the grading structure (an organisational factor) was found to be a root cause of an individual misfitting. As Talbot and Billsberry (2007a, p. 8) note, the grading structure “led to promises being broken” and this resulted in an individual “not feeling part of the HR division and becoming frustrated” (the generation of emotional or psychological states).

Another significant feature of this conference paper was the inclusion of a model that depicts the causal chain of misfit. This model is reproduced in Figure 2.3.2.4(ab) below.



Talbot *et al.* (2007, pp. 9 – 10) proposed that “there are sources of organisational misfit, originating mainly from organisational culture, policies or procedures and management interventions, but also from colleagues and the individuals’ own circumstances. These actions, behaviours and policies have effects on individuals which lead to emotions or psychological states” as illustrated in Figure 2.3.2.4(ab).

Continuing with this theme, Talbot and Billsberry (2010) presented a conference paper titled: “Comparing and Contrasting Person-Environment Fit and Misfit.” Based on a sample of 38 employees occupying a diverse range of jobs, causal maps were put together to show how these participants come to fit and misfit at work. The primary objective of the study was to “identify how employees’ experiences of fit and misfit differed and in what ways they shared similarities” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 3). The researchers compiled a coding schedule by using the extant measures (that is, PJ fit, PO fit, and so forth.) from the PE fit literature.

In addition, the coding schedule included job embeddedness measures and demographic factors. It was found that the majority of respondents’ causal map concepts could be coded using the PE fit dimensions previously established in the literature (68% for fit and 72% for misfit) leading Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 3) to conclude that “fit and misfit were similarly perceived to result primarily from interactions with the organisation, job and groups of co-workers, with person-supervisor, person-individual and person-vocation fit seemingly less important.”

The results also reflected that demographic factors were seldom mentioned, either in relation to fit or misfit perceptions, suggesting that neither fit or misfit result from individuals being similar or different on the bases of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and so forth. This finding concurs with both Elfenbein and O’Reilly (2007) and Jackson and Chung (2008) who argue that “a person’s fit or misfit in an organisation is not due to people being similar or different at a superficial level but rather that whether one fits or not is a deeper, psychological construct” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 3).

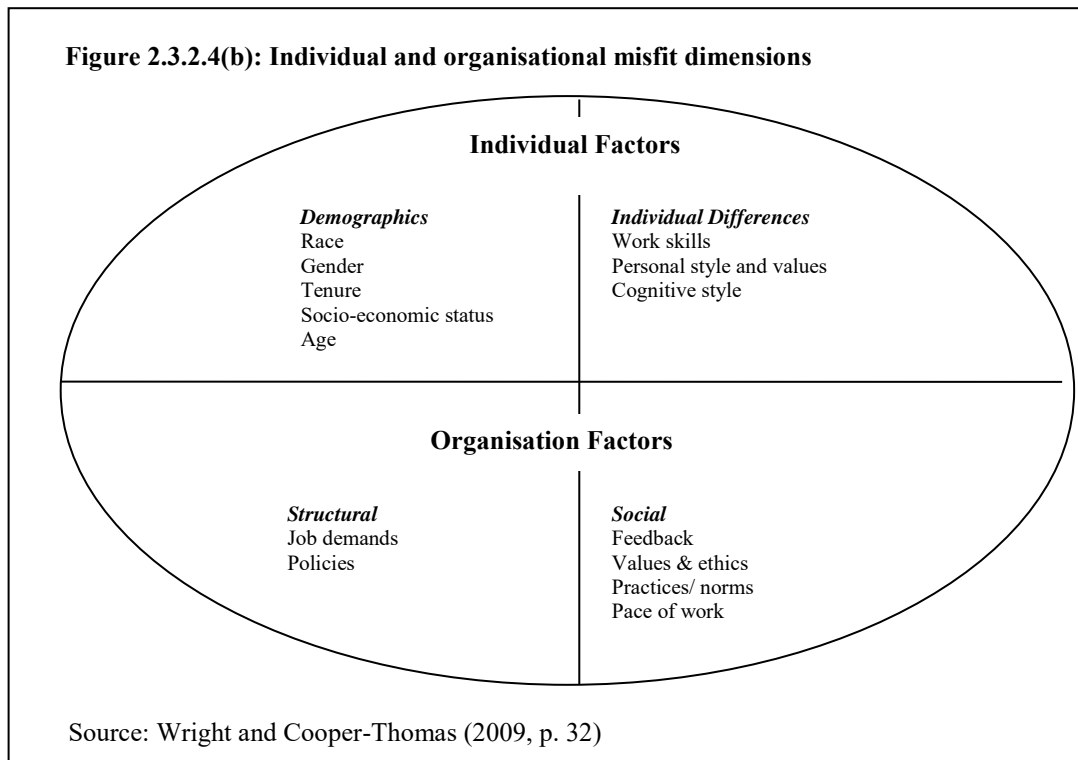
The study findings have revealed some important differences between fit and misfit. First, when speaking about their misfit perceptions, participants emphasised negative organisational and group factors whereas they cited positive job factors when talking about their fit at work. Second, strong perceptions of misfit were believed to be caused by poor organisational practices, mismanagement and imposed, petty bureaucracy.

On the other hand, alignment and subscription to the organisation's values were shown to cause perceptions of fit, albeit at lower levels. Third, job embeddedness dimensions, particularly links to their communities, were mentioned more often by those individuals' who perceived that they fitted in well at their workplaces. Fourth, regardless of whether participants were misfits or fitted in well at work, they tended to speak about misfit perceptions in the negative, whereas fit was positively phrased.

According to Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 2), "this supports the view that misfit is a negative experience (for example, Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005) and potentially stressful to individuals (Le Fevre *et al.*, 2003; Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Edwards, 2008)."

2.3.2.4(b) Integration of Literature

Empirical studies examining misfit have identified a number of dimensions along which misfit is possible. Based on an extensive review of the literature, Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009) divided these into personal and organisational factors as illustrated in Figure 2.3.2.4(b) on the next page:



2.3.2.4(c) Demographic Dissimilarity

Research has shown that misfit on demographic variables (for example, age, gender and race) represents a significant surface-level dimension influencing a person's sense of misfit. For example, Chattopadhyay (1999) investigated the impact of demographic dissimilarity on organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Demographic dissimilarity in this study refers to "the differences between a focal employee and his or her peers in terms of demographic characteristics such as race, sex, or age" (Chattopadhyay, 1999, p. 273). The demographic data for the respondents were obtained from their organisational records. In order to assess demographic dissimilarity, a type of surface-level misfit, Chattopadhyay (1999, p. 278) calculated each type of demographic dissimilarity (that is, race, age, and gender) as the "difference between a focal employee and all of his or her peers on a specific demographic characteristic using Tsui, Egan, and O'Reilly (1992) formula: the square root of the summed squared differences between an individual's value

on a specific demographic variable and the value on the same variable for all peers is divided by the total number of employees in a work group.”

In another study investigating surface-level misfit, Sacco and Schmitt (2005) examined an employee’s demographic misfit in relation to co-workers’ demographics as a predictor of turnover risk over time. The respondent sample included restaurant employees from quick service restaurants across the US. Similar to Chattopadhyay (1999), demographic dissimilarity on race, age and gender was ascertained. Blau’s (1987) index of heterogeneity was used to calculate a racial diversity indicator for each restaurant. According to Sacco and Schmitt (2005, p. 208), “this index varies from 0 to 1 asymptotically, and higher values indicate heterogeneity.” The restaurant-level composition with regard to gender was captured as the proportion of women and age was calculated as the mean crew member age within a given restaurant.

2.3.2.4(d) Minorities in the Workplace

Lovelace and Rosen (1996) explored whether the experiences of white male managers, white female managers, African-American managers, and Hispanic managers are similar with respect to the achievement of fit. They proposed that “because of the differences in cultural, life, and organisational experience, minority managers may perceive that they fit in less well within their organisation than do other managers” (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996, p. 704). It was also further proposed that “many women may perceive that they fit less well in a predominantly white male environment than do their male colleagues because they have different outside interests, different definitions of appropriate work-family balance, different communication styles, and different definitions of career success” (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996, p. 704).

This study also addressed an important area in fit and misfit, namely, the role of feedback in learning about fit and misfit, an area that hitherto has been under-

researched. Direct feedback (that is, obtained through questions or direct verbal or written feedback) was considered to be a far more valid source of information in learning about fit or misfit than environmental monitoring (which is subject to all sorts of perceptual and interpretational errors) (Ashford & Tsui, 1991 as cited in Lovelace & Rosen, 1996, p. 705). Thus, Lovelace and Rosen (1996, p. 706) suggested that “overall, individuals who obtain less direct feedback should, over time, perceive that they fit less well with their organisation. That is because people who do not get enough direct feedback might have less information on which to make the necessary adjustments to improve their fit and enhance their promotional opportunities.” The results revealed that African-American managers reported achieving significantly poorer fit compared to the white male, white female and Hispanic managers. It was noted however, that race and gender explained a relatively small amount of the variance in perceived fit.

2.3.2.4(e) Personality-Based Dissimilarities

Surface-level dimensions have also been studied in conjunction with deeper-level factors (for example, personality, values, and so forth.). For example, Liao, Joshi, and Chuang (2004) examined demographic- and personality-based dissimilarities in relation to organisational and interpersonal deviant behaviours. This study was carried out on a sample of 286 employees from 26 franchised stores of a US mid-west family-style restaurant chain. Demographic dissimilarity was based on age, ethnicity and gender. The personality dissimilarity dimensions include conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience. In order to create the demographically- and personality-based dissimilarity variables, each individual respondent’s demographics regarding gender, ethnicity and age, as well as the individual’s personality traits was assessed. Individual differences in terms of the demographic and personality dimensions relative to his or her co-workers formed the basis of the individual dissimilarity measures used in this study. Individual dissimilarity to the group was operationalised as “a Euclidean distance measure that is the square root of the

average squared distance of an individual relative to all other members of the group” (Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989 as cited in Liao *et al.*, 2004, p. 982).

2.3.2.4(f) Cognitive Style Mismatches

Deeper-level factors such as a person’s misfit on cognitive style and values have also been found to be important dimensions influencing an individual’s sense of misfit. Misfitting on a person’s cognitive style was investigated by Chan (1996). Cognitive misfit here refers to “the degree of mismatch between an individual’s cognitive style of problem solving and the predominant style demands of the work context” (Chan, 1996, p. 198). Associations among cognitive misfit, performance and actual turnover after a period of three years were examined in a sample of 253 entry-level engineers employed in the Singaporean civil service. According to Chan (1996, p. 195), “cognitive misfit is a cross-level construct derived from the individual level construct of cognitive style based on Kirton’s Adaption-Innovation Theory (KAI). The KAI theory proposes that individuals can be located on a continuum of cognitive style of problem-solving and decision-making ranging from adaption to innovation.”

Chan (1996) further contends that cognitive misfit may occur in instances where a person with an adaptive cognitive style resides in a working environment that places high demands on innovation or creativity. Highly innovative work environments are usually housed in the research and development department of an organisation. In this context, the level of cognitive misfit escalates with the increase in a person’s adaptive style. Cognitive misfit may also exist when an individual on the innovative end of the continuum of cognitive problem styles resides in an environment that places high demands on adaptation. A typically example of this environment is the staff function of the organisation. This function is traditionally known to support the organisations primary functions and reside in finance, administration and HR. A considerable number of issues dealt with in these departments deal with softer organisational matters such as change management,

culture and adaptation. Highly creative employees working in these staff functions often feel that they are wasting their talents and in some instances feel like they do not fit in. In these circumstances, the degree of cognitive misfit rises with increases in individual innovative style (Chan, 1996).

Thus in this study, the cognitive style of each participant was measured using the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (Kirton, 1976, 1977). This measure comprises 32 items, each with a 1 to 5 response range (that is, 32 to 160 possible KAI score range). Low scores achieved by the respondents correspond towards the adaptive end and the high scores designate styles toward the innovative end of the continuum. The predominant style demands in the work context were derived by looking at where the new entry-level engineers were posted in the Singaporean civil service. New entry-level engineers were either posted to the research and development (R&D) engineering function or the staff engineering function in a random manner. The core job tasks in the R&D engineering function were closely related to technological innovation and development (that is, predominant in innovation demands). In contrast, the core job tasks in the staff engineering function involve aspects of production and maintenance (that is, predominant in adaption demands). Cognitive misfit in this study was measured using a moderated logistic regression technique as opposed to the calculation of difference scores.

Building on the work of Ho and Rogers (1993) and Chan (1996), Fuller and Kaplan (2004), investigated the effects of auditor cognitive style and task characteristics on auditor's task performance. Cognitive misfit in this study was defined as "a lack of fit between a person's cognitive style and task characteristics" (Fuller & Kaplan, 2004, p. 131). In contrast to Chan's (1996) study, this study used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to measure the auditors' cognitive styles. The MBTI was used in prior studies involving accountants/auditors and proved to be a valid and reliable measure. The cognitive style component of the MBTI consists of two independent bipolar dimensions: perception and judgment (Keen & Bronsema, 1981).

Fuller and Kaplan (2004) emphasise the prominence of perception and judgment as dimensions by affirming that the way in which an individual perceives incoming information is through perception which is affixed by sensation and intuition. Individuals who belong to the sensors category desire facts while intuitives favour possibilities. The decision-making process is characterised by judgment which is secured by thinking and feeling. People branded as thinkers depend on rational processes of association in contrast to feelers who rely on rational comparisons (Myers & McCaulley, 1985 as cited in Fuller & Kaplan, 2004).

The combination of the two aforementioned dimensions (that is, perception and judgment) yields four cognitive styles. According to Fuller and Kaplan (2004) when the characteristics of the dimensions are alike, an individual can have an intuitive or an analytic style. A person possesses a hybrid style when the characteristics of the dimensions are not aligned. Based on this logic, Fuller and Kaplan (2004, p. 133) categorised auditors as possessing an “analytic, intuitive, or hybrid cognitive style.” The participating auditors in this study were required to complete two audit tasks (that is, to assess the task requirements), a debriefing questionnaire, and the MBTI (that is, to assess cognitive style).

In a more recent study, Cools *et al.* (2009) examined the consequences of cognitive misfit in a study conducted on Belgian employees. All participants completed a cognitive style measure which was based on the Cognitive Style Indicator (CoSI), an 18-item questionnaire developed by Cools and Van den Broeck (2007). The CoSI distinguishes between three different cognitive styles: a knowing style, a planning style, and a creating style. A knowing style, for example, is prevalent in people who prefer facts and details. On the other hand, a planning style is dominant in people who prefer structure and order. Individuals possessing a creative style see problems as avenues for further opportunities and challenges. They have a preference for “creative, unconventional, and flexible ways of decision making” (Cools *et al.*, 2009, p. 170). Cognitive misfit in this study was conceptualised by

comparing a person's cognitive style and the prevalent cognitive climate in their respective organisations.

2.3.2.4(g) Value Dissimilarities

Misfit between individuals' values and that of their organisations is also found to be an important factor influencing people's sense of misfit. In this regard, Robert and Wasti (2002) explored whether or not misfit can predict organisational outcomes beyond fit alone. Low fit or misfit, according to Robert and Wasti (2002, p. 548), "is experienced by an individual who strongly endorses a set of values and believes that their organisational culture does not support the same." These authors focused on idiocentrism and allocentrism which are known to be individual-level manifestations of individualistic and collectivist values. They hypothesised that "attitudes will be relatively positive when an individual is high on allocentrism or idiocentrism, and high on the parallel dimension of organisational individualism and collectivism (fit), and will be relatively negative when an individual is high on allocentrism or idiocentrism, and high on the contrasting dimension of organisational individualism or collectivism (misfit)" (Robert & Wasti, 2002, p. 548).

Siegall and McDonald (2004) examined the impact of value incongruence on burnout on a sample of 135 university employees in the US. Drawing on the principles of Maslach and Leiter's (1997) model of burnout that focuses on the incongruence between the employee and the job in terms of workload, reward, fairness and values, Siegall and McDonald (2003) hypothesised that the greater the mismatch (that is, misfit) between a person's values and the organisation's, the more burnout a person will experience. Value mismatch (or misfit) was assessed using a perceived PO fit scale. Participants were required to complete a 2-item scale that asked whether they agreed, in general, with the values of their university and whether their work-related goals and those of their universities had diverged (reversed scored) in the past few months.

In a further study that focused on value misfit, Bouckenooghe, Buelens, Fontaine, and Vanderheyden (2005), examined value conflict (that is, value misfit) and its prediction of stress. A sample of 400 Flemish workers representing a wide variety of occupations (for example, police officers, bank clerks, teachers, manufacturing employees, and so forth.) responded to a questionnaire. Value conflict was assessed using a 3-item, 5-point Likert type scale developed by these authors. Participants were required to state how strongly they disagreed or agreed with: a) whether their personal values sometimes conflict with the values in their jobs or functions, b) whether their personal values are sometimes in conflict with their organisational values, and c) whether they must compromise their values at work.

Wheeler *et al.* (2005) considered the link between PO value misfit and turnover in a sample of 198 full-time employees using a web-based survey. Here, PO value misfit was conceptualised as being the polar opposite of PO fit and was measured accordingly using an adapted version of Lauver and Kristof-Brown's (2001) 3-item perceived fit scale. Participants were required to indicate how well their values matched or fit the values of their organisations. Low scores on these items were equated to low fit or misfit. Wheeler *et al.* (2005, p. 203) note that "the phenomenon of misfit is understudied in the larger context of PO fit."

Hobman and Bordia (2006) explored the association between value dissimilarity and conflict in work teams on a sample of 165 Master of Business Administration (MBA) students. They posited that "when individuals have different work values to other team members, they may be perceived as being less prototypical of the team, especially if the type of value is a defining characteristic of the team" (Hobman & Bordia, 2006, p. 487). The values were measured using an adapted version of the Organisational Culture Profile (OCP) (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991) consisting of the following value dimensions: "innovation and creativity; organisation and attention to detail; achievement and high expectations; opportunities and competitiveness; sharing information and being supportive; academic as opposed to professional growth; collaboration and teamwork; and decisiveness" (Hobman & Bordia, 2006,

p. 491). The respondents were given these value dimensions and were required to rank the values from 1 (highest guiding value) to 8 (lowest guiding value) in terms of how important they were when they approached an assignment or project. Value dissimilarity (or value misfit) was computed by selecting “the highest guiding value for each individual” (Hobman & Bordia, 2006, p. 491). This highest guiding value was then compared against “other team member’s ranking on this value and substituted in the dissimilarity formula” (Hobman & Bordia, 2006, p. 491).

Naus *et al.* (2007) examined the relationship between value incongruence and organisational cynicism in a sample of 174 Dutch workers. Drawing on the work of Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins (1989) and Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998), five values (that is, achievement, helping and concern for others, fairness, honesty and integrity) were used to create profiles of the participants’ personal values and their perceptions of their companies. Naus *et al.* (2007) highlighted the point previously made by Edwards (1993) and Edwards and Parry (1993), that the measurement of incongruency (or misfit) using profile similarity indices and difference scores has generated controversy. Thus, in order to avoid the problems associated with these methods, polynomial regression was used to test the incongruence effects.

Dbaibo *et al.* (2010, p. 706) noted that “no study has investigated the effects of perceived incongruence between colleagues on 10 individual-level value types proposed by Schwartz (1994).” Thus, using an adapted version of Schwartz’s (1994, 2002) Basic Human Values Scale on a sample of 362 employees from Beirut, Lebanon, Dbaibo *et al.* (2010) investigated whether value incongruence and organisational justice predicted perceived stress. More specifically, they proposed that “perceived value incongruence on the security, self-direction, honor-hospitality, and benevolence value types between colleagues will predict stress” (Dbaibo *et al.*, 2010, p. 707). Value incongruence in this study is defined as “the incompatibility of one’s values with those prevailing in the environment” (Dbaibo *et al.*, 2010, p. 705).

According to Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005) as cited in Dbaibo *et al.*, (2010, p. 705), the value mismatch or incongruence slant has become “widely accepted as the defining operationalization of PO fit” and was consistently demonstrated to predict a variety of individual and organisational outcomes. Value incongruence was assessed by asking respondents to provide ratings for their perceived own values and for the perceived values of typical other colleagues employed in their organisation. Thus, the “differences between the endorsed ‘self’ scores and those endorsed for ‘others’, are indicative of value incongruence or misfit” (Dbaibo *et al.*, 2010, p. 709).

The authors discounted the use of polynomial regression to explore predictor effects because it was not deemed effective when there is more than one predictor variable as is the case in this study (that is, value incongruence and justice). Following the advice of Schwartz (1994), on the use of a total value mean per participant as a covariate in statistical analyses to reduce the risk of multicollinearity, Dbaibo *et al.* (2010, p. 710) calculated the total mean for value incongruence for each participant by “taking the square root of the sum of squared mean self-other differences for 11 value types.” These 11 value incongruence variables were then standardised by “dividing difference scores by the total mean as recommended by Schwartz (1994)” (Dbaibo *et al.* 2010, p. 710). Thus, the 11 standardised value type incongruencies were used to examine which of the discrepancies in the value types are the best predictors of stress as proposed by the authors of this study.

2.3.2.4(h) DA Mismatches

A misfit between an individual’s skills and abilities and that required by their job is another important dimension identified by the literature as influencing misfit. For example, Simmering *et al.* (2003) examined employee development and its relationship with conscientiousness and person environment misfit (in terms of needs and supplies of autonomy) in a longitudinal study on a sample of 83

managers enrolled in an executive MBA program at Michigan State University. They argued that “conscientious individuals should be more likely to engage in development, particularly when they are experiencing person-environment misfit” (Simmering *et al.*, 2003, p. 954). Autonomy has been identified as an important facet of fit and is defined as “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out” (Hackman & Oldham, 1980, p. 79 as cited in Simmering *et al.*, 2003, p. 956). According to Simmering *et al.* (2003, p. 957) misfit can exist “when an employee has too little autonomy and when an employee has too much autonomy.”

The autonomy needs of the participants were assessed using a 5-item scale, based on the independence subscale of the Work Aspect Preference Scale (Pryor, 1998). This scale measured the amount of autonomy the respondents felt was acceptable in their current jobs. Autonomy supplies were assessed using the same Work Aspect Preference Scale (Pryor, 1998), which was adapted to measure the amount of autonomy the respondents felt was present in their current jobs. These two fit components (that is, autonomy needs and autonomy supplies) were used as separate components in the moderated regression techniques when testing the study hypotheses. This approach was used instead of computing difference scores for misfit. The use of difference scores had been previously criticised by scholars such as Edwards (1994) and Edwards & Parry (1993) for having “poor reliability, questionable construct validity, and difficulties in interpretability” (Simmering *et al.* 2003, p. 958).

2.3.2.4(i) SV Mismatches

Shaw and Gupta (2004) investigated the impact of supplies-values misfit on somatic complaints and depression. Supplies-values misfit was conceptualised as “the incongruence between the desired level of a certain task characteristic (values) and the level of that characteristic available in the job (supplies)” (Kristof, 1996 as

cited in Shaw & Gupta, 2004, p. 848). Values have been defined as “the conscious desires held by the person” (Edwards & Parry, 1993, p. 294 as cited in Shaw & Gupta, 2004, p. 848) and are “typically defined operationally as preferences or interests, although they can also include motives and goals” (Shaw & Gupta, 2004, p. 848). On the other hand, supplies refer to “the amount, frequency, or qualities of the job characteristic at issue – for this study, the amount of complexity on the job” (Shaw & Gupta, 2004, p. 848). Thus, the degree of misfit was assessed by firstly measuring the participants’ perceived job complexity with a 3-item scale adapted from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1983) and secondly, by measuring the respondents’ preference for job complexity using a continuous dependent-response rating line (Russell & Bobko, 1992). Polynomial regression was used to test the misfit effects.

2.3.2.4(j) Competencies-Demands Mismatches

More recently, Trautmann *et al.* (2011) examined the misfit between workers’ competencies and job demands as a predictor of job performance. This study was conducted on a sample of 103 employees and 15 supervisors from a production company in Germany. The authors ensured that all aspects of job-related requirements and abilities of workers were covered. They enquired about “demands and abilities regarding auditory, visual, and sensory perception, motor control, and physical adaptivity, as well as meta-competencies like task learning, task complexity and attention” (Trautmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 341). Participant employees were required to fill out a 32-item questionnaire consisting of two parts for: a) self-rated job requirements, and b) individual abilities. In addition, the supervisors were requested to provide their ratings on the abilities of their employees using the same dimensions previously mentioned. The impact of fit or misfit on task performance, self-efficacy and job satisfaction was assessed using a regression model that “included interactions, of self-rated demands and abilities, self- and supervisor ratings of abilities respectively” (Trautmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 342).

2.3.2.4(k) Motivational Style-Job Demands Incongruences

Previous research has also shown that the incongruence between a person's motivational style and type of job demands is an important factor in influencing a person's sense of misfit. Blix and Lee (1991) undertook a study to investigate occupational stress among university administrators at California State University in the US. The effects of a misfit between the university administrators' motivational style and the type of jobs on occupational stress, was examined. Motivational styles were conceptualised using Porter's (1976) typology that posits the existence of three basic motivational styles.

Firstly, the altruistic-nurturing style, which is based on "the need to be helpful and characterises an individual who is most rewarded by nurturing and genuinely helping another" (Blix & Lee, 1991, p. 290). Secondly, the assertive-directive style, which is based on "the need for action and challenge"; this characterises a person who is rewarded by "being the leader and achieving goals" (Blix & Lee, 1991, pp. 290 – 291). Thirdly, the analytic-autonomising style, which refers to "the need for self-control, certainty, and predictability" and portrays an individual who is most rewarded by being "autonomous, self-reliant, and self-sufficient" (Blix & Lee, 1991, p. 291). Thus, it has been submitted that mutually beneficial relationships are favoured to transpire in situations where a person is rewarded for his/her principal motivational style. It has been recognised that that each work context has an inimitable set of demands and these demands may be incongruent to what an individual desires. Thus, a situation may develop wherein a person's needs remain unmet by this environment. In a perfect situation, the needs of an employee person will be in congruence with the rewards associated with the job. Accordingly, this utopian state will lead to a perfect fit (Blix & Lee, 1991).

The findings tentatively showed that there was a link between misfit and a variety of subjective stress symptoms. For example, participants who were considered misfits, experienced more stress in the workplace, battled to cope with workplace

stress and had a higher inclination to search for other employment (Blix & Lee, 1991).

2.3.2.4(l) Out of Synchrony with General Pace of Social Environment

Misfit has also been demonstrated as being influenced by being in and out of sync with the general pace of the social environment at work. In this regard, Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2005) examined how fit and misfit between individual and aggregate work group hurriedness impact on satisfaction, psychological strain, and citizenship behaviour. This study was carried out on a sample of 409 employees of a furniture production company in the Mid-Atlantic region in the US. Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2005, p. 93) affirm that “there are also recognizable rhythms in the work environment which become part of the context within which individuals perform their day-to-day work activities.” They provide examples of cycles such as “work schedules” (for example, Pierce & Dunham, 1992), “the flow of work” (for example, Doerr, Mitchell, Klastorin, & Brown, 1996), and “the pace or general hurriedness of those around us” (for example, Levine, 1988) that may have an impact on “satisfaction”, “productivity” and “selection into (or out of) the environment” (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005, p. 93).

McGrath, Kelly, and Machatka (1984) as cited in Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2005, pp. 93 – 94) suggested that “compatibility (or lack thereof) between individual and work environment rhythms has widespread and crucial implications for affect, cognition and behaviour.” In this study, individual hurriedness was measured using a “subset of Landy *et al.*’s (1991) time urgency items” (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005, p. 97). Work group hurriedness was computed by “aggregating the individual hurriedness scores within the work group” (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005, p. 97). The hypotheses were tested using polynomial regression and three dimensional surface plots (Edwards, 1993, 1994; Edwards & Parry, 1993).

2.3.2.4 (m) Personality-Cultural Mismatches

A mismatch between aspects of a person's personality and the organisation's culture is another dimension that has been considered important when forming misfit perceptions. In one of the first studies that attempted to investigate misfit, Chatman and Barsade (1995) explored the personal and situational sources of cooperation by contrasting behaviour under conditions of personality fit and misfit with an organisation's culture in an organisational simulation. These researchers assessed MBA students' disposition to cooperate and randomly assigned them to simulated companies that either emphasised collectivist or individualistic cultural values. Chatman and Barsade (1995, p. 424) argue that "a person with a high disposition to cooperate places priority on associating with others for mutual benefit, gaining social approval, and working together with others toward a common end or purpose, while a person with a low disposition to cooperate places priority on maximising his or her own welfare regardless of others' welfare."

Personal cooperativeness, as specifically examined in this study, is "a single-dimension personality characteristic varying from high personal cooperativeness, at one extreme, to low personal cooperativeness, or individualism, at the other extreme" (Chatman & Barsade, 1995, p. 424). From the organisational perspective, an equivalent construct is "the extent to which organisational cultures emphasise individualistic or collectivist values" (Chatman & Barsade, 1995, p. 424).

2.3.2.4(n) Image Discrepancies

Image discrepancy has also been established as a significant factor in determining an individual's sense of misfit. In this regard, Takase, Kershaw, and Burt (2001) investigated nurses' responses to the image discrepancy between the public and nurses, and its associations with their self-concept, job satisfaction and performance. A sample of 82 registered nursing students at a university in Western Australia participated in the study. Here, misfit was conceptualised as "the

discrepancy between the perceived public image of nurses and nurses' self-concept" (Takase *et al.*, 2001, p. 822) and was computed by "subtracting the scores of the nurses' self-concept from corresponding scores of their perception of the public image" (Takase *et al.*, 2001, p. 822). The results indicate the existence of an incongruity in the images of the nursing profession, which can contribute to misfit.

2.3.2.4(o) Vocational Mismatches

Holland's (Holland, 1962, 1968, 1985a) vocational theory posits that vocational fit entails the congruence between an individual's personality and the occupational requirements of the job. Vocational misfit (that is, a mismatch between an employee's personality and the occupational requirements of the job) has been demonstrated to be an important dimension influencing a person's misfit perceptions. Cluskey and Vaux (1997) examined vocational misfit as a source of occupational stress in a sample of 188 management accountants employed in a heavy equipment manufacturing company in the Midwest region of the US. As noted by these authors, the typical vocational path of management accountants entails "rotation through disparate positions" (Cluskey & Vaux, 1997, p. 43) and this "puts these professionals at risk for episodes of vocational misfit" (Cluskey & Vaux, 1997, p. 43). It was found that on average, the management accountants sampled in this study had been with their organisation for almost 13 years but in their current position for approximately two years. The results also showed that 40% of the sample of management accountants met Holland's (1985b) criteria for vocational misfit.

Recently, Ford (2012) explored job-occupation misfit as an occupational stressor in a large heterogeneous sample of employees in a variety of occupations and organisations in the US. Job-occupation misfit was defined as "the misfit between the job characteristics and those typical of one's occupational role" (Ford, 2012, p. 412). Dierdorff, Rubin, and Morgeson (2009, p. 974) as cited in Ford (2012, p. 412) defined an occupation as "a collection of work roles with similar goals that require

the performance of distinctive activities as well as the application of specialised skills or knowledge to accomplish these goals.” Common trends in organisations suggest that jobs within the same occupational title can differ considerably across organisations (Ford, 2012). For example, not all accountants compile tax returns and not all human resource managers handle payroll.

According Ford (2012, p. 412) “this deviance from occupational roles has the potential to create strain for workers whose expectations are not met, training does not match the job requirements, and preferences differ from the attributes of the job.” Using aspects of “theory on met expectations, PE fit, and social information processing, the incongruence (or misfit) between the pressure and autonomy experienced by workers and that which would be expected given their occupational roles was investigated as a predictor of job satisfaction, perceived occupational stress and depression” (Ford, 2012, p. 412).

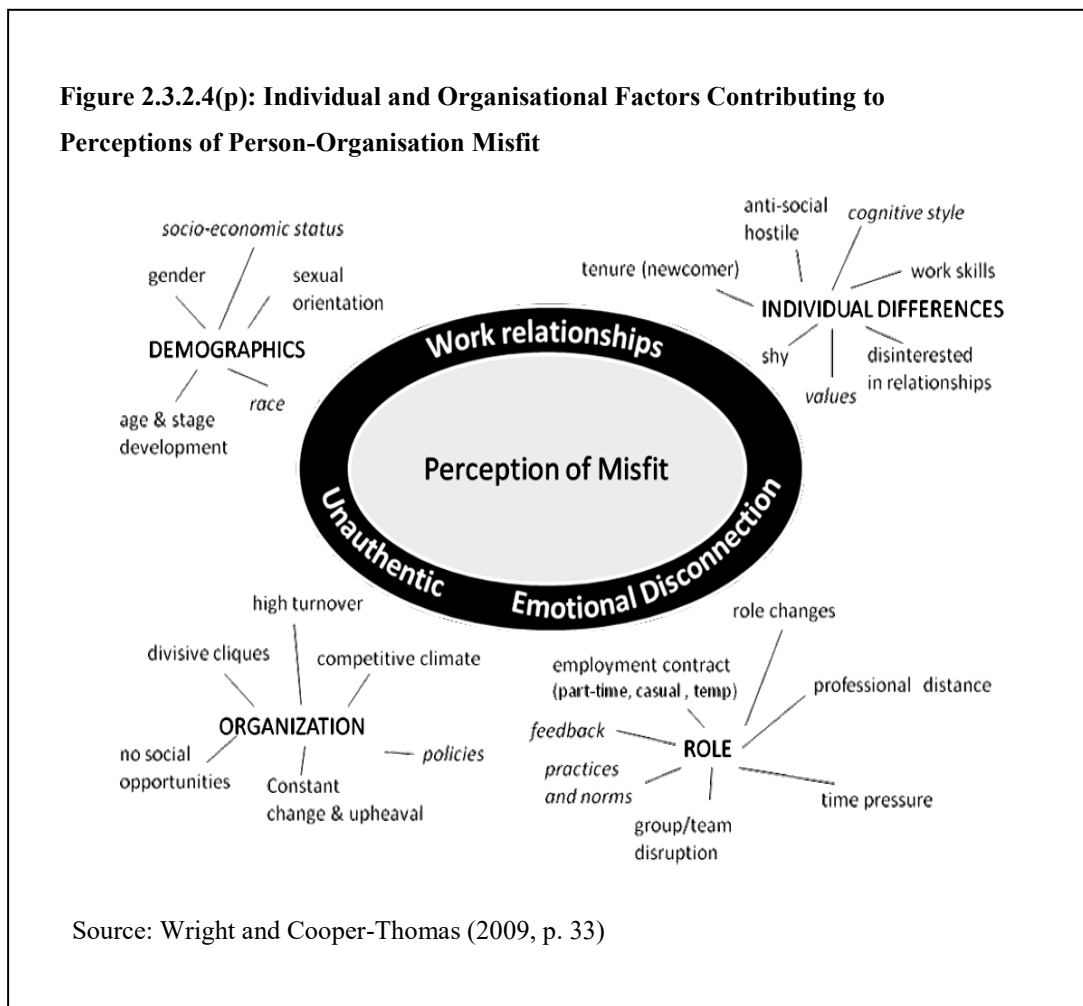
2.3.2.4(p) Poor Co-Worker Relationships

Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009) conducted an on-line survey to explore the impact of co-worker relations on misfit perceptions in a sample of New Zealand and Australian employees. Participants were required to comment and provide input on aspects of their fit and misfit with their organisations and the quality of their relationships with co-workers. The results of this study suggest that the quality of relationships at work is central to people’s perception of incongruence (or misfit). Further support has also been provided for the individual and organisational differential predictors of misfit perceptions as previously highlighted in Figure 2.3.2.4(b).

A significant finding in this study is that these individual and organisational predictors “only contribute to perceptions of misfit if the individual experiences poor co-worker relationships in the workplace” (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009, p. 21). Thus, Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009, p. 21) suggest that “co-worker

relationships act as a buffer or exacerbator for perceptions of misfit.” They observe that experiencing feelings of misfit “may not be distressing if one’s work peers provide opportunities for genuine social connection” (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009, p. 21).

Based on a qualitative analysis, the following four themes emerged from the data relating to the principal subject of social relationships together with individual and organisational factors affecting misfit: demographics, individual differences, role factors and organisational context. Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009) integrated these themes with the individual and organisational differential predictors of misfit perceptions earlier identified (see Figure 2.3.2.4(b)) into a new framework shown in Figure 2.3.2.4(p) below:



In Figure 2.3.2.4(p) on the previous page, the new themes derived from the study, are inserted in normal font and elements from Figure 2.3.2.4(b) are added in italics. Although these four new themes are similar in some respects to the predictors previously identified mainly through quantitative studies (see Figure 2.3.2.4(b)), there are many new factors. It was reported that “sexual orientation emerged at the individual level, as well as specific personality orientations, such as being shy, hostile, anti-social, and disinterested in social relationships at work” (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009, p. 21). At the organisational level, perceived misfit was associated with “structural factors including the constant change and upheaval at work, and role changes as well as employment contract effects within role perceptions” (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009, pp. 21 – 22). Several other factors were identified as being pertinent to misfit, including factors of a more social nature (for example, the desire to keep a professional distance, time pressure, tenure, and group or team disruption).

Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009) incisively concluded that their research provided early indications that the phenomenon of PO misfit cannot be merely understood as an equation that brings together a varied range of personal and organisational variables that directly affect misfit. The reality of the work context is that there simultaneously exists a complex set of social relationships between various parties that inhabit the workplace. These social relationships, particularly the relationships with co-workers, operate in a highly complex manner to influence perceptions of misfit either by increasing or lowering it. The results of this study tentatively supported this principle by demonstrating that personal and organisational factors may germinate perceived misfit and that co-worker relations may be intrinsically involved in these relationships, more often in the form of a moderating variable. It was earlier pointed out and subsequently confirmed by the study data that the aforementioned processes operated concurrently as opposed to working independently (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009).

2.3.2.5 Consequences of Employee Misfit

2.3.2.5(a) Stress, Strain, Burnout and Well-Being

One of the consistent results in the PE literature is that employee misfits have been associated with many negative attitudes and behaviours. The most researched topic on misfit is arguably its association with stress. The PE fit framework to stress has now been widely accepted as significant in our understanding of stress in organisations (Edwards, 1996; Edwards & Cooper, 1990; Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993; Eulberg, Weekley, & Bhagat, 1988; French, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1982). According to Edwards and Cooper (1990, p. 293) the PE fit approach to stress characterises stress as “a lack of correspondence between characteristics of the person (for example, abilities, values) and the environment (for example, demands, supplies).” This lack of correspondence is posited to create “deleterious psychological, physiological, and behavioural outcomes which eventually result in increased morbidity and mortality” (Edwards & Cooper, 1990, p. 293; Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 628). These fundamental principles underpin many of the theories of stress such as those offered by French, Rogers, and Cobb (1974), McGrath (1976), Karasek (1979), Schuler (1980), French *et al.* (1982) and Beehr and Bhagat (1985).

Edwards and Cooper (1990, p. 293) list several reasons for the extensive recognition of the PE fit approach to stress. First, many of the other approaches to stress “particularly the stimulus and response approaches” have severe limitations (Edwards & Cooper, 1990, p. 293). Second, “PE fit as a general framework has a long tradition in psychology, tracing its origins to influential writers such as Lewin (1938, 1951) and Murray (1938)” (Edwards & Cooper, 1990, p. 293). Third, “viewing the person and the environment as joint determinants of stress-related outcomes has a certain intuitive appeal, capturing the common sense notion that one person’s pleasure is another person’s pain” (Edwards & Cooper, 1990, p. 293). The extant literature examining the PE fit approach to stress has revealed that many

of the empirical studies are beset with theoretical and methodological complications that severely limit the interpretation and generalizability of their findings (Edwards, 1996; Edwards & Cooper, 1990; Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993). Edwards and Cooper (1990, p. 294) note that “until these problems are recognised and rectified, we will be unable to accumulate a sound body of empirical evidence to support or refute the PE fit approach to stress.”

French *et al.* (1982) provided a landmark study in their examination of the PE fit approach to stress in a sample of 2 010 respondents representing 23 occupations at 67 different work sites in the US. These job occupations ranged from blue collar (for example, machine-paced assembler) at one extreme to white collar jobs (for example, engineer) at the other. According to Edwards and Van Harrison (1993, p. 632) these occupations were selected because they “represented a wide range of job characteristics, had exhibited high levels of psychosomatic strain in previous research, and involved minimal exposure to physical and chemical hazards, thereby permitting a focus on social and psychological hazards at work.”

French *et al.*'s (1982) handling of the PE fit approach to stress comprises two distinctive forms of PE fit. One version focuses on supplies-values (SV) fit that is, the similarity between personal values or goals. The other version, known as demand-abilities (DA) fit, centres on the congruence between an individual's knowledge, skills or abilities and environmental demands. In addition, French *et al.* (1982) pointed out that “P and E can be described both objectively and subjectively” (Edwards & Cooper (1990, p. 294). In objective fit, the P and E variables exist independently of the person's perceptions, whereas subjective fit entails the P and E variables as perceived by the individual. According to Edwards and Cooper (1990, p. 294), “the central thesis of French *et al.*'s (1982) approach is that subjective SV or DA misfit will produce negative psychological, physiological, and behavioural outcomes, collectively labelled ‘strain’.”

The findings of this study provided three key deductions (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993). Firstly, “misfit was frequently associated with increased strain, particularly job-related affect and psychological disturbance” (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 628; French *et al.*, 1982). Secondly, “the relationship between misfit and strain was often curvilinear, with a turning point where E and P were equal” (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 628; French *et al.*, 1982). Thirdly, “fit measures representing these curvilinear relationships often accounted for significant variance beyond that explained by E and P measures, typically doubling the proportion of variance explained in strain” (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 628; French *et al.*, 1982).

PE fit theory suggests three basic hypothetical relationships between fit and strain (Edwards & Van Harrison 1993, p. 629). The first of these measures is labelled “fit”; it comprises the algebraic difference between E and P ($E - P$) and was proposed to portray a monotonic relationship with strain. According to Edwards and Van Harrison (1993, p. 629), “this relationship is expected when, for example, strain not only decreases as supplies increase toward motives but continues to decrease thereafter, as when excess supplies can be applied toward other motives or retained for future use.” The next category of measures, known as “deficiency” ($E - P$ for $E \leq P$, 0 for $E > P$) and “excess” ($E - P$ for $E \geq P$, 0 for $E < P$), depicts asymptotic relationships with strain.

Edwards and Harrison (1993) further expound on the measures of deficiency and excess by asserting that deficiency signifies an undesirable association with strain only in circumstances where E is less than P. This specific situation may arise when increasing supplies diminishes strain until satiation is reached. Beyond this point, any further increases in supply will have little impact on strain. On the other hand, the measure of excess denotes that there exists a positive relationship with strain in conditions wherein E is greater than P. This could occur when demands surpass abilities thus resulting in the intensification of strain. The increase in strain does not occur when the demands fall short of abilities (Edwards & Harrison, 1993).

French *et al.*'s (1982) study has been criticised on the basis that "it operationalized fit using various transformations of the algebraic difference between E and P" (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 628). Edwards and Cooper (1990) argue that difference scores used in the assessment of fit suffer from several substantive and methodological complications. Edwards and Van Harrison (1993, p. 629) identify four problems with the fit measure used by French *et al.* (1982). Firstly, the use of difference scores confounds the separate relationships of E and P with strain. Secondly, "fit measures with different substantive interpretations, often yielded significant relationships with strain" (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 629). Thirdly, difference score measures "effectively impose an untested set of constraints on the joint relationships of E and P with strain" (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 629). Fourthly, difference score measures "reduce the inherently three-dimensional relationship between E, P, and strain to two dimensions" (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993, p. 629).

In response to these shortcomings, Edwards and Van Harrison (1993) re-analysed data from French *et al.*'s (1982) study using polynomial regression as described by Edwards (Edwards, 1991; Edwards, 1996; Edwards & Cooper, 1990). The use of polynomial regression circumvents problems associated with the use of difference scores and captures the underlying three-dimensional relationship between E, P and strain. As noted by Edwards and Van Harrison (1993, p. 628), the results of their study "resolve ambiguities in the French *et al.* (1982) findings and identify relationships between E, P, and strain that, although consistent with PE fit theory, cannot be adequately represented by fit measures such as those by French *et al.* (1982)."

Edwards (1996) continued with the PE fit-stress theme, by further examining relationships between the two versions of fit (that is, SV fit and DA fit) and organisational stress. Although his study adopted similar methods to those used in Edwards and Van Harrison's (1993) study, data were collected from a new sample of 428 employees entering a major graduate school in the eastern US. The

respondents selected were required to be in positions where they were responsible for subordinates (that is, managerial). These respondents then completed measuring instruments assessing supplies, values, demands, abilities, importance, and two types of strain (that is, job dissatisfaction and tension) in relation to five sets of managerial tasks.

Edwards (1996) noted that there is some debate regarding the comparative strengths of the SV and DA versions of fit. Shirom (1982) as cited in Edwards (1996, p. 301) “argued in favour of DA misfit, contending that DA misfit represents job dissatisfaction and, hence, should be viewed as an outcome of stress rather than stress itself.” On the other hand, Van Harrison (1978) as cited in Edwards (1996, p. 301) affirmed that “DA misfit will produce strain only if failure to meet demands creates SV misfit on other dimensions, or if meeting the demand itself is internalised as a value.” It was thus proposed that SV misfit will be directly related to strain, while DA misfit produces strain through its impact on SV misfit (Edwards, 1996).

Edwards (1996, p. 301) lists two persuasive reasons for viewing stress in terms of SV misfit rather than DA misfit. Firstly, Locke (1976) as cited in Edwards (1996, p. 301) contends that “dissatisfaction refers not to SV misfit itself, but rather to a negative emotional state resulting from SV misfit.” This is based on Locke’s (1976) contention that, “SV fit does not confound stress with dissatisfaction, but instead casts them as distinct, causally related phenomenon” (Edwards, 1996, p. 301). Secondly, it has been argued by those who support the concept of DA misfit that “failure to meet demands will produce strain only if doing so yields substantial costs for the person” (Edwards, 1996, p. 301). The results of this study show that, when looking at SV fit, “job dissatisfaction not only increased as supplies deviated from values, but was also higher when supplies and values were both low than when both were high” (Edwards, 1996, p. 331).

According to Edwards (1996, p. 331), “the increase in strain for insufficient supplies corroborates a basic tenet of PE fit theory, and the increase in strain for excess supplies suggests an interference effect, in which excess supplies on one dimension induce misfit on other dimensions.” In the case of DA fit, it was reported that job dissatisfaction declined as demands and abilities increased. According to Edwards (1996, p. 331), this finding “corroborates with Karasek’s (1979) notion that demanding jobs coupled with high decision latitude (which represents a situational determinant of ability) enhance job satisfaction, perhaps by creating opportunities for people to use valued skills and demonstrate their competence.”

Blix and Lee (1991) examined occupational stress using the PE fit framework in a sample of 575 deans, associate deans and chairpersons within the Californian State University system. It was reported that the misfit between the participants’ motivational style and the type of job demands was associated with perceived work stress and the perception of poor coping ability. In addition, the results indicated a link between misfit and consideration of changing jobs. The results of this study lend support to the PE fit framework of occupational stress.

Sutherland and Fogarty’s (1995) study also provided some empirical support for the inverse relationship between stress and measures of PE fit. Based on a sample of 154 adult employees, their study examined the relations among nine measures of Holland’s (1985a) concept of congruence and occupational stress. It was reported that discrepancies (that is, misfit) between the letters representing the respondents’ type and the job environment were related to stress and strain. A significant finding emanating from this study is that “the relation between congruence and stress, like the relation between congruence and job satisfaction (Spokane, 1985), is significant but rather small and dependent on the measure of congruence used.” The link between misfit and stress was further examined in Lovelace and Rosen’s (1996) study that explored the differences in achieving PO fit among a diverse group of managers. It was reported that poor organisational fit (or misfit) was associated with job dissatisfaction, intention to leave and greater levels of stress.

The relationship between misfit and stress was further investigated by Cluskey and Vaux (1997) who examined vocational misfit as a source of occupational stress among management accountants in the US. It was reported that poor vocational fit (or vocational misfit) was significantly associated with job dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, staff turnover and stress.

PE fit theory was again used to understand stress in a study conducted by Edwards and Rothbard (1999) who explored how the comparison of work and family experiences with the individual's values relates to stress and well-being. Edwards and Rothbard (1999), while acknowledging the benefits of using PE fit theory in understanding organisational stress, identified two shortcomings in previous PE fit research. Firstly, it was noted that by far the majority of PE fit research focused on work stress, while ignoring the role of PE fit theory in understanding stress emanating from non-work sources such as family. Secondly, existing research has not advanced robust forecasts regarding the form of the association between PE fit and stress (or burnout). Many of the studies have relied on the general proposition that fit is advantageous and misfit is detrimental. In this regard, Edwards and Rothbard (1999) argued that this idea is exaggeratedly naïve considering the fact that levels of well-being may fluctuate subject to whether perceptions surpass or fall short of values (French *et al.*, 1982; Locke, 1976). Moreover, well-being levels may change depending on whether fit signifies congruence between low versus high degrees of P and E constructs (Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993; Imparato, 1972).

Edwards and Rothbard (1999) further argued that notwithstanding the fact that PE fit theory distinguishes various potential associations between PE fit and well-being, it fails to offer robust conceptual criteria for predicting at what point a certain association will transpire. Against this background and building on the theory of PE fit, Edwards and Rothbard (1999) sought to examine stress and well-being related to work and family.

Based on a sample of 1 758 employees from a large public university in the US, fit was assessed with regard to autonomy, relationships, security and segmentation for both work and family. The relationship of fit with work and family satisfaction, anxiety, depression, irritation, and somatic symptoms was then examined. The results showed that “in general, well-being improved as experiences increased toward values and improved to a lesser extent as experiences exceeded values” (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999, p. 85). In addition, “well-being was also higher when experiences and values were both high than when both were low” (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999, p. 85).

Le Fevre *et al.* (2003) made several notable observations when examining the concepts of stress, distress, and eustress in their theoretical paper. They refer to PE fit theory which suggests that a lack of fit (or misfit) may lead to physiological or psychological stress, or both. Edwards *et al.* (1998) as cited in Le Fevre *et al.* (2003, p. 733) contend that “these stresses are likely to be expressed as physical symptoms such as raised blood pressure, raised serum cholesterol, and lowered immunity, and psychological symptoms including sleep disturbances, anxiety, panic attacks, dysphoria, and restlessness.”

The PE fit approach to stress was further examined by Yang, Che, and Spector (2008) who investigated the effects of job stressors on well-being in a sample of 288 employees in the People’s Republic of China. According to these authors, this investigation was the first to examine occupational stress using the PE fit approach in China (Yang *et al.*, 2008). In the theory section underpinning this research, it was further reiterated that “the person and environment work as joint determinants of employees’ well-being, with the misfit between person and environment as the cause of strains” (Yang *et al.*, 2008, pp. 567 – 568).

Moreover, on the basis of a review of the literature, these authors formed two incisive conclusions with regard to the misfit and strain relationship. Firstly, it was noted that “when actual state and preferred state are both high and match each

other, well-being will be higher than when they are both low and match each other” (Yang *et al.*, 2008, p. 569). Secondly, the importance of content dimensions of fit in explaining the effects of fit or misfit on strain was emphasised. Yang *et al.* (2008, p. 569), observe that “the shape of the surface for different content dimensions (for example, relationships at work vs. career advancement) or different well-being indices can be different (that is, monotonic, U-shaped or asymptotic model), due to potentially different mechanisms which may take effect for different content dimensions.” The results suggested that the degree of fit and misfit did relate to job satisfaction, mental and physical well-being, and turnover intention. However, the dynamics of the fit/misfit-strain relationships are dependent on the specific content dimension of fit/misfit and the particular indicator of stress outcome.

Research has also shown that PJ misfit can contribute to stress. For example, Shaw and Gupta (2004) examined the moderating role of job performance in the SV fit relationship with strain outcomes. Using principles from cybernetic stress and psychological centrality frameworks, the authors argue that “SV misfit relates to lower well-being levels when job performance is low but this effect is attenuated when job performance is high” (Shaw & Gupta, 2004, p. 847). The results of the study support the aforementioned authors’ prediction.

Value misfit has also been demonstrated to be a significant factor that influences stress in employees. Bocchino, Hartman, and Foley (2003) examined the incongruence (or misfit) between personal and organisational values and its link to perceived psychological contract violations and work stress in the context of age, gender and job tenure. Based on a sample of 108 full-time US-based employees of an international organisation that has undergone change, it was reported that workers showing high degrees of perceived psychological contract violations are more likely to experience value misfit, be relatively older and have been occupying their jobs for a relatively shorter time. Moreover, workers reporting higher stress symptoms are more likely to be male and have been in their current jobs longer (Bocchino *et al.*, 2003).

Siegall and McDonald (2004) investigated the relationships between PO value incongruence (value misfit), burnout and personal job outcomes in a sample of 135 academics from a mid-sized US west coast public comprehensive university. Based on Maslach and Leiter's (1997) model of burnout, it was hypothesised that "the greater the mismatch between a person's values and the organisation's, the more burnout the person will experience" (Siegall & McDonald, 2004, p. 294). In addition, it was also proposed that burnout will act as the intervening variable between PO misfit and personal job outcomes. The findings show that a misfit between a person and the company's values resulted in negative outcomes, including all the burnout measures.

Accordingly, it was noted that "the less a participant reported a match between his/her values and the university's, the more that person experienced burnout and the more that person increased time on non-work activities" (Siegall & McDonald, 2004, p. 299). It was also demonstrated that PO value congruence was negatively associated with intention to leave and job satisfaction. Burnout was also found to partially or fully mediate the value misfit – job outcome relationships for dissatisfaction and less time spent on teaching and professional development activities.

Bouckenooghe *et al.*, (2005) explored the relationships among stress, values and value conflict (or value misfit) in a sample of 400 Flemish workers. The results indicate that the values of openness to change, conservation, self-transcendence, and self-enhancement were significant predictors of stress. In addition, employees who reported high levels of value conflict (or value misfit) also experienced more stress.

Dbaiibo *et al.*'s (2010) study investigated value incongruence and organisational justice as predictors of perceived stress in a sample of 362 employees in Beirut, Lebanon. The existing frameworks alluding to value incongruence propose that fit is a critical factor in the experience of stress. Previous research has indicated that

the mismatch between a person's values and those of the organisation will result in many undesirable work outcomes (Bouckenoghe *et al.*, 2005; Naus *et al.*, 2007). Against this background, this study set out with the expectation of proving that fit is a key variable in the stress experiences of people in a non-Western context.

The results did not materialise as anticipated. Instead, there was partial support for a link between value incongruence and stress. In fact, the findings of this study indicate that "incongruence on value types of benevolence, power and self-direction are weakly predictive of perceived stress, while perceptions of interpersonal and distributive injustice are strongly predictive of perceived stress" (Dbaibo *et al.*, 2010, p. 701). These inconsistent findings persuaded Dbaibo *et al.* (2010) to speculate that perhaps it is conceivable that PO fit may be loosely bound to a global assessment of value congruence and more influenced by specific values that may be significant in a particular organisation.

A further option may reside in the fact that the study results may be echoing the findings previously reported by Nyambegera, Daniels, and Sparrow (2001) and of Lu (2006), who submitted that the consequences of fit may be dependent on cultural issues. It was suggested that the fit propositions may not be as significant country where there are many challenges in the form unstable economies, scarcity of jobs and various social ills. Moreover, in some of these countries, individual freedom and preferences are suppressed (Dbaibo *et al.*, 2010; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007). Taking these arguments into account, Dbaibo *et al.* (2010, p. 715) concluded that "it is possible that the absence of large misfit effects is linked to the properties of 'interdependent' societies: Interdependent self-construal's require the subordination of individual preferences to relational and collective needs, and may equip individuals with better coping skills in handling incongruence with others."

In a more recent study focusing on misfit as a predictor of stress, Ford (2012) examined job-occupation misfit as a predictor of occupational stress in a large and diverse sample of US employees. More specifically the study examined the misfit

between the pressure and autonomy experienced by employees and that which would be expected given their occupational roles as a predictor of job satisfaction, perceived support, and depression (Ford, 2012, p. 412). It was reported that “job pressure had much stronger effects on job satisfaction, perceived support, and depression when it exceeded the pressure that would be expected given the occupational role’s norms for time pressure and critical decision-making demands” (Ford, 2012, p. 412).

2.3.2.5(b) Deviant Behaviour

Misfit has also been empirically demonstrated to be linked to deviant behaviour in the workplace. For example, Liao *et al.* (2004, p. 969) “examined demographic- and personality-based employee dissimilarity in relation to organisational and interpersonal deviant behaviour in a sample of 351 restaurant employees in Midwestern US.” The findings indicated that “dissimilarities in ethnicity, agreeableness, and openness to experience were significantly associated with organisational deviance” (Liao *et al.*, 2004, p. 969). Moreover, “dissimilarities in gender, conscientiousness, and extraversion were significantly linked to interpersonal deviance” (Liao *et al.*, 2004, p. 969).

2.3.2.5(c) Citizenship Behaviour

Misfit has also been shown to be negatively linked to citizenship behaviour. In this regard, Chattopadhyay (1999) examined the influence of demographic dissimilarity on organisational citizenship behaviour. The findings indicate that demographic dissimilarity negatively influenced citizenship behaviour. However, this relationship was contingent on the demographic characteristics of the participants and the composition of the work group.

2.3.2.5(d) Organizational Cynicism

Misfit has also been empirically demonstrated to influence organisational cynicism. Organisational cynicism has been defined as “a negative attitude toward one’s employing organisation, comprising three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organisation lacks integrity; (2) negative affect toward the organisation; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviour toward the organisation that are consistent with these beliefs and affect” (Dean *et al.*, 1998, p. 345). Naus *et al.* (2007) examined the relationship between value incongruence, job autonomy, organisation-based self-esteem and organisational cynicism in a sample of 174 Dutch employees. Using polynomial regression to test their hypotheses, Naus *et al.* (2007, p. 195) reported that “value incongruence and job autonomy add significantly to the prediction of organisational cynicism.” The results also show that organisation-based self-esteem partially mediates the relationships between value incongruence, job autonomy and organisational cynicism.

2.3.2.5(e) Task and Relationship Conflict

Misfit has also been empirically linked to task and relationship conflict in work teams. Hobman and Bordia (2006) studied the relationship between value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict in a sample of 165 MBA students involved in teams. This study employed a longitudinal design to investigate whether the impact of visible and professional dissimilarity on conflict would lessen, and the impact of value dissimilarity would increase over time. The results show “that value dissimilarity was positively linked to task and relationship conflict at time 2. Team identification moderated the association of value dissimilarity with relationship conflict at time 1. In addition, team identification also moderated the impact of age, gender and ethnic dissimilarity on task conflict at time 2, and the influence of gender and professional dissimilarity on relationship conflict at time 2” (Hobman & Bordia, 2006, p. 483).

2.3.2.5(f) Job Satisfaction, Performance and Intention to Exit

A large body of research has also shown that misfit can predict job dissatisfaction and intention to leave the organisation, and negatively influence job performance. In one of the earlier studies, Chan (1996) examined the relationships among cognitive misfit, job performance and actual staff turnover after three years in a sample of 253 entry-level engineers employed in the Singaporean civil service. Using logistic regression analysis, it was reported that cognitive misfit was uncorrelated with performance. However, cognitive misfit did provide “significant and substantial incremental validity in predicting actual turnover over the predictability provided by job performance” (Chan, 1996, p. 203).

Takase *et al.* (2001) investigated a sample of 80 Australian nurses’ responses to the image discrepancy between the public and nurses (that is, nurse-environment misfit), and its link with their self-concept, job satisfaction and job performance. It was reported that nurse-environment misfit was negatively related to job satisfaction and performance.

Fuller and Kaplan (2004) drew on the work of Chan (1996) to examine the role of cognitive misfit on task performance in a sample of 44 auditors. According to Fuller and Kaplan (2004, p. 131), “auditors have been classified as possessing intuitive, analytic, or hybrid cognitive style.” An experimental design and questionnaires were used in this study to obtain data from the respondents. The participants (that is, auditors) were required to complete two audit tasks, a debriefing questionnaire and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). It was reported that the cognitive style of the participating auditors significantly interacted with the type of task. More specifically, the results showed that analytic auditors performed better on the analytic task than on the intuitive task (Fuller & Kaplan, 2004). Similarly, intuitive auditors were stronger performers on the intuitive task than on the analytic task (Fuller & Kaplan, 2004).

The instructors in accounting education have stated an interest in the impact of cognitive styles on students' performance over a number of years (Honn & Ugrin, 2012). In responding to this mindfulness, Honn and Ugrin (2012) investigated the effects of cognitive misfit on students' accounting task performance. Scaffolding on Chan's (1996) theory of cognitive misfit, their study proposed that a decline in performance will result when there is a mismatch between a student's cognitive style and the cognitive demands of an accounting task. A sample totalling 138 students were selected to participate in an experiment. These students' cognitive styles were classified as global or sequential using the Felder-Solomon Index of learning styles. It was reported that cognitive misfit negatively affected the performance of students on a managerial accounting task and this impact was more prominent for students who were classified as having global styles (Honn & Ugrin, 2012).

Brigham, De Castro, and Shepard (2004) examined the relationships between cognitive misfit and burnout, satisfaction and intention to exit in entrepreneurs. The findings show that cognitive misfit in entrepreneurs increased levels of burnout, intention to exit and decreased satisfaction. Further analysis revealed that different kinds of entrepreneurs (for example, analytic *versus* intuitive) will display different attitudes on these work outcomes, given the level of structure and formalisation in their firms (Brigham *et al.*, 2004). More specifically, it was stated that when the cognitive style of an interpreter displays a divergence with the prevailing structure of his/her company, he/she will be inclined to experience more deleterious outcomes (for example, increased burnout, lower satisfaction and higher intentions to exit) than an interpreter than represents a better fit (Brigham *et al.*, 2004).

The outcomes of this study are noteworthy in a sense that it provides greater clarity on "which types of interpreters will experience greater difficulty in managing their business (from a cognitive conflict perspective) at different stages of growth and maturity" (Brigham *et al.*, 2004, p. 18). It has been noted that the misfit issues surrounding the owner/entrepreneur transition quandary is not a recent topic in the

management literature. Nevertheless, which types of personal and environmental variables that might cause misfit has been under-researched (Brigham *et al.*, 2004).

Sacco and Schmitt (2005) proposed and evaluated the linkages of a dynamic multilevel model of demographic diversity and misfit effects in a large sample of restaurant employees in the US. These authors set out accomplish three objectives in this study. Firstly, using a cross-level approach, Sacco and Schmitt (2005) explored an employee's demographic misfit in relation to co-workers' demographics as a predictor of turnover risk over time. Secondly, changes in restaurant demographic diversity in relation to changes in profitability over time and the relevant unit turnover rates were investigated at the business-unit level. Thirdly, the effects of the match between the racial composition of the restaurants and their communities on profitability were explored. The findings supported the association between demographic misfit and turnover and partially supported a negative relationship between racial diversity and changes in profitability.

Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2005) explored the impact of being in (and out) of sync with the general pace of the social environment at work on a sample of 352 workers employed in a furniture production company located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the US. It was reported that generally, individuals that did not match the pace of the work group (or misfit) were somewhat less satisfied, were less likely to engage in citizenship behaviour and displayed greater levels of strain than those who fitted in. With regard to the effects of the two types of misfit investigated, the findings show that workers, who were more hurried than their work group, reported lower levels of strain than those who were less hurried than their work group.

Chilton, Hardgrave, and Armstrong (2005, p. 193) explored "the fit between the preferred cognitive style of a software developer and his/her perception of the cognitive style required by the work environment, and the impact of that fit on stress/strain and performance." Based on a sample of 123 object-oriented software developers and their supervisors from a diverse range of US companies, it was

reported that performance declines and stress increases as the gap between desired and actual cognitive styles increases.

Wheeler *et al.* (2007) empirically examined the associations between PO misfit, job dissatisfaction and intent to leave in a sample of 205 full-time adult employees working in two geographic regions of the US. The results suggest that the link between misfit and intent to leave is not as clear cut as it has been made out to be. In fact, regression analyses, has demonstrated that it may be unwise to assume that the misfit has a direct influence on intent to leave. Instead, the findings indicate that variables such as job mobility may intervene in the relationships between misfit, job dissatisfaction and intent to leave.

Cools *et al.* (2009) studied the effects of cognitive misfit on job satisfaction, job search behaviour and intention to leave using two large-scale data bases in Belgium. The findings of this study did not support the suggestion that, individuals' who display cognitive fit are more satisfied with the job and express less job search behaviour and intention to leave the organisation than individuals who show cognitive misfit. Nevertheless, the results suggest that cognitive styles and cognitive climate can have separate effects on employees' job satisfaction, job search behaviour and intention to leave.

Pierce and Snyder (2010) investigated the impact of ethical misfit on the tenure of employees in the context of a vehicle emissions testing market. They argued that the misfit between employees and their organisations on ethical grounds is "asymmetric, such that one direction can have a stronger effect on attrition than the other" (Pierce & Snyder, 2010, p. 2). Using a database of more than 6 million emissions tests from a US metropolitan area between 2001 and 2004, it was found that ethical misfit increases attrition.

Trautmann *et al.* (2011) examined the fit/misfit between employees' competencies and job demands as a predictor of job performance over their work career. It was

proposed that a match between individual abilities and job demands will have a positive impact on indicators of job performance for example, work ability, job-related self-efficacy and job satisfaction. These authors further proposed that misfit could have deleterious effects on performance. A sample of 103 employees and 15 supervisors in a production company in Germany were requested to rate individual abilities and job-related demands in the motor, sensory and cognitive fields to identify links between fit/misfit and the work-related factors that influence performance.

The findings reflect that the congruence between subjectively perceived demands and abilities in motor control positively influenced self-efficacy whereas a misfit between these negatively impacted on self-efficacy. This result applied to a greater extent to blue collar employees and older employees. It was also reported that fit/misfit between supervisor- and employee-rated abilities to learn new tasks had a significant influence on work ability, with fit having a positive effect and misfit a negative impact. In this regard, it was noted that “both white and blue collar workers as well as middle aged and older employees were sensitive to this effect” (Trautmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 339). Finally, the results also showed that “a fit/misfit between employee- and supervisor-rated ability to deal with high task complexity was not associated with job satisfaction over the entire group, but in white collar workers and older employees” (Trautmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 339).

2.3.2.5(g) Proactive Behaviours

As highlighted in the previous discussion, by far the majority of studies examining the impact of misfit have shown that it has harmful effects on many attitudes and behaviours such as stress, job satisfaction, performance and intention to leave the organisation. However, a small number of studies have proposed that in certain contexts and under certain conditions, misfit may indeed have a positive influence on both the individual and organisation concerned. Schneider (1987a) and Schneider *et al.* (1997) as cited in Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 1) posited that

individual employees who do not fit in would eventually exit the organisation. If this scenario continues unabated, many organisations will be populated with people that behave similarly and are like-minded. Eventually, organisations will stagnate and in many instances objectionable practices such as group-think will set in. Moreover, a considerable number of companies will struggle to adapt to the volatile business environment as a result of its lack in diversity. Thus, having these misfitting employees voluntary leave may be detrimental to the organisation in the long run. In similar vein, Argyris (1958) as cited in Talbot and Billsberry (2008, p. 2) asserts that “having an organisation staffed with too many people of ‘one type’ leads to a lack of innovation”.

Simmering *et al.* (2003) found a positive association between misfit and proactive behaviour. Using a sample of 83 managers working in a variety of industries in the US, these authors examined the moderating role of misfit (in terms of needs and supplies of autonomy) in the conscientiousness-development relationship. Simmering *et al.* (2003) lambasted the very core principles of the ASA framework by arguing that there may be several flaws that warrant highlighting. They began by observing that a substantial volume of PE fit research was guided by Schneider’s (1987) ASA model which implied that fitting in will produce positive outcomes and misfitting will result in negative outcomes. The many empirical studies that were carried out since the inception of the ASA model have endeavoured to validate these effects. For example, a fair amount of research has showed that fit may be associated with positive attitudes such as commitment and job satisfaction (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005) while other studies have linked misfit to stress and intentions to exit (Chan, 1996; Edwards & Harrison, 1993; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005; Lovelace & Rosen, 1996).

Notwithstanding the voluminous research hitherto, Simmering *et al.* (2003) attacks the foundational principles of the ASA framework by arguing that, by the way it has been portrayed, it comes across as if it has shied away from anticipating the

prospect that people who experience misfit may decide to undergo change themselves or attempt to change their work context as opposed to self-selecting out of their companies. It has been noted that this scenario is regrettable because it renders employees as reactive to events rather than proactive (Simmering *et al.*, 2003).

Thus, with the intention of exploiting the aforementioned perceived inadequacies of the ASA model, Simmering *et al.* (2003) proposed that conscientious individuals, when encountering the phenomenon of misfit, will react by proactively engaging in career development activities to increase their fit levels. This formed the fundamental argument underlying their present research. The results showed that “conscientiousness was positively related to development but only when employees were misfits with respect to autonomy” (Simmering *et al.*, 2003, p. 954).

Devloo *et al.* (2011) tested a different perspective on misfit by extending the initial work of Simmering *et al.* (2003) on the positive association between misfit and proactive behaviour. This group of researchers investigated the extent to which “managers who hold an incremental implicit person theory (that is, believe that personal attributes are relatively malleable) rely on proactive strategies to address imbalances (or misfit) between demands and abilities” (Devloo *et al.*, 2011, p. 453). They further argued that “the role of individual differences in reactions to PE misfit is a relatively unexplored research area that may increase our understanding of the processes relating PE fit to behavioural outcomes” (Devloo *et al.*, 2011, p. 455). Thus, it was reasoned that “individual differences in implicit person theory are crucial to our understanding of when people will respond to misfit with positive seeking behaviour” (Devloo *et al.*, 2011, p. 456).

Data were collected from a sample of 303 managers from 12 organisations in Spain and Belgium. It was reported that implicit person theory played a significant moderating role in the relationship between DA misfit and feedback seeking behaviour for two of the three investigated task dimensions (that is, planning,

coordinating and decision-making). The findings of this study provided preliminary evidence for a proactive framework of DA misfit which could serve as a guide for future studies in this area.

2.3.2.5(h) Attraction Towards Teams

In a team setting, misfit based on personality differences has been shown to positively impact on members' attraction toward their teams. Kristof-Brown, Barrick, and Stevens (2005) explored how misfit on extraversion (that is, high individual-low team or low individual-high team levels) is related to members' attraction to their teams. Data were collected from two independent samples that is, 324 MBA students working in teams and 217 members of teams employed in two manufacturing firms. Using polynomial regression and three-dimensional surface plots, it was found that "members reported greater attraction to their teams when their level of extraversion was dissimilar to the average level of extraversion of other team members" (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005, p. 951). Moreover, it was also reported that those members who were more attracted to their teams, displayed an increase in job performance.

2.4 Gaps in the Extant Misfit Literature

The initial review of the literature has revealed five key conclusions about the research to date on misfit.

First, the misfit literature continues to be plagued by definitional inconsistencies. Despite an increase in misfit research in recent years, scholars are no closer to reaching consensus on what exactly misfit means to the individuals concerned. The lack of progress in this area possibly relates to the way that misfit has been traditionally studied. By far the majority of studies adopted a positivistic paradigm whereby misfit was conceptualised as a measurement of differences (that is, external-in approach). This approach formed the basis of the many empirical

studies examining the consequences of misfit as highlighted in the previous discussion.

Although these methods played a role in furthering our understanding of misfit, they provided limited insight into what exactly misfit means to individuals. As Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 2) succinctly put it, “relatively little is known about misfit” and “how misfit may be conceptualised is therefore unclear.” Moreover, Billsberry *et al.* (2006, p. 12) stated that “at present we know very little about the process of becoming a misfit”. A potential solution to this shortcoming may lie in exploring misfit qualitatively, using an interpretative/constructivist paradigm whereby a person’s perceptions and experiences of misfit may be elicited through in-depth interviews. This approach might yield a deeper and enriched understanding of misfit.

Second, misfit has been predominantly studied in the UK, US and to a certain extent Western Europe and Australia/New Zealand. These countries have well-developed economic and social systems. With the exception of Western Europe, they have similar cultural and business contexts. Continuing to investigate misfit in these country contexts may stifle the growth of misfit research in the long term. It is necessary to explore misfit in other countries. To date, misfit has yet to be explored in South Africa, a country with a rich history and a diverse culture. Misfit may be understood and experienced differently by South African employees when compared to their Western counterparts.

Third, there appears to be a dearth of theoretical frameworks underpinning misfit research. Edwards (2008) noted that PO fit and misfit research has been characterised as having poorly developed theories. This literature review has shown that misfit has been studied on the basis of it being the opposite of fit. Thus, many of the studies examining misfit have piggybacked on existing fit theories when trying to explain its effects. With misfit taking on its own identity in recent years, there is an urgent need to develop misfit-specific theories. This study aimed to fill

this gap by using grounded theory methodology in developing an employee misfit model based on employees' perceptions and experiences.

Fourth, the factors influencing a person's sense of misfit have not been extensively investigated. Although attempts have been made by a group of researchers in the UK (for example, Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a) and Australia/New Zealand (Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009), they have merely scratched the surface. By investigating these factors in countries outside the US, UK, Western Europe and Australia/New Zealand, several interesting findings may surface which could further enhance our understanding of misfit.

Fifth, the literature is silent on how organisations react to and manage their misfitting employees. Misfit has traditionally been researched from the perspective of the individual employee and the assumption is made that when employees feel that they do not fit in, they eventually leave their organisations. However, as highlighted previously, not all misfits leave. In fact, at any given time, organisations will have their share of misfitting employees. Obtaining information about how these misfits are managed might further enrich our understanding of misfit.

2.5 Summary and Conclusions to Chapter Two

This chapter presented an initial review of the literature. Traditional grounded theorists argue in favour of producing a literature review after the data collection and analyses phases of the study. However, some contemporary researchers favour the inclusion of a literature review at the outset, that is, directly after the introduction. The researcher adopted a "middle-ground" approach by presenting the literature review in two parts with the first part presented in this chapter. This initial review focused on three aspects which had a crucial bearing on the direction of the study. The first aspect, relates to the PE fit construct. A detailed discussion of the various types of fit, measurement issues and paradigms was presented. The second

aspect includes a detail discussion of the central construct in this research, that is, misfit. Issues surrounding the conceptualisation of misfit, differences between fit and misfit, the factors influencing a person's sense of misfit, empirical studies examining the consequences of misfit were dealt with in detail. The third aspect explores the current gaps in the extant misfit literature. Part two of the literature review will be presented together with the discussion of the results in Chapter Five. This second part will be informed by the results of this study and will deal with among other issues, the various theoretical frameworks that have been used to explain misfit issues in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used in this study. It begins with a list of the research questions and objectives (previously stated in Chapter One, sections 1.5 and 1.6) guiding this study. The rest of the chapter comprises the rationale and discussion of the various methods selected to satisfactorily answer and address the stated research questions and objectives. A critical aspect in methodology is the type of paradigm embraced by the researcher. The discussion of various research paradigms and the one selected by the researcher is presented. A cogent argument is then presented for the adoption of a qualitative research approach using grounded theory as the method of choice to explore the dynamics of organisational misfit and to satisfactorily answer the research questions. The chapter continues with a description of the research design, followed by a brief discussion on the use of the literature review in this grounded theory study.

The participant selection criteria and procedures and the pilot study are then presented, followed by a discussion of the data collection instruments and procedures used in this study. The chapter proceeds with an account of how the data collected will be analysed, with special emphasis on the analytical tools used in the development of grounded theory (for example, constant questioning and comparison, theoretical sampling, and so forth) and the coding processes used (for example, initial/open coding, axial coding and theoretical coding). This is followed by a discussion of how the findings of this study will be reported on and evaluated. The chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical considerations relevant to the research, followed by a summary and conclusion to the chapter.

3.2 Research Questions and Objectives

As highlighted in Chapter One (sections 1.5 and 1.6), the following research questions and objectives guided this study.

3.2.1 Research Questions

- How do South African employees define and understand misfit?
- What are the factors that influence South African employees' sense of misfit?
- What are the consequences of South African employees' misfit?
- How do South African employees cope with their misfit?
- How can South African organisations effectively manage their employee misfits?

3.2.2 Research Objectives

- To explore how South African employees define and understand misfit,
- To explore the factors that influence South African employees' sense of misfit,
- To explore the consequences of South African employees' misfit,
- To explore how South African employees cope with their misfit,
- To explore how South African organisations effectively manage their employee misfits,

- To explore other study related factors surrounding employees' experiences of misfit in the South African workplace, and
- To develop a model of misfit as experienced by South African employees.

3.3 Research Paradigms

3.3.1 Defining Paradigms in Research

A paradigm has been defined as an overarching philosophical standpoint; a belief system about the nature of the nature of the world that guides the way in which a researcher investigates issues (Bryman, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Krauss, 2005). Rubin and Rubin (2005), as cited in Broom and Willis (2007, p. 17) define a paradigm as “an overarching philosophical or ideological stance, a system of beliefs about the nature of the world, and ultimately, when applied in the research setting, the assumptive base from which we go about producing knowledge.” Similarly, Willis (2007, p. 8) argues that a paradigm is “a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field.” Chalmers (1982, p. 90) offers a comprehensive elucidation of what a paradigm is by describing it as “made up of the general theoretical assumptions and laws, and techniques for their application that the members of a particular scientific community adopt.” He notes that a paradigm has five fundamental components:

- “Explicitly stated laws and theoretical assumptions,”
- “Standard ways of applying the fundamental laws to a variety of situations,”
- “Instrumentation and instrumental techniques that bring the laws of the paradigm to bear on the real world,”

- “General metaphysical principles that guide work within the paradigm,”
and
- “General methodological prescriptions about how to conduct work
within the paradigm” (Chalmers, 1982, p. 91).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), three interrelated issues form the fundamental building blocks of all research paradigms: ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations.

3.3.2 Ontological Considerations

The ontological question seeks to address the form and nature of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). In this regard, Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 22) contend that “questions of social ontology are concerned with the nature of social entities.” They add that:

The central point of orientation here is the question of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 22).

Researchers who believe that, “social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence”, are adopting an ontological stance of objectivism (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 108). In contrast, those who align themselves with the notion that “social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of those actors concerned with their existence” are assuming an ontological posture of subjectivism (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 108).

3.3.3 Epistemological Considerations

The epistemological matter relates to the question of what should be considered acceptable knowledge in a discipline or field of study (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

3.3.3.1 Positivism

The core issue here is “a question of whether or not the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles as the natural scientist” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 16). Scholars who embrace the principles of the natural scientist subscribe to the epistemological position of positivism (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). Remenyi, Williams, Money, and Swartz (1998, p. 32) argue that those adopting a positivistic posture will favour “working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalisation similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists.” A principle feature of positivism is that it is based on the assumption that “the researcher is independent of and neither affects nor is affected by the subject of the research” (Remenyi *et al.*, 1998, p. 33). A similar understanding of this type of epistemology has been presented by Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler (2008, p. 20), who identified three basic principles of positivism:

- “The social world exists externally and is viewed objectively,”
- “Research is value-free,” and
- “The researcher is independent, taking the role of an objective analyst.”

A positivistic stance enables knowledge to be established by exploring social reality through observing objective facts. The development of theory begins with “hypothesising fundamental laws and deducing what kinds of observations support

or reject the theoretical predictions of the hypotheses” (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p. 20).

3.3.3.2 Interpretivism

Critics of positivism argue that the social sciences are “far too complex to lend itself to theorising by definite ‘laws’ in the same way as the physical sciences” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 106). They go on to state that: “those researchers critical of positivism argue that rich insights into this complex world are lost if such complexity is reduced entirely to a series of law-like generalisations” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 106). Researchers sympathetic to such a view subscribe to an epistemology of interpretivism. Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 17) contend that “the study of the social world therefore requires a different logic of research procedure, one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order.” Von Wright (1971), as cited in Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 17) has portrayed this as an “epistemological clash” between “positivism” and “hermeneutics (a concept concerned with the theory and method of interpretation of human action).” Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 18) further argue that this clash “represents a division between an emphasis on the explanation of human behaviour that is the chief ingredient of the positivist approach to the social sciences and the understanding of human behaviour.”

Von Wright (1971), as cited in Blumberg *et al.* (2008, p. 21) identified three basic principles of interpretivism:

- “The social world is constructed and is given meaning subjectively by people,”
- “The researcher is part of what is observed,” and
- “The research is driven by interests.”

Interpretivists subscribe to the notion that knowledge is advanced and that theory is constructed “through developing ideas inducted from the observed and interpreted social constructions” (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p. 21). Blumberg *et al.* (2008, p. 21) further argue that:

Gathering and measuring of facts will not disclose the essence of a social phenomenon; rather, researchers need to explore why people have different experiences and to understand how these differences result in the different constructions and meanings people give to the social world. Interpretivists research social phenomena by making sense of how people interpret the social world. This requires the researcher to dig into the process of subjective interpretation, acknowledging the specific motivations and interests of the participants.

Verstehen, the hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition, and symbolic interactionism have had significant intellectual influences on interpretivism.

3.3.3.2(a) *Verstehen*

The concept of *Verstehen* was introduced by Max Weber (1864 – 1920). Weber (1947), as cited in Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 18) described sociology as a “science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects.” Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 18) argue that the fundamental point is that “the task of ‘causal explanation’ is undertaken with reference to the ‘interpretive understanding of social action’ rather than to external forces that have no meaning for those involved in the social action.” Abel (1976, p. 109) states that:

The term *Verstehen* ('to understand') denotes the position of those who claim that the social scientist can and must make use of his own inner experience. The student of human actions is part of his own subject matter. He must use the methods of introspection and empathy, which have nothing in common with the procedures of natural science.

3.3.3.2(b) Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Tradition

Van Manen (1997), as cited in Lavery (2003, p. 4) argued that "phenomenology is essentially the study of the lived experience or the life world." Valle, King, & Halling (1989) as cited in Lavery (2003, p. 4) attested that "its emphasis is on the world as lived by a person, not the world or reality as something separate from the person." According to Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 107), phenomenology refers to "the way in which we as humans make sense of the world around us." Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 18) define phenomenology as "a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how, in particular, the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world."

Phenomenology has its roots in the works of Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) who is also known as the "father of phenomenology" (Lavery, 2003, p. 3). The German philosopher Alfred Schutz (1899 – 1959) was credited with being one of the first people to apply phenomenological ideas to the social sciences. His writings were significantly influenced by Husserl and Weber's concept of *Verstehen*. The following frequently cited paragraph perfectly encapsulates Schutz's position regarding phenomenology:

The world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not 'mean' anything to molecules, atoms, and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist

– social reality – has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting, and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world which they experience as reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behaviour by motivating it. The thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men [and women!], living their daily life within the social world (Schutz, 1962, p. 59).

3.3.3.2(c) Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism has also been acknowledged as having a profound intellectual influence on interpretivism (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Saunders *et al.*, 2007). Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 107) argue that “in symbolic interactionism we are in a continual process of interpreting the social world around us in that we interpret the actions of others with whom we interact and this interpretation leads to adjustment of our own meanings and actions.” George Herbert Mead (1863 – 1931) is considered one of the founders of symbolic interactionism.

However, his deliberations on “the way in which our notion of self emerges through an appreciation of how others see us” have been the subject of considerable debate (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 20). For example, scholars have argued that Mead’s concepts and ideas may be far more closely aligned to a positivistic approach than has typically been acknowledged (McPhail & Rexroat, 1979, as cited in Bryman & Bell, 2007). It has also been noted that the Iowa School of Research, that drew heavily on Mead’s work proceeded largely in a positivist direction (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, the literature has tended to view symbolic interactionism as “occupying similar intellectual space to the hermeneutic –

phenomenological tradition and so broadly interpretative in approach” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 20).

Blumer (1969) also made a significant contribution to the development of concepts and ideas surrounding symbolic interactionism. He contends that “a key premise of symbolic interactionism is that meanings assigned to objects in the world arise out of the social interaction one has with one’s fellows” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). MacKinnon (2005, p. 90) lists three key principles underlying Blumer’s (1969) perspective of symbolic interactionism:

- “A principle of ‘meaning’ that contends that people act towards objects (people and things) based upon the meanings that they have given to those objects,”
- “The principle of ‘language.’ Language provides the tools (symbols) to negotiate meaning,” and
- “The principle of ‘thought.’ The idea here is that we interpret symbols in different ways. In our minds, we take on roles of others and try to assume different points of view.”

Prawat (1996), as cited in MacKinnon (2005, p. 90) stresses the significance of symbolic interactionism as “the social construction of reality.” In this regard, he states that:

The process of personal meaning takes a backseat to socially agreed upon ways of carving up reality ... symbolic interactionism sees meaning as a social product that arises in the process on interaction between people (Prawat, 1996 as cited in MacKinnon, 2005, p. 90).

3.3.3.3 Realism

Realism is another epistemological position that researchers could embrace. Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 104) attest that “the essence of realism is that what the senses show us as reality is the truth: that objects have an existence independent of the human mind.” They add that “realism is a branch of epistemology which is similar to positivism in that assumes a scientific approach to the development of knowledge” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 105). Bryman and Bell (2007), note that realism has two features in common with positivism. Firstly, “a belief that the natural and social sciences can and should apply the same kinds of approach to the collection of data and to explanation” and secondly, “a commitment to the view that there is an external reality to which scientists direct their attention (in other words, there is a reality that is separate from our descriptions of it)” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 18).

Direct and critical realism are the two most common forms of realism found in the OB and management literature (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2007; Saunders *et al.*, 2007). According to Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 105), direct realism implies that “what you see is what you get: what we experience through our senses portrays the world accurately”. In contrast, critical realists argue that “what we experience are sensations, the images of the things in the real world, not the things directly” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 105). Bhaskar (1989) as cited in Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 105), is known as one of the major proponents of critical realist epistemology and stated that “as researchers we will only be able to understand what is going on in the social world if we understand the social structures that give rise to the phenomenon that we are trying to understand.” He further asserts that “we can identify what we don’t see through the practical and theoretical processes of the social sciences” (Bhaskar, 1989 as cited in Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 105).

3.3.4 Methodological Considerations

The methodological question seeks to address the question of “how can social reality be studied?” (Corbetta, 2003, p. 13) or “how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). According to Corbetta (2003) responses to the methodological question depend on the replies to the ontological and epistemological question. He further expounds on this by arguing that “a vision of social reality as an external object that is not influenced by the cognitive research procedures of the scientist will accept manipulative techniques (for example, experimentation, the control of variables, and so forth) more readily than a perspective that underlines the existence of interactive processes between the scholar and the object studied” (Corbetta, 2003, p. 13). Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) emphasise the interrelatedness of the ontological, epistemological and methodological questions and present the following example:

A ‘real’ reality pursued by an ‘objective’ inquirer mandates control of possible confounding factors, whether the methods are qualitative (say, observational) or quantitative (say, analysis of covariance). (Conversely, selection of a manipulative methodology – the experiment, say – implies the ability to be objective and a real world to be objective about). The methodological question cannot be reduced to a question of methods; methods must be fitted to a predetermined methodology.

3.3.5 Competing Paradigms in Research

Willis (2007) notes the existence of several competing paradigms in social science research and contends that the exact number and names of these specific paradigms

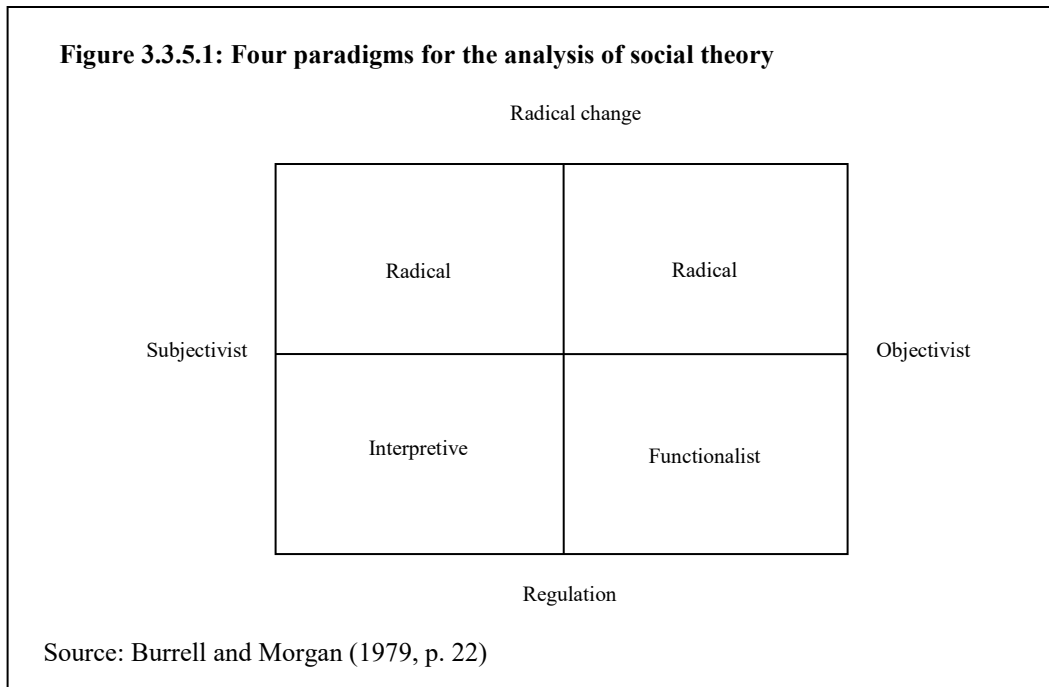
very from scholar to scholar. He encapsulates the current discourse in the following observation:

Some discussions are organised around the idea that there are two paradigms, quantitative and qualitative, but that is an oversimplification that emphasises data rather than foundational beliefs and assumptions. The exact number of world views (paradigms) and the names associated with a particular paradigm vary from author to author (Willis, 2007, p. 8).

Gephart (1999) identified three paradigms which have hitherto dominated research: positivism, interpretive constructionism and critical postmodernism. Similarly, Willis (2007) presented a generally accepted list which included the following three paradigms: post-positivism (an influential variant of positivism), interpretivism and critical theory. Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) provide an authoritative account of the various combinations of paradigms that than have been preferred by social science researchers in the past.

3.3.5.1 Burrell and Morgan's (1979) Matrix of Paradigms

Burrell and Morgan (1979) presented a matrix of social science paradigms which have proven useful in OB and I/O psychology research in generating new insights into issues and problems. This matrix is reproduced in Figure 3.3.5.1 on the next page:



In Figure 3.3.5.1 above, four paradigms are identified: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralist. These paradigms have been “arranged to correspond to four conceptual dimensions: radical change and regulation and subjectivist and objectivist” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 112). Each of the paradigms are organised to correspond to four theoretical dimensions: radical change and regulation and subjectivist and objectivist. In the context of management research, radical change refers to “a judgement about the way organisational affairs should be conducted and suggests ways in which these affairs may be conducted in order to make fundamental changes to the normal order of things” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 113). On the other hand, the regulation dimension “seeks to explain the way in which organisational affairs are regulated and offer suggestions as to how they may be improved within the framework of the way things are done at present” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p. 113). The subjectivist and objectivist dimensions have been previously highlighted in relation to the type of ontological posture assumed in research and warrant no further discussion at this juncture.

Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 25) emphasise that these four paradigms are “mutually exclusive”. They add that they “offer alternate views of social reality, and to understand the nature of all four is to understand four different views of society” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 25). These paradigms serve the following purposes:

- “Taken together, they provide a map for negotiating the subject area, which offers a convenient means of identifying the basic similarities and differences between the work of various theorists and, in particular, the underlying frame of reference which they adopt”,
- “It also provides a convenient way of locating one’s own personal frame of reference with regard to social theory, and thus a means of understanding why certain theories and perspectives may have more personal appeal than others,” and
- “It provides a tool for mapping intellectual journeys in social theory – one’s own and those of the theorists who have contributed to the subject area” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 24).

3.3.5.1(a) Functionalist Paradigm

The functionalist paradigm (bottom right hand corner of the matrix) is positioned within the objectivist and regulatory dimensions. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 26), this paradigm is characterised by “a concern for providing explanations of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, need satisfaction and actuality.” They add that functionalist theorists approach these “general sociological concerns from a standpoint which tends to be realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 26).

3.3.5.1(b) Interpretive Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm is situated in the bottom left hand corner and located on the subjectivist and regulatory dimensions of the matrix. Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 113) assert that “the philosophical position to which this refers is the way we as humans attempt to make sense of the world around us.” Similarly, Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 28) contend that:

The interpretive paradigm is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of the subjective experience. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action.

Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 28) further assert that the interpretive paradigm “tends to be nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic.” The main features of interpretivism have been previously discussed in the section on epistemological positions and warrant no further elaboration at this point.

3.3.5.1(c) Radical Humanist Paradigm

The radical humanist paradigm is housed in the top left hand corner of the matrix and is located within the subjectivist and radical change dimensions. According to Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 113), scholars working within this paradigm will be “concerned about changing the status quo.” Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 32) argue that “its frame of reference is committed to a view of society which emphasises the importance of overthrowing or transcending the limitations of existing social arrangements.” They add that “the radical humanist places most emphasis upon radical change, modes of domination, emancipation, deprivation and potentiality” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32). In the context of organisational research, Bryman

and Bell (2007, p. 26) state that a radical humanist “sees an organisation as a social arrangement from which individuals need to be emancipated and research as guided by the need to change.”

3.3.5.1(d) Radical Structuralist Paradigm

The fourth paradigm known as the radical structuralist paradigm is situated in the top right hand corner of the matrix and is bordered by the radical change and objectivist conceptual dimensions. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 34) radical structuralism is “committed to radical change, emancipation, and potentiality, in an analysis which emphasises structural conflict, modes of determination, contradiction and deprivation.” Furthermore, radical structuralism confronts these common concerns from a position which is inclined to be realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). With reference to the organisational context, Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 113) state that “the radical structuralist paradigm is involved with structural patterns with work organisations such as hierarchies and reporting relationships and the extent to which these may produce dysfunctionalities.”

Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) typology has generated controversy around the issue of the “commensurability or otherwise of the four paradigms” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 26). Burrell and Morgan (1979) hold that the four paradigms are different from one another as they are established on the basis of fundamentally disparate beliefs. Consequently, each paradigm “must develop independently of each other” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, 26).

In contrast, Reed (1985), as cited in Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 26) advocates that “the boundaries between paradigms are not as clear as Burrell and Morgan suggest and the overstatement of the differences between them leads to isolationism and reduces ‘the potential for creative theoretical development.’” These controversies notwithstanding, Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) matrix has profoundly influenced

research scholars by inspiring them to “explore the assumptions that they make about the nature of the social world and the way it can be studied” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 26).

3.3.5.2 Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) Framework

Guba and Lincoln (1994) provide the most authoritative breakdown of the existing paradigmatic positions adopted by social science researchers: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism. These four paradigms are displayed in Table 3.3.5.2 below:

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theory	Constructivism
<i>Ontology</i>	naïve realism- “real” reality but apprehendable	critical realism- “real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	historical realism- virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	relativism- local and specific constructed realities
<i>Epistemology</i>	dualism/ objectivist; findings true	modified dualist/ objectivist; critical tradition/ community; findings probably true	transactional/ subjectivist; value- mediated findings	transactional/ subjectivist; created findings
<i>Methodology</i>	experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	modified experimental/ manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	dialogic/dialectical	hermeneutical/ dialectical

Source: Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109)

Table 3.3.5.2 on the previous page, contains the descriptions of the responses that Guba and Lincoln (1994) believe followers of each paradigm would make to the ontological, epistemological and methodological questions.

3.3.5.2(a) Positivist Paradigm

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108), positivism represents “the ‘received view’ that has dominated the formal discourse in the physical and social sciences for some 400 years.” On the other hand, postpositivism epitomises “efforts of the past few decades to respond in a limited way (that is, while remaining within essentially the same set of basic beliefs) to the most problematic criticisms of positivism” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109).

Gephart (1999, p. 1) asserts that positivism “assumes an objective world which scientific methods can more or less readily represent and measure, and it seeks to predict and explain causal relations among key variables.” McKenna (2003) notes that positivism “identifies a reality that can be discovered, measured and manipulated.” The fundamentals of positivism have been previously highlighted in the epistemology section of this study and warrant no further discussion at this point.

The positivist paradigm has been continuously reviewed and amended in an attempt to overcome its inherent limitations. Classical positivism which dominated social science research up until the early twentieth century, gave way to a more progressive version known as neo-positivism (1930s to 1960s). Corbetta (2003, p. 6) notes that the neo-positivistic paradigm “was much more complex and detailed and, in some respects, contradictory and unclear than classic positivism;” however, a few of “the basic assumptions were maintained, such as ontological realism (‘the world exists independently of our awareness of it’) and the pre-eminent role of empirical observation in understanding this world.”

3.3.5.2(b) Post-Positivist Paradigm

Positivism evolved further into post-positivism towards the end of the 1960s. Corbetta (2003, p. 7) emphasises that, “this process of moving away from the original positive orthodoxy, first through neo-positivism and then post-positivism, did not mean that the empiricist spirit was abandoned.” The following excerpt sums up the relevance of modern positivism in contemporary social science research:

Modern positivism, when it states that laws (both natural and social) are probabilistic and open to revision, when it affirms the conjectural nature of scientific knowledge and in the end, the theoretical conditioning of the observation itself, has come a long way from the naïve interpretation of the deterministic laws of the original positivism. It has lost its certainties, but does not repudiate its empiricist foundations. The new positivism redefines the initial presuppositions and the objectives of social research; but the empirical approach, though much amended and reinterpreted, still utilises the original observational language, which was founded on the cornerstones of operationalization, quantification and generalisation (Corbetta, 2003, p. 7).

Gephart (1999, p. 4) asserts that “post-positivism is consistent with positivism in assuming that an objective world exists but it assumes that the world might not be readily apprehended and that variable relations of facts might be only probabilistic, not deterministic.” Willis (2007) presents a useful summary of the positions taken by the proponents of positivism and post-positivism. This summary is reproduced in Table 3.3.5.2(b) on the proceeding page:

	<i>Empiricism or Positivism</i>	<i>Postempiricism or Postpositivism</i>
Nature of reality	External to human mind	External to human mind
Purpose of research	Find universals	Find universals
Acceptable methods of data	Scientific method Objective data	Scientific method Objective data
Meaning of data	Mirror to reality Use to develop theory	Falsification Use to test theory
Relationship of research	Separate activities	Separate activities

Source: Willis (2007, p. 72)

Table 3.3.5.2(b) shows that there are two differences between positivism and post-positivism when assessed against the following five issues: “nature of reality,” “purpose of research,” “acceptable research methods and data,” “meaning of data,” and “relationships between research and practice” (Willis, 2007, p. 72).

The first difference relates to the meaning of data. Positivists lend credence to the ‘correspondence theory of truth’. Willis (2007, p. 73) states that the ‘correspondence theory of truth’ implies that “if you do enough research and it verifies your theory, you can be confident your theory reflects the true nature of the world.” In contrast, post-positivists argue that “there is never enough research to permit you to eliminate all doubt about your theory” (Willis, 2007, p. 73).

The second difference between positivism and post-positivism pertains to the relationship of theory to data. Positivism subscribes to the notion that “you can collect objective data that are theory free and then use it to develop a theory” (Willis, 2007, p. 73). Advocates of post-positivism reject this assumption and support the principle that “any collection of data is based on theory” (Willis, 2007,

p. 73). Thus, post-positivists recognise that data and its interpretation are dependent on theory.

3.3.5.2(c) Critical Theory Paradigm

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109) critical theory refers to “a blanket term denoting a set of several alternative paradigms, including additionally (but not limited to) neo-Marxism, feminism, materialism and participatory inquiry.” They added that “critical theory may be conveniently divided into the following three sub-types: post-structuralism, post-modernism and a combination of the two” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109).

McKenna (2003, p. 219) notes that “the critical paradigm has much in common with the interpretive paradigm but here the researcher is not satisfied with understanding multiple perspectives but seeks to challenge and transform the social power relations.” The essence of critical theory is captured in the following:

The critical paradigm is the basis of most feminist research which aims not only to understand the structural shaping of experience but to do so in order to effect change. Critical research criticises most mainstream research for reinforcing the socio-economic status quo, which is, ‘unfair, unequal, and subtly and overtly oppressive’ for many people (McKenna, 2003, p. 219).

Similarly, Kincheloe and McLaren (1994), as cited in Gephart (1999, p. 7) argue that critical scholarship “seeks to transcend taken for granted beliefs, values and social structures by making these structures and the problems they produce visible, by encouraging self-conscious criticism, and by developing emancipatory consciousness in scholars and social members in general.” Willis (2007, p. 82) notes that “critical theory research tends to emphasise relationships that involve

inequities and power, and a desirable aspect of critical research involves helping those without power to acquire it.”

Critical theory shares one common feature with post-positivism that is, a belief in the existence of an external reality. However, the form that this reality takes differs between the two paradigms. Table 3.3.5.2(c) below, lists the similarities and differences between post-positivism and critical theory as evaluated against the five major issues previously mentioned under the differences between positivism and post-positivism.

Table 3.3.5.2(c): Differences between Postpositivism and Critical Theory on the Five Major Issues		
	<i>Postpositivism</i>	<i>Critical Theory</i>
Nature of reality	Material and external to the human mind	Material and external to the human mind
Purpose of research	Find universals	Uncover local instances of universal power relationships and empower the oppressed
Acceptable methods of data	Scientific method Objective data	Subjective enquiry based on ideology and values; both quantitative and qualitative data are acceptable
Meaning of data	Falsification Use to test theory	Interpreted through ideology; used to enlighten and emancipate
Relationship of research to practice	Separate activities Research guides practice	Integrated activities Research guides practice

Source: Willis (2007, p. 83)

As reflected in Table 3.3.5.2(c) above, critical theory differs from post-positivism in four of the five issues used as a basis of comparison. These differences are reflected in the areas of: “the research purpose, acceptable methods of data, the

meaning of data and the relationship of research to practice” (Willis, 2007, p. 83). As pointed out earlier, the only feature shared by these two paradigms relates to the common acknowledgment that there is a reality external to the human mind. Willis (2007, p. 91) succinctly captures some of the fundamental differences between post-positivism and critical theory by stating the following:

These two forms of research have different purposes, different methods, and different ways of looking at the data of the research project. Critical theorists often criticise post-positivists for studying unimportant things simply because they can be quantified and for studying things that prop up and maintain systems that should be torn down. Post-positivists often criticise critical theorists for confusing ideological practice with ‘real’ research and for coming to the research table with preconceived biases about what will be learned.

3.2.5.2(d) Interpretative Paradigm

As emphasised previously in the section on epistemology (section 3.2.3.2), interpretative research is primarily concerned with “meaning” and “it seeks to understand social members’ definition of a situation” (Schwandt, 1994, as cited in Gephart, 1999, p. 5). McKenna (2003, p. 218) argues that “while positivism, as a research paradigm, seeks to control the environment, research in the interpretive paradigm seeks to extend human understanding thereof so that we can exist harmoniously within it.” Interpretivists see reality as a “construction, which is relative to its context” (McKenna, 2003, p. 218).

Gephart (1999, p. 5) asserts that “interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation hence there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking, reasoning humans.” Although there are subtle differences between interpretivism and constructivism, these paradigms are used

interchangeably in the literature to refer to the same fundamental research philosophy (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Corbetta, 2003; Willis, 2007). Gephart (1999, p. 5) notes that “interpretivism often addresses essential features of shared meaning and understanding whereas constructivism extends this concern with knowledge as produced and interpreted to an anti-essentialist level.”

Schwandt (1994), as cited in Gephart (1999, p. 5) observes that “constructionists argue that knowledge and truth are the result of perspective, hence all truths are relative to some meaning context or perspective.” Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109) refer to constructivism as denoting an “alternative paradigm whose breakaway assumption is the move from ontological realism to ontological relativism.” The essential feature of both interpretivism and constructivism is clearly articulated by Gephart (1999, p. 5) as follows:

There are many interpretivist and constructionist genres but central to all of these has been a concern with subjective meanings – how individuals or members of society apprehend, understand and make sense of social events and settings (the idea of interpretation) and how this sense making produces features of the very settings to which sense making is responsive (the concern for reflexivity).

3.3.6 The Paradigm embraced in this Study

Researchers in the I/O psychology and OB fields differ substantially in their epistemological and ontological orientations and these paradigmatic differences have a significant effect on their research objectives and design, and consequently on the nature of the knowledge that their studies yield. According to Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006a, p. 2), “to ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is in congruence with their beliefs about the nature of reality.” They add that “consciously subjecting such beliefs to an ontological

interrogation in the first instance will illuminate the epistemological and methodological possibilities that are available” (Mills *et al.*, 2006a, p. 2).

The researcher has positioned himself within the constructivist paradigm. Mills *et al.* (2006a, p. 2) state that “constructivism is a research paradigm that denies the existence of an objective reality, ‘asserting instead that realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exists as many such constructions as there are individuals (although clearly many constructions will be shared)’” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 43). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), as cited in Mills *et al.* (2006a), people who deny the existence of an objective reality align themselves with a relativist ontological orientation. Mills *et al.* (2006a, p. 2) point out that:

Relativists claim that concepts such as rationality, truth, reality, right, good, or norms must be understood ‘as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture ... there is a non-reducible plurality of such conceptual schemes.’ In other words, the world consists of multiple individual realities influenced by context.

From an epistemological perspective, constructivists emphasise “the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant, and the construction of meaning” (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, as cited in Mills *et al.*, 2006a, p. 2). Mills *et al.* (2006a, p. 2) further argued that:

Researchers in their ‘humanness,’ are part of the research endeavour rather than objective observers, and their values must be acknowledged by themselves and by their readers rather as an inevitable part of the outcome.

According to Broom and Willis (2007, p. 25), “researchers who positioned themselves within an interpretivist, constructivist paradigm tend to use qualitative

methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and ethnographic observation.” These methods elicit data that allow the researcher to “reflect on subjective meanings and interpretations; the social and culturally embedded nature of individual experiences; and the relationship between the researcher and researched” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, as cited in Broom & Willis, 2007, p. 25). Broom and Willis (2007, p. 25) present a list of methods and features associated with the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm:

- “Methods utilising an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm:”
 - “In-depth, semi-structured or unstructured interviews,”
 - “Observation (participatory or non-participatory),”
 - “Focus groups,”
 - “Secondary discourse analysis.”

- “Features of an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm:”
 - “Interpretivist: Seeks ‘understanding’ with a focus on subjective meanings and interpretation,”
 - “Naturalistic: Data are collected in the setting of everyday life,”
 - “Subjectivity: Research practice and knowledge production is not objective or neutral; rather it is gendered and partial,”
 - “Complexity: Not so concerned with inference but rather with depth of analysis,”
 - “Political: The position of value neutrality is viewed as misleading as it makes the focus of the research seem independent from social relations,”
 - “Validity: High on validity as it draws on the understandings of research subjects, but not necessarily generalizable as it relies on the interpretation of the researcher.”

3.4 Rationale for Qualitative Approach using Grounded Theory

3.4.1 The Influence of Fit on the Study of Misfit

Misfit research up to this point in time has taken on a peculiar trajectory. Until recently, misfit was conceptualised by many scholars as a continuous variable that is the polar opposite of fit. Consequently, an overwhelming majority of studies investigating misfit was undertaken in the context of examining the dynamics and outcomes of fit. The study of misfit was intrinsically linked to that of fit. Thus, the preferred methods of investigating fit had a hand in influencing the way misfit was studied in the past.

The extant literature indicates that research scholars have been inconsistent in their approaches to investigating the fit construct. Billsberry and De Cooman (2010) argue that these erratic styles may have created confusion around the conceptualisation of fit and this may have spilled over into the misfit arena, thus stifling research in that area. To date, researchers investigating the concept of fit have adopted different epistemological positions which affected the type of methodologies and techniques used.

Talbot & Billsberry (2008, p. 3) have noted that the vast majority of fit studies have approached it from a “positivist stance (for example, Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Cable, 1997), where the researcher remains neutral while testing theories and hypotheses on large samples with the aim of generating generalizable findings (for example, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002).” Such studies have been underpinned on the premise that “fit is a measurable reality, where it is possible to take a measure of the organisation (for example, its values) and the individual (for example, individual’s values) and compare the two to give a measure of fit (for example, Chatman, 1991)” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, p. 3). The incongruence between organisational and individual measures in either

direction was understood to be that of misfit. The OCP, a tool formulated by O'Reilly *et al.* (1991), has been regarded as the benchmark instrument for measuring objective fit or misfit and has been used extensively by researchers to date (Talbot *et al.*, 2007).

A further group of studies has focused on how individuals perceive themselves to fit in at work (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008; Talbot *et al.*, 2007; Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010). Perceptions of fit or subjective fit can be measured directly by requesting a person to “report on an overall assessment of fit between themselves and the organisation” (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007, as cited in Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, p. 3). Low levels of fit in these instances have been equated to misfit. However, researchers have yet to produce a measuring instrument that asks a person to report on an overall assessment of misfit between themselves and the organisation.

Other fit studies (for example, Kristof-Brown, 2000) have assumed a relativist epistemological posture by attempting to “triangulate findings from both qualitative and quantitative studies” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, p.3). There has been a dearth of studies that have attempted to understand how fit and misfit have been socially constructed (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005b; Talbot & Billsberry, 2008; Talbot & Billsberry, 2010).

3.4.2 Examining Misfit as a Psychological Variable

As highlighted previously (that is, Chapters One and Two), Billsberry *et al.*'s (2006) theoretical paper suggested that “misfits are not polar opposites of people who fit in;” they added that “it is not necessarily the case that when the factors which cause fit are absent, misfit occurs” (Talbot *et al.*, 2007, p. 5). This new line of thinking suggests that misfit might be a distinctive categorical variable from that of fit and should be investigated as such. In line with this thinking, there have been calls for additional research that seeks to examine misfit as a psychological variable

(from the inside-out) as opposed to the large-scale reliance on it being a measurement of differences (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010; Talbot *et al.*, 2007).

3.4.3 A Move towards Qualitative Approaches to Studying Misfit

Talbot and Billsberry (2008, p. 2) argue that “at present, we know precious little about misfit.” In a later study, Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 2) noted that “compared to the extensive work that has gone into clarifying the conceptualisation of PE fit, relatively little is known about misfit.” Wheeler *et al.* (2007, p. 215) concur and acknowledge that “the area of misfit is wide open to researchers.” Chatman, Wong, and Joyce (2008, p. 81) added their voice to calls for a greater focus on misfit by stating that “though a marked increase in research that highlights misfits has begun to emerge, it may still not go far enough.”

Talbot and Billsberry (2008, p. 3) argued that “because misfit is under-researched (Billsberry *et al.*, 2006; Chatman *et al.*, 2008; Judge, 2007; Wheeler *et al.*, 2007), and we do not know what misfit means to people, qualitative methods would seem to offer a way of gaining new insights.” According to Merriam (2009, p. 13), “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.” Similarly, Cooper and Schindler (2006), as cited in Talbot and Billsberry (2008, p. 3) contend that qualitative research is principally worthwhile “to understand the different meanings that people place on their experiences and often requires research techniques that delve more deeply into people’s hidden interpretations, understandings, and motivations.” According to Morse (1994), as cited in Goulding (2002, p. 19), “the process of qualitative research relies on inference, insight, logic and luck, and eventually with hard work and creativity the results emerge as a coherent whole.” Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3) offer an insightful view of what qualitative research entails:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

3.4.3.1 Advantages of Qualitative Research

The advantages of conducting qualitative research are captured by Ospina (2004, p. 2) in her article titled *Qualitative Research* that applied specifically to issues relating to leadership and may be deemed relevant to misfit:

- “Flexibility to follow unexpected ideas during research and explore processes effectively,”
- “Sensitivity to contextual factors,”
- “Ability to study symbolic dimensions and social meaning,” and
- “Increased opportunities”
 - “to develop empirically supported new ideas and theories,”
 - “for in-depth and longitudinal explorations of leadership phenomenon and in this case misfit issues,” and
 - “for more relevance and interest for practitioners.”

3.4.3.2 Causal mapping

In recent years, a group of researchers from the Fit Project Team at Open University in the UK has conducted a series of studies investigating fit and misfit issues using qualitative methods (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010; Talbot *et al.*, 2007). One such approach, known as causal mapping has proved particularly useful in investigating individuals' perceptions of fit and misfit. Causal mapping was used by Billsberry *et al.* (2005b) as a technique to effectively explore organisational members' own sense of fit, an area that had heretofore remained unexplored.

According to Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 560) causal mapping techniques “allow respondents to surface previously tacitly held thought processes in an explicit manner.” Bryson, Ackerman, Eden, and Finn (2004), as cited in Talbot and Billsberry (2008, pp. 3 – 4) argue that causal mapping “helps clarify their thinking on complex matters, especially if negative emotions are making it difficult for the person to see the situation clearly.” The following captures the essence of what causal mapping entails:

To surface an organisational member's sense of fit, the mapping session starts with the notion of 'your fit' within your organisation and the question 'what causes your fit?' is asked. The questions that can help the participants to explore their sense of fit are, for instance: What influences your fit? What causes that? How does it happen? Who is involved? By answering the questions, the participants can start surfacing more specific factors, explaining their sense of fit within their organisation (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005b, p. 561).

Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, pp. 562 – 563) list five reasons why causal mapping is an appropriate technique to map an individual's sense of fit or misfit:

- “First, as interest is in revealing the underlying factors influencing a sense of fit, a causal structure is being uncovered,”
- “Second, when an individual produces a causal map they are encouraged to think about the factors influencing every construct that they mention. As they generate more and more items and develop a causal map of many influences, the respondent is producing a richer picture of their own fit,”
- “Third, the task of producing a causal map is relatively simple and non-threatening,”
- “Fourth, causal maps are particularly useful when the researcher wants to reveal factors that are context dependent,” and
- “Fifth, causal maps ‘place concepts in relation to one another’, [...] they impose structure on vague situations” (Weick & Bougon, 1986, as cited in Billsberry *et al.*, 2005b, p. 563).

3.4.3.3 Storytelling

Storytelling is a qualitative technique that has been used to supplement causal mapping in fit and misfit studies. Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 563) note that storytelling is concerned with “the elicitation of stories from individuals in face-to-face meetings to trigger the effective use of causal mapping.” Gabriel (2000), as cited in Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 563) conveys the dynamics of storytelling as follows:

Storytelling is an interesting technique to consider for the exploration of organisational members’ fit because many people have an inventory of stories about work that they can recount. When these stories concern the storyteller’s own experience in the organisation, they are clearly relevant to the subject under

investigation. Often, the stories capture pivotal moments in the relationship between the individual and the organisation.

In some instances, storytelling may prove challenging to interviewees when it is used prior to the causal mapping technique. In this regard, Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 567) note that “the simple request for stories could be problematic, as people might not have stories readily available.”

Meglino and Ravlin (1998), as cited in Talbot and Billsberry (2008, p. 3) argued that although other qualitative techniques such as ethnographic observation and focus groups would elicit rich data, they nevertheless have been associated with potential shortcomings. Ethnographic observation can be risky in the sense that there could be a scenario where no misfits are identified in the population being observed. Focus groups have been known to “encourage individuals to conform to others’ views, potentially leading to socially desirable responses” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, p. 3).

3.4.4 Justifying the use of In-Depth, Semi-Structured, Face-to-Face Interviews

A qualitative technique that has been under-utilised in fit or misfit studies thus far is the in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interview. This is somewhat surprising considering the fact that face-to-face interviews have long been the preferred interview technique in the field of qualitative research (Opdenakker, 2006). This study uses qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews as its primary data collection tool. Kvale (1983), as cited in Opdenakker (2006, p. 2) describes a qualitative research interview as “an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomenon.” Whiting (2008, p. 36) contends that “in-depth interviews should be personal and intimate encounters in which ‘open, direct, verbal questions’ are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories.”

Opdenakker (2006, p. 5) states that face-to-face interviews “are characterised by synchronous communication in time and place” and lists several advantages thereof:

- “Due to this synchronous communication, face-to-face interviews can take advantage of social cues such as voice, intonation and the body language of the interviewee. These social cues can provide additional information that can be added to the verbal answers of the interviewee to a question,”
- “In face-to-face interviews, there is no major time delay between question and answer. Consequently, the interviewer and interviewee can directly react on what the other says or does. It is noted that an advantage of this synchronous communication is that the answer of the interviewee is more spontaneous, without an extended reflection,”
- “With the permission of the interviewee, face-to-face interviews can be digitally recorded. Using a digital recorder has the advantage that the interview report may be more accurate than writing out notes,”
- “In a face-to-face interview, the interviewer has the opportunity to create a good interview ambiance,” and
- “The termination of a face-to-face interview is much easier than other interview methods. During the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, a large number of clues for example, shuffling of papers or switching off the recorder) can be given to indicate that the end of the interview is near” (Opdenakker, 2006, p. 5).

3.4.5 Justifying the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory

The approach chosen for this study was that of constructivist grounded theory. The grounded theory method comprises “a systematic, inductive and comparative approach to conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a, p. 1). Charmaz (2006, p. 2), states that “grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves.” Daniel (2009, p. 96) states that grounded theory is “an inductive approach through which explanatory theory is derived from a close consideration of the data.” Bryant and Charmaz (2007a, p. 1) list four stand-out characteristics of grounded theory:

- “The method is designed to encourage researchers’ persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analyses,”
- “Data collection and analyses proceed simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other,”
- “The method builds empirical checks into the analytic process and leads researchers to examine all possible theoretical explanations for their empirical findings,” and
- “The iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analyses makes the collected data progressively more focused and the analysis successfully more theoretical.”

Goulding (1999, p. 6) captures the crux of grounded theory as follows:

The emphasis behind grounded theory therefore became one of ‘new’ theory generation. In keeping with its principles, the

theory evolves during the research process itself and is a product of continuous interplay between data collection and analysis of that data. Consequently, unlike many other methods, the grounded theorist does not wait until all the data is collected before analysis begins; rather, the search for meaning through the interrogation of data commences in the early stages of data collection.

This study's use of the grounded approach to investigate South African employees' perceptions and experiences of misfit fits perfectly with the stated goals of grounded theory cited by Goulding (1999, p. 6): "given its emphasis on new discoveries, the method is usually used to generate theory in areas where little is already known, or to provide a fresh slant on existing knowledge about a particular social phenomenon."

Grounded theory was developed in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss as a reaction to the dominance of positivistic quantitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Eaves, 2001; Goulding, 2002). These sociologists and their research team observed how the process of dying occurred in a number of different hospital settings in the US. More specifically, they examined how and when medical personnel and their terminally ill patients knew they were dying and how they dealt with the news. The resulting data were subjected to explicit analytic treatment by Glaser and Strauss who then produced "theoretical analyses of the social organisation and temporal order of dying" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). A significant outcome of these studies was the development of "systematic methodological strategies that social scientists could adopt for studying many other topics" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). These strategies were first articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal book: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Glaser and Strauss (1967) promoted the notion of developing theories from research grounded in data as opposed to deducing testable hypotheses from extant theories.

Since the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory has moved in divergent directions (Charmaz, 2000). Goulding (1999, p. 7) notes that “this is largely the result of the two original authors reaching a diacritical juncture over the aims, principles and procedures associated with the implementation of the method.” Glaser remained steadfastly committed to the original principles of classical grounded theory as espoused by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Charmaz (2006, p. 8) observes that, “for years, Glaser remained consistent with his earlier exegesis of the method and thus defined grounded theory as a method of discovery, treated categories as emergent from the data, relied on direct and, often, narrow empiricism, and analysed a basic social process.”

However, Strauss (1987) later questioned the relevance of some of the founding principles underpinning his and Glaser’s (1967) seminal work. He subsequently teamed up with Juliet Corbin and they co-authored the book entitled: *The Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which “provoked accusations of distortion and infidelity to the central objectives of parsimony and theoretical emergence” (Glaser, 1992, as cited in Goulding, 1999, p. 7). While Glaser emphasised the “interpretive, contextual and emergent nature of theory development,” Strauss and Corbin, on the other hand, “appeared to have become somewhat dogmatic regarding highly complex and systematic coding techniques” (Goulding, 1999, p. 7). Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 96) presented a new coding technique using “a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (Eaves, 2001, p. 656).

In his book, *The Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, Glaser (1992) criticised the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990) on the basis that it diluted the essence of grounded theory and thus rendered it innocuous. Glaser (1992), as cited in Charmaz (2006, p. 8) asserts that “Strauss and Corbin’s procedures force data and analysis into preconceived categories and, thus, contradict fundamental tenets of grounded theory.” Goulding (1999, p. 7) notes that “other grounded theory researchers have

reiterated this, arguing that Strauss has modified his description of grounded theory from its original concept of emergence to a densely codified operation.” The work of Strauss and Corbin (1990) has received support from Benoliel (1996) and Melia (1996) who viewed their work as complementing classical grounded theory. Benoliel (1996) and Melia (1996) share the view that “in order for knowledge generation to take place, methodologies must be re-examined, revised, further explicated and improved in terms of clarity” (Eaves, 2001, p. 656).

Since Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) book appeared, grounded theory has further evolved into constructivist and objectivist forms based on whether scholars subscribe to the interpretive or positive traditions, respectively (Charmaz, 2000; 2001a; 2006). The constructivist approach to grounded theory “lies squarely in the interpretive tradition” and “places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Two key characteristics have been identified that distinguish constructivist grounded theory from other grounded theory approaches:

- “Constructivist grounded theorists assume a reflective posture towards the research process and products, and consider how their theories develop” (Charmaz, 2006), and
- “Constructivist grounded theorists accept that both data and analyses are social constructions that reveal what was involved in their production” (Bryant, 2002, 2003; Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Hall & Callery, 2001).

In contrast, the objectivist grounded theory subscribes to the positivistic tradition and thus “attends to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the processes of their production” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). Charmaz (2006, p. 131) further contends that “this stance erases the social context from which data emerge,

the influence of the researcher, and often the interactions between grounded theorists and their research participants.”

Mills *et al.* (2006a, pp. 1 – 2) provide an accurate description of the evolution of grounded theory:

Grounded theory can be seen as a methodological spiral that begins with Glaser and Strauss’ original text and continues today. The variety of epistemological positions that grounded theorists adopt are located at various points on this spiral and are reflective of their underlying ontologies. The form of grounded theory followed depends on a clarification of the nature of the relationship between researcher and participant, and on an explication of the field of what can be known.

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, this present study adopted a constructivist approach to the development of grounded theory based on the conviction that neither the researcher nor the participants arrived at this study untouched by the world. The researcher lends credence to the assumption cited in Daniel (2009, p. 97) that “neither the data nor theories are ‘discovered,’ but we are part of the world we study and the data we collect.” Furthermore, in line with the argument presented by Daniel (2009, p. 97), in this study, the researcher “explicitly assumed that any theoretical rendering of the results of this study ‘[would] offer an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it’ (Charmaz, 1995, 2000, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994).” As a consequence, the theoretical model of employee misfit which was developed from the data in this study was “an interpretation of the data that is dependent on this researcher’s personal perspective and point of view” (Daniel, 2009, p. 97).

Mills *et al.* (2006a, p. 6) observe that, “ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist, constructivist grounded theory reshapes the

interaction between researcher and participants in the research process and in doing so brings to the fore the notion of the researcher as author.” Charmaz (2000), as cited by Mills *et al.* (2006a, p. 6) argued that since the mid-1990s, a constructivist approach to grounded theory was “both possible and desirable” because “data do not provide a window on reality” but instead, “reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural and structural contexts.”

Mills *et al.* (2006a, p. 6) offer the following pertinent observations regarding the constructivist grounded approach as espoused by Charmaz (1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2006):

Following Charmaz, researchers need to go beyond the surface in seeking meaning in data, searching for and questioning tacit meanings about values, beliefs and ideologies. There is an underlying assumption that the interaction between the researcher and participants ‘produces the data, and therefore the meanings that the researcher observes and defines’ (Charmaz, 1995a). To enrich these data, Charmaz (1995b) has positioned the researcher as co-producer, exhorting them to ‘add ... a description of the situation, the interaction, the person’s affect and [their] perception of how the interview went.’

Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006b, p. 9) listed three requirements of a constructivist approach to grounded theory:

- “The creation of a sense of reciprocity between participants and the researcher in the co-construction of meaning and, ultimately, a theory that is grounded in participants’ and researcher’s experiences,”

- “The establishment of relationships with participants that explicate power imbalances and attempts to modify these imbalances,” and
- “Clarification of the position the author takes in the text, the relevance of biography and how one renders participants’ stories into theory through writing.”

Breckenridge, Jones, and Elliott (2012, p. 7) argued that “constructivist grounded theory is distinctly different to classic grounded theory methodology.” She identified two fundamental differences:

- First, “Where constructivist grounded theory attempts to interpret how participants construct their realities and present multiple perspectives, it has re-modelled the original purpose of classic grounded theory, which is to conceptualise a latent pattern of behaviour” (Breckenridge *et al.*, 2012, p. 7), and
- Second, “The relativism inherent within constructivist grounded theory and the predetermined philosophical lens are fundamentally at odds with the general inductive nature of the classic approach” (Breckenridge *et al.*, 2012, p. 7).

Breckenridge *et al.* (2012, p. 7) contends that “given these fundamental differences, it is essential that researchers are clear and consistent in their choice of methodology, following one path rather than engaging in a methodological ‘pick and mix’.”

Chenitz and Swanson (1986), as cited in Daniel (2009, p. 98) stated that the purpose of grounded theory was to “further an understanding of social phenomena.” Strauss and Corbin (1990) noted that “through the use of this method, theory is

discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon” (Daniel, 2009, p. 98).

The field of misfit has been criticised for not having been grounded in substantive theoretical frameworks (Edwards, 2008; Wheeler *et al.*, 2013). As a consequence, many of the studies examining misfit antecedents and outcomes lacked cogent explanations that were underpinned by sound fit/misfit-specific theory. This omission has resulted in the stagnation of any credible research in the misfit field. The various definitional conundrums and ambiguities currently existing in misfit research have yet to be solved. Grounded theory presented the opportunity to satisfactorily address this gap in the misfit literature, as this study was based on the perceptions and actual experiences of employees in the context of the South African working environment.

Glaser (2001, p. 122) noted that from an academic standpoint, grounded theory research “is a sure thing as a contribution” (Daniel, 2009, p. 98) for two principal reasons:

- “Originality is assured in a grounded theory study given that the goal is to generate a theory from data, not to logically deduce a theory from existing theories or to verify existing theories” (Glaser, 1999; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Daniel, 2009, p. 98), and
- “Once the theory is generated, a review of the existing literature in the field is incorporated” (Daniel, 2009, p. 99).

Based on these two reasons, the present grounded theory study “extended and adjusted the literature” (Glaser, 2001, as cited in Daniel, 2009, p. 99) and in the process makes a significant scholarly and practical contribution to what is currently understood about misfit in the workplace.

3.5 Other Important Research Design Issues

3.5.1 An Exploratory Focus

As highlighted earlier in this chapter (section 3.4.5), the researcher embraced a grounded theory approach of the constructivist type to investigate this study's research questions. The use of grounded theory required an exploratory focus as opposed to the hypothesis-testing approach that characterises empirical studies. Daniel (2009, p. 99) stated that "grounded theory, as an experimental and emergent research methodology, allows the use of interviews to capture data." In line with this, the researcher opted for the use of semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews as a tool to obtain the type of rich data that was required to shed light on the phenomenon of misfit.

3.5.2 The Constant Comparison of Data Principle

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 105) introduced the principle of the "constant comparison of data" which entails initially comparing data on an interview-to-interview basis, and subsequently comparing data from the interviews with "the theory that is emerging from the data" (Daniel, 2009, p. 99). By adopting this methodological approach for this study, the data obtained from the participants through the interviews were used to construct a theory – which was articulated in the form of a conceptual model – as opposed to being used to "test the validity of existing theories" (Daniel, 2009, p. 99).

3.5.3 Justifying the use of a Mono-Method Approach

The choice of research design is usually guided by the research questions of a study. Bryman (2005), however, noted that in practice this inclination is often circumvented. For example, in his study on researchers' practices in relation to mixed-methods research, he reported that two discourses emerged from the

interview data. More specifically, a particularistic discourse that mirrors the traditional view that supports using mixed-methods research only when the research questions warrant it and a universalistic discourse which views mixed-methods research as generally more superior (Bryman, 2008). Onwuegbuzie and Leach (2005) argued that mono-method research is a major threat to the advancement of the social sciences and advocated that students should develop into pragmatic researchers by embracing mixed-methods approaches.

The researcher opted to use a qualitative mono-method approach in this study. A few factors influenced the researcher's choice of method. Firstly, the researcher subscribed to the particularistic discourse and as such was guided by the type of research questions formulated in this study. The research questions sought to extract rich data on a sensitive and emotional topic, that is, individuals' experiences of misfit. This type of data could not easily be extracted using more empirical approaches. Secondly, recent research especially that conducted by the Fit Project Team at Open University in the UK suggested the use of more qualitative techniques to unravel the complexities around the misfit construct. These studies primarily used causal mapping and storytelling techniques and it was suggested that perhaps other qualitative techniques (for example, in-depth interviews) should be embraced in order to validate their results (Talbot and Billsberry, 2007a; 2008; 2010).

The adoption of a multiple methods within the qualitative rubric was deemed superfluous by the researcher as these methods were unable to enhance the quality of data any further than what the in-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews would have achieved.

3.5.4 Time Dimension

The researcher adopted a cross-sectional design in this study. Cross-sectional studies are "carried out once and represent a snapshot in time" as opposed to

longitudinal studies which are “repeated over an extended period” (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p. 199). Longitudinal designs have the advantage of being able to monitor variations of time and are regarded as being far more superior in tests of causality as a causal relationship between X and Y necessitates that X occurs before Y. However, the restrictions on budgets and time, especially when conducting academic research towards a masters or doctoral degree, often justify the need for cross-sectional studies (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008). It has been noted that some of the advantages of longitudinal designs may accrue to cross-sectional studies by “adroit questioning about past attitudes, history and future expectations” (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p. 199).

The researcher opted for a cross-sectional design primarily on the basis that it was not the stated intention of the research to assess changes in particular variables over a period of time. This current study sought to ask employees at one point in time to relate their perceptions and past experiences of not fitting at work. Consequently, it was considered unnecessary to interview these same employees some months later to track any variations in their misfit condition.

3.5.5 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis has been described as “the level at which the research is performed and which objects are researched” (Blumberg *et al.* 2008, p. 224). Typically, these may include a person, groups, supervisor-subordinate dyads, organisations and so forth. The unit analysis that formed the focus of this study is the individual employee.

3.6 The Place of the Literature Review in Grounded Theory Studies

3.6.1 Current Debate: Purists versus Pragmatists

Grounded theory has several distinctive features, including theoretical sampling and constant comparative analysis which differentiate it from other research approaches (Dunne, 2011). Moreover, grounded theory research requires that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously, thus making it significantly unique when compared to other methods of conducting research (Charmaz, 2006; Dunne, 2011). A noteworthy point of contention in grounded theory research has been how and when the prevailing literature should be used (Dunne, 2011; McCallin, 2006; McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007). This conundrum has been a source of considerable uncertainty among novice researchers setting out on grounded theory studies. There is considerable tension in the literature between the purist position advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1998) that is opposed to an early literature review and the more relaxed stance taken by Strauss and Corbin (1998), who acknowledge the value of such a review in the primary stages of research.

Glaser (1998) and Glaser and Strauss (1967)'s standpoint contradicted many conventional research methods which considered a detailed literature review during the primary stages of research as fundamental to building a solid foundation upon which a study may proceed (Dunne, 2011). It should be emphasised, however, that Glaser (1998) did not advocate a total ban on a review of the literature, but merely deferment to a stage after the data has been collected and analysed (Dunne, 2011). According to Dunne (2011, p. 114), Glaser's central concern is "the premise that a detailed literature review conducted at the outset may 'contaminate' the data collection, analysis and theory development by leading the researcher to impose existing frameworks, hypotheses or other theoretical ideas upon the data, which in turn would undermine the focus, authenticity and quality of the grounded theory research." Moreover, Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original posture was grounded on

the need for categories to surface naturally from the empirical data during the analysis phase of a study without it being clouded by existing theoretical frameworks and related hypotheses (Dunne, 2011).

The purist stance advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) has been criticised on several grounds. Firstly, the absence of a detailed review of the literature during the early stages of research may obfuscate the framing of the problem statement and related research questions guiding the study. Secondly, qualitative studies and more particularly, grounded theory studies are useful in exploratory investigations when not much is known about the topic of interest. It thus becomes almost impossible for researchers adopting Glaser and Straus's (1967) classical approach to discover existing gaps in the literature pertaining to the area of interest. Thirdly, the researcher may be oblivious to design, methodological and logistical issues that hindered previous research, thus, incurring considerable costs in terms of both time and money. Finally, the adoption of the purist position may be impractical for many researchers as their research funding and advancement are intrinsically linked to the production of a research proposal, with a literature review as its fundamental component (Coyne & Cowley, 2006; Dunne, 2011; McCann & Clark, 2003; McGhee *et al.*, 2007; Payne, 2007). It can thus be concluded that many of the arguments put forward by Glaser (1998) are unrealistic. Indeed, arguments such as "engaging with the literature review may contaminate the research by imposing assumptions and preconceptions" (Dunne, 2011, p. 117), and "researchers may be unduly influenced by theoretical ideas and assumptions gleaned from the extant literature" (Dunne, 2011, p. 117) have been rebuffed (see Charmaz, 2006; Cutcliffe, 2000; Urquhart, 2007).

Many research scholars are now calling for a middle position that takes cognisance of some of Glaser's (1998) views while acknowledging the benefits of an early literature review.

The above discussion highlights the fact that the role and timing of a literature review is a contentious issue among scholars conducting grounded theory research. In order to eliminate any confusion, it is imperative for a researcher to clearly justify his/her approach with regard to the place of the literature review in his/her study. In this regard, Dunne (2011, p. 118) notes that “each researcher must make an informed and justifiable decision regarding how and when extant literature will be employed in a grounded theory study.”

3.6.2 Approach Adopted in this Study

In this study, the researcher adopted the approach taken by Dunne (2011) in his doctoral study of intercultural relations of students in higher education. Thus, in line with Dunne’s (2011) style, the extant literature on organisational misfit was separated into existing empirical research and existing theoretical concepts with each having a different focus during different stages of the research process.

Preceding the data collection phase of this study, the researcher undertook a review of existing empirical studies in the area of organisational fit and misfit. This was deemed pertinent to familiarise the researcher with relevant issues, past research and existing gaps in knowledge. Furthermore, this early review of the empirical research helped the researcher to focus on a particular area of misfit that had hitherto been disregarded and to frame the problem statement and research questions. The early focus on existing empirical research on misfit formed an integral part of the research proposal which is a mandatory requirement for all doctoral students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The researcher adopted an entirely different application when engaging with the existing theoretical concepts relevant to this study. While it is germane to point out that the researcher had some prior theoretical knowledge of organisational fit and misfit, having been involved in discussions with several experts from the Fit Project Team at the Open University in the UK, utmost care was taken to avoid imposing a

specific theoretical framework on this research study at its inception. In line with the way in which Dunne (2011) enacted his methodological approach, the existing theories that the researcher was *au fait* with were melded into the new concepts and tentative hypotheses that emerged from the data collection and analyses. At the same time, the researcher aimed to recognise novel theories that could be used to reinforce or challenge the findings emerging from the data analysis “in order to improve the quality, rigour, and profundity of the analysis” (Dunne, 2011, p. 119).

The middle-ground approach espoused by the researcher had significant implications for the structure of the final thesis. Phase one of the literature review which commenced prior to data collection and analysis, and mainly entailed a review of the empirical research undertaken in the area of misfit together with a discussion of conceptual issues, was included in Chapter Two and titled “Literature Review”. The second phase, which included a review of the related theoretical concepts and new literature pertaining to organisational misfit, was incorporated into the Discussion of Results that is, Chapter Five of the thesis.

3.7 Participation Selection Criteria and Procedures

3.7.1 Sampling in Qualitative Grounded Theory Research

Coyne (1997, p. 623) noted that “sampling procedures in qualitative research are not so rigidly prescribed as in quantitative studies.” Morse (1991) argues that “the lack of clear guidelines on principles for selection of a sample has resulted in much confusion in qualitative research” (Coyne, 1997, p. 623). Scholars have recognised the significant impact that sample selection has on the eventual quality of the research in qualitative studies (Charmaz, 2006; Coyne, 1997; Glaser, 1978; Morse, 2007; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Morse (2007, pp. 230 – 234) identified three principles which are integral to the success of qualitative sampling:

- “Excellent research skills are essential for obtaining good data,”

- “It is necessary to locate ‘excellent’ participants to obtain excellent data,”
and
- “Sampling techniques must be targeted and efficient.”

Patton (1990) contends that the various types of sampling techniques used in qualitative research can be grouped under the umbrella term, ‘purposive sampling’. He asserted that “qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This view is supported by Sandelowski (1995), who stated that “all sampling in qualitative research can be described as purposeful and suggested three types of purposeful sampling: maximum variation, phenomenal variation and theoretical variation” (Coyne, 1997, p. 628). Patton (1990) as cited in Coyne (1997, p. 627) presented a list of 15 different strategies that researchers might call upon to purposefully select information-rich cases: “extreme or deviant case sampling; intensity sampling; maximum variation sampling; homogeneous samples; typical case sampling; stratified purposeful sampling; critical case sampling; snowball or chain sampling; criterion sampling; theory-based or operational construct sampling; confirming or disconfirming cases; opportunistic sampling; purposeful random sampling; sampling politically important cases; and convenience sampling.”

In the past, “researchers have been criticised for not describing their sampling strategies in sufficient detail, which makes interpretation of findings difficult and affects replication of the study” (Kitson, Sussman, Williams, Zeehandelaar, Shickmanter, & Steinberger, 1982, as cited in Coyne, 1997, p. 623).

Sampling in grounded theory research has its own idiosyncrasies, a fact noted and succinctly stated by Morse (2007, p. 229):

In comparison with other types of qualitatively derived theory, the theory emerging within grounded theory has a unique structure; one that links the researcher's developing concepts in stages and phases. Because grounded theory is based on symbolic interactionism and processes of negotiating reality and documenting change, grounded theory sampling techniques must not only explicate the dimensional scope of the phenomena of interest, but also enable comprehensive description of the trajectory of the phenomena over time.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced the concept of theoretical sampling to ensure the rigour and quality of grounded theory research. In their seminal work entitled: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, they define theoretical sampling as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). They add that:

This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal. The initial decisions for theoretical collection of data are based only on a general sociological perspective and on a general subject or problem area. The initial decisions are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45).

Glaser (1978) offered recommendations for data collection strategies pertaining to theoretical sampling, including “staying open by changing interviewing styles, sites, or participants; follow up on recurring patterns in participant data; and asking key participants to give more information on categories that seem central to emerging theory” (Draucker, Martsof, Ratchneewan, & Rusk, 2007, p. 1138).

The literature presents numerous versions of how sampling is actually conducted in grounded theory studies. Coyne (1997, p. 625) notes that “theoretical sampling does involve the purposeful selection of a sample in the initial stages.” Glaser (1978, p. 45) concedes that in the primary stages of a study, scholars will “go to the groups which they believe will maximise the possibilities of obtaining data and leads for more data on the question.” In addition, researchers will start by “talking to the most knowledgeable people to get a line on relevancies and leads to track down more data and where and how to locate oneself for a rich supply of data” (Glaser, 1978, p. 45). Chenitz and Swanson (1986), as cited in Coyne (1997, p. 625) echoed these views on theoretical sampling by stating that:

In theoretical sampling, the sample is not selected from the population based on certain variables prior to the study; rather the initial sample is determined to examine the phenomenon where it is found to exist. Then, data collection is guided by a sampling strategy called theoretical sampling.

Morse (2007, p. 235) notes that “in grounded theory, sampling schemes change dynamically with the development of the research.” She identified four types of sampling methods used in grounded theory:

- “Convenience sampling: Participants are selected on the basis of accessibility. This method of sampling is used at the beginning of a project to identify the scope, major components, and trajectory of the overall process” (Morse, 2007, p. 235),

- “Purposeful sampling: Participants are selected as indicated by the initial analysis of interviews. These interviews reveal how participants themselves partition emerging phenomena. Participants may be speaking for themselves (‘we’), or speaking for others (‘they’) (that is, providing shadow data;

Morse, 2001). The researcher will then proceed to sample according to the way this scheme sorts the phenomenon” (Morse, 2007, p. 235),

- “Theoretical sampling: Participants are selected according to the descriptive needs of the emerging concepts and theory. These needs dictate the sampling strategies and goals (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978)” (Morse, 2007, p. 235), and
- “Theoretical group interviews: These are used to expand on and to verify the emerging model. When conducting theoretical group interviews, participants are recalled in small groups, introduced to the preliminary findings, and subsequently asked to discuss and to provide further examples of the findings. Their insights are used to modify and saturate the emerging model” (Morse, 2007, p. 235).

Draucker *et al.* (2007) noted that there may be a case to distinguish theoretical sampling from selective sampling. Schatzman and Strauss (1973), as cited in Draucker *et al.* (2007, pp. 1137 – 1138) argued that “whereas theoretical sampling is guided by emerging theory, selective sampling is the identification of populations and settings prior to data collection.” Draucker *et al.* (2007, pp. 1137 – 1138) concluded that “sampling in grounded theory is sequential, beginning with selective sampling and moving into theoretical sampling when concepts begin to emerge.” The onus is on the researcher to decide when to move from selective to theoretical sampling (Draucker *et al.*, 2007).

Coyne (1997) notes, that a group of scholars has raised concerns regarding the practice of “method slurring” in qualitative research. Baker, Wuest, and Stern (1992) noted that certain qualitative studies were characterised by “the ‘mixing’ of methods and ‘muddling’ of theoretical perspectives” (Coyne, 1997, p. 624).

This discussion highlights the fact that sampling issues in grounded theory studies have been nebulous and inconsistently applied up until this point in time. Against this background, the researcher, for the sake of parsimony, clarity and ease of understanding, deemed it prudent to adopt a two-stage approach to sampling in this study. This ensured that the basic tenets of grounded theory sampling as espoused by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2006) were strictly adhered to. Moreover, the sampling strategy chosen was modelled on the approach that was successfully used by Eyles (2009) in her study entitled: *A Grounded Theory Study of Homeopathic Practitioners' Perceptions and Experiences of the Homeopathic Consultation*.

As highlighted previously, the area of misfit has been under-researched. In cases where not much is known about a topic, qualitative, exploratory approaches would be deemed appropriate to uncover facts. The goal of qualitative research is not to examine a large number of participants with the aim of producing statistically generalizable results, but instead, to conduct a more in-depth study on a small number of participants to obtain rich data (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Daniel, 2009; Silverman, 1985). Charmaz (2006) put forward a strong argument for the need to use smaller sample sizes instead of large samples to extract in-depth, rich data in grounded theory studies. She commented incisively that:

Many quantitative studies require random samples of people whose characteristics are representative of the population under study. Whereas quantitative researchers want to use their data to make statistical inferences about their target populations, grounded theorists aim to fit their emerging theories with their data. Quantitative researchers test preconceived hypotheses; grounded theorists sometimes offer the grist for emergent hypotheses that other researchers might pursue. Colleagues and teachers who invoke the logic of quantitative research often mistakenly advise qualitative researchers to make their samples

represent distributions of larger populations. The error of this advice lies in assuming that qualitative research aims for generalizability. Although this strategy may be useful for initial sampling, it does not fit the logic of grounded theory and can result in the researcher collecting unnecessary and conceptually thin data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 101).

3.7.2 Criteria for Participant Eligibility

In order to qualify to take part in this study, potential participants were required to fulfil the following criteria:

- A potential participant should be currently or previously employed for more than a year in their current or previous organisation, respectively, and
- A participant should have experienced some form of ‘not fitting in’ (or misfit) in their current or previous organisation.

The above pre-set criteria for participant eligibility were necessary in order to obtain rich and high quality data from employees who had actually experienced misfit in their workplaces. These misfit experiences informed the conceptual model which was developed as a primary objective of this grounded theory study. Moreover, setting a baseline of a minimum of one year’s work experience was a necessary precondition as it was considered unlikely that employees with less than a year’s experience would be in a position to speak confidently about organisational matters and issues surrounding misfit.

3.7.3 A Description the Sampling Process used in this Study

3.7.3.1 Stage One - Purposive Sampling

The first stage of the sampling process employed a purposive sampling technique. Bryman (2008), as cited in Eyles (2009, p. 31) contends that “the goal of purposive sampling was to sample participants in a strategic way, to obtain a sample appropriate for the research question and to ensure that there was a variety in the resulting sample so that participants differed from each other in terms of key characteristics.” Using purposive sampling at the outset was slow in eliciting potential respondents as many misfits were not keen to reveal themselves and voluntarily agree to be a part of the study. Consequently, it was necessary to use an additional technique known as snowball sampling.

According to Saunders *et al.* (2007, p. 232), “snowball sampling is commonly used when it is difficult to identify members of the desired population.” Likewise, Blumberg *et al.* (2008, p. 255) argued that snowball sampling is useful “in applications where respondents are difficult to identify and are best located through referral networks.” In this study, the employee misfits that the researcher initially made contact with suggested other employees who they felt were germane or enthusiastic to participate in the study.

Due to the sensitivity surrounding misfit and the fact that it has traditionally been viewed as a negative or undesirable condition, many potential participants who had experienced misfit were reluctant to talk about it for fear of being labelled, ostracised or victimised. As a result, a tactful approach was required from the researcher to ensure a more favourable response. A screening question was used to help identify these so-called ‘misfits’. For the purposes of expediency, it was assumed that employees who had expressed some degree of unhappiness in their current or previous workplaces might be experiencing or have experienced some degree of misfit. A screening question was devised (see Appendix C); this required

potential participants to indicate, on the basis of their unhappiness, the extent to which, on a scale of 1 to 9, they regarded themselves as a misfit, with 9 being an absolute misfit and 1 not a misfit at all.

Similar to the approach adopted by Daniel (2009), word of mouth was used to lobby interest in the study as was the researcher's own knowledge of colleagues and acquaintances who indicated that they did not fit in with their organisation or were unhappy in their jobs. These individuals were emailed the screening question and on the basis of their response, were approached with a request to voluntarily participate in this research study. During the recruitment of these potential participants, the researcher held face-to-face meetings or telephonic conversations to explain the purpose and background of the study, the selection criteria, and confidentiality issues and other protocol. Employees who demonstrated an interest in taking part in the study and met the selection criteria previously outlined, were forwarded a copy of two relevant documents: (a) information about the research study (see Appendix A), and (b) an informed consent form (see Appendix B).

Daniel's (2009, p. 102) approach also guided the researcher when responding to referrals from other people. The researcher engaged in dialogue with each of the referral sources to describe the background and purpose of the study, the participant selection criteria, and issues of confidentiality and other related protocol. Individuals who indicated that they were willing to assist with the recruitment process were provided with the following brief covering letter to use when making contact with a potential referral participant:

Mervyn Williamson is a doctoral student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance. He is conducting a research study in fulfilment of his thesis, to investigate the perceptions and experiences of organisational misfit among South African employees. Mervyn has requested my help in recruiting

participants for his study. Participation in his study is voluntary, you will not be identified, and all information that you provide will be held in the strictest of confidence. Is this study something that interests you and are you keen in setting aside some time to participate in this research?

3.7.3.2 Stage Two – Theoretical Sampling

The researcher continued to be guided by Eyles (2009) when enacting the second stage of the study's sampling strategy. Eyles (2009, p. 31) argued that "as a study develops and becomes more specific, a more focused sampling approach is needed." In this context, theoretical sampling was considered to best serve this purpose. Charmaz (2006) and Glaser and Strauss (1967), as cited in Eyles (2009, pp. 31 – 32) asserted that "theoretical sampling was the process of data collection where the researcher having been informed by prior analysis decided what data to collect next in order to develop the emerging theory." The theoretical sampling technique used in this study therefore "ensured that the sampling was fluid and evolved as needed throughout the study so that questions that arose could be tested along with the developing theoretical model and its categories" (Eyles, 2009, p. 32). Eyles (2009, p. 32) further asserted that "the subsequent use of theoretical sampling to explore views of participants that differed from others was used to provide a balanced perspective."

3.8 Pilot Study

According to Blumberg *et al.* (2008, p. 74), "the data-gathering phase of the research process typically begins with pilot testing." Polit, Beck, and Hungler (2001, p. 467) asserted that "a pilot study can be utilised as a small scale version or trial run in preparation for a major study." Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001, p. 1) stated that "the term 'pilot studies' refers to mini versions of a full-scale study (also called 'feasibility' studies), as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular

research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview schedule.” They add that “pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design” and “conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success in the main study, but it does increase the likelihood” (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001, p. 1).

Blumberg *et al.* (2008, p. 74) noted that “a pilot study is conducted to detect weaknesses in design and instrumentation, and to provide proxy data for selection of a probability sample.” They further contend that pilot studies should, therefore, “draw subjects from the target population and stimulate the procedures and protocols that have been designated for data collection” (Blumberg *et al.*, 2008, p. 74). There are several benefits to conducting a pilot study. Brause (2000), as cited in Daniel (2009, p. 103) noted that these include:

- “A rehearsal to see how the researcher will perform,”
- “Confirmation that the process will work,”
- “Assurances that materials collected are the ones needed,”
- “An opportunity to experiment with procedures for analysing data,”
- “An opportunity to revise procedures as needed.”

The exact sample size that is required has been the subject of considerable debate in the literature. For example, Baker (1994) established that “a sample of 10 – 20% of the sample size for the actual study is a reasonable number of participants to consider enrolling in a pilot” (Simon, 2011, p. 1). Moreover, Blumberg *et al.* (2008, p. 74) argued that “the size of the pilot group may range from 5 to 100 subjects, depending on the method to be tested, but the respondents do not have to be statistically selected.”

Due to the subjective and discretionary nature of qualitative research, the literature is relatively silent on what represents an appropriate sample size in this type of research. In grounded theory studies, estimating the correct sample size for pilot studies could be a challenging exercise for researchers if the size is based on a percentage of the final sample size. The final sample size in grounded theory studies is difficult to predict at the outset because the researcher would have no idea of the precise point at which data saturation would be reached.

For the purposes of this research, a pilot study was conducted on four participants who were known to the researcher and who had previously expressed an interest in the research topic. This sample size is within the range recommended by Baker (1994) (that is, 10% of 40). All the relevant protocol set down for the main study was strictly adhered to, including the screening of the individuals against the set selection criteria. As stated by Daniel (2009, p. 103), the purpose of the pilot study in this research study was “to inform the study by testing the adequacy of procedures and questions contained in the Interview Guide” (see Appendix D) that underpinned the semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews.

Prescott and Soeken (1989, p. 60) stated that “pilot studies are likely to be under-discussed, underused and underreported.” Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001, p. 4) concluded that “a well-designed and well-conducted pilot study can inform us about the best research process and occasionally about likely outcomes.” As the pilot interview process evolved, the research procedures and interview schedule were adapted and improved. For example, the question order and wording in certain specific instances were changed to ensure a seamless transition. There were however, no material and significant changes to the protocols of the study.

3.9 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Misfit has been under-researched (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008). The few studies that have examined misfit used quantitative, statistical approaches with large samples,

with the primary aim of generalising the findings across different subject populations. As noted earlier in this chapter, this external-in approach to the study of misfit failed to take cognisance of the fact that misfit is also a psychological experience. Thus, other research approaches and methods are required that could be effective in eliciting people's attitudes, feelings or experiences of misfit. This could shed more light on what the construct of misfit actually means to the individual concerned.

Against this background, there have been calls for a paradigmatic shift in how misfit is studied, to embrace more qualitative methodologies (Billberry *et al.*, 2005b; Talbot & Billsberry, 2008). This study heeds this call by using a qualitative, constructivist grounded theory approach to the study of misfit. As Charmaz (1990) succinctly stated; "to use the grounded theory method effectively, the researcher needs rich, detailed data" (Daniel, 2009, p. 104). The face-to-face interview is a research instrument that perfectly fits these requirements.

The data collection instrument and procedures used in this research study are discussed in the following sections.

3.9.1 The Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument used was a semi-structured, face-to-face interview schedule. This interview schedule is reflected in Appendix D. It basically consists of an introduction, the interview questions and conclusion. The interview questions, form the core component of the schedule and includes; the participants' background information and perceptions and experiences of misfit.

3.9.2 The Interviews

3.9.2.1 Interview Process and Procedures

As highlighted previously, the researcher used qualitative, in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection instrument to collect data from the participants in this grounded theory study. Goulding (2002, p. 59) provided valuable insight into the use of interviews in grounded theory studies:

Interviews may take many forms: they may be structured, unstructured, group, face-to-face or conducted over the telephone. With grounded theory, the most common form of interview is the face-to-face, unstructured or, more realistically, semi-structured, open-ended, ethnographic, in-depth conversational interview. This is favoured because it has the potential to generate rich and detailed accounts of the individual's experience. It should also be flexible enough to allow the discussion to lead into areas which may not have been considered prior to the interview but which may be potentially relevant to the study.

DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 315) stated that “the individual in-depth interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters.” They add that “the in-depth interview is meant to be a personal and intimate encounter in which open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 317). Charmaz (2006, p. 25) supports the use of intensive interviewing in grounded theory and asserts that “intensive interviewing permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience.” The use of intensive interviewing allows the researcher to:

- “Go beneath the surface of the described experience(s),”
- “Stop to explore a statement or topic,”
- “Request more detail or explanation,”
- “Ask about the participant’s thoughts, feelings and actions,”
- “Keep the participant on the subject,”
- “Come back to an earlier point,”
- “Restate the participant’s point to check for accuracy,”
- “Slow or quicken the pace,”
- “Shift the immediate topic,”
- “Validate the participant’s humanity, perspective or action,”
- “Use observational and social skills to further the discussion," and
- “Respect the participant and express appreciation for participation” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 26).

Many scholars have recognised that conducting in-depth interviews is a challenge for novice researchers (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Charmaz, 2006; DiCicco-Bloem & Crabtree, 2006; Goulding, 2002; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Fontana and Frey (1994), as cited in Goulding (2002, pp. 59 – 60) provide a list of the main considerations associated with interviewing:

- “Accessing the setting,”
- “Understanding the language and culture of the respondents,”
- “Deciding on how to present oneself,”
- “Locating an informant,”
- “Gaining trust,” and
- “Establishing rapport.”

The interview dates and locations were set in advance by the researcher. All participants were given reminders either by telephone or email a few days before the interviews took place. A variety of locations ranging from offices to boardrooms were used to conduct the interviews, depending on their suitability and the convenience of the participants. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. As is customary in grounded theory studies, the data collection process was governed by the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Consequently, it was difficult for the researcher to have advance knowledge of how many respondents would be required to reach a point of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, in the end, a total of 40 employee misfits, including four who were part of the pilot study, made up the final sample size for this study.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced himself to the participant and provided a brief description of the study and other related information. Each and every participant was assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of all their responses at the outset. In addition, the researcher reiterated the fact that involvement in this research was voluntary and that the respondent had the right to terminate the interview should he or she feel the need to do so. Permission to record the interviews was requested from all respondents prior

to the commencement of the interviews. Given the significance of the data collection phase in this grounded theory study, a high-quality Sony Digital Voice Recorder (Model: ICD-PX312M) was used to record all interviews.

The purpose of the interviews was to ask each respondent to share their perceptions and experiences of being a misfit in the workplace. The initial review of the literature and consultations with members of the Fit Project Team in the UK, who had some experience of working with misfit issues, guided the design of the questions included in the interview schedule (see Appendix D).

After the initial introduction and protocol, the digital voice recorder was switched on and the first of a series of questions was put to the respondent. The researcher requested specific biographical data about the respondent, including age, job title, sector employed in, race group, and so forth, as a starting point. Thereafter, a broad question, namely, “What does the term misfit mean to you?” was posed to the respondent to kick start the “business end” of the interview. The participants were given *carte blanche* to speak their mind and only when there was a prolonged silence was another question asked. Glaser (2001), as cited in Daniele (2009, p. 106) noted that “the way to identify the main concerns of the participants is to say as little as possible and listen.”

During the interviews, the researcher made brief notes about key issues raised by the respondent that warranted further clarification. The dynamics of the interaction between the researcher and respondent varied from a casual conversation to more formal disclosure about what misfit really means to the individual concerned. Prior and subsequent to all interviews, reflective notes were taken about the process (Eyles, 2009). This provided the researcher with a valuable learning experience and insight into the nature of the recorded data (Eyles, 2009).

As stated by Daniel (2009, p. 106) and experienced by the researcher, “the interview guide helped focus the interviews, but did not appear to constrain or limit

the potential responses of the participants.” Consequently, the respondents “were able to share their stories and experiences in a linear and somewhat coherent manner” (Daniel, 2009, p. 106).

Conducting interviews in grounded theory studies could prove challenging for many researchers not schooled in the principles of theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method espoused by the classical school of grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Taking cognisance of these requirements, the researcher changed to more focused questions in subsequent interviews after having analysed the earlier interviews. Glaser (1978, 2001) contends that those subscribing to grounded theory usually begin with a broad open-ended question and progress to more specific questions on the subject matter under investigation.

In keeping with classical grounded theory guidelines, analysis began as soon as “the initial data was collected and this informed further data collection” (Eyles, 2009, p. 34). After having completed the tenth interview, it was evident that similar matters were being raised by the respondents and this delivered the impetus to “delve deeper” in succeeding interviews. On completion of the fifteenth interview, “the analysis had developed and categories were emerging from the initial concepts, these categories then became the focus of subsequent data collection so that the researcher could further understand the properties for each category and their relationship with each other” (Eyles, 2009, p. 34). Subsequent to this, the data collection process took on a different angle. The researcher assumed a more engaging posture which was made manifest in the form of more focused questions being directed at the interviewees. This enabled the researcher to acquire more “relevant data” and provided the opportunity to “refute or enlarge his knowledge of the categories” (Eyles, 2009, p. 34).

The constant comparison of interview data and theoretical sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Holton (2007, p. 281) shed light on the

significance and interrelatedness of the processes of constant comparison and theoretical sampling as follows:

The constant comparison of interchangeable indicators in the data yields the properties and dimensions of each category, or concept. This process of constant comparison continues until no new properties or dimensions are emerging. At this point, a concept has been theoretically saturated. This 'intense property development' (Glaser, 2001, p. 191) produces the conceptual density necessary to lift the theory above description and enable its integration through theoretical propositions (hypotheses) as abstract conceptual theory. 'Once a category is saturated, it is not necessary to theoretically sample anymore to collect data for incident comparisons. And of course, once many interrelated categories of a grounded theory are saturated, theoretical completeness is achieved for the particular research' (Glaser, 2001, p. 192).

After completing 35 interviews, it became clear to the researcher that no additional information had emerged that was different from previous interviews, thus persuading the researcher to tentatively conclude that a point of theoretical saturation may have been reached. To err on the conservative side, the researcher interviewed a further five participants. There were no further changes in the pattern of information previously acquired, thus providing further proof that theoretical saturation had indeed, been reached. Consequently, by the end of the interview process, a total of 40 respondents had participated in the study.

Prior to the termination of all interviews, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and raise issues that had previously not been raised, but that were deemed important to the study. Thereafter, the interviews were terminated by switching off the digital voice recorder and thanking all participants for being part

of this ground-breaking study on misfit. Permission was sought to contact the respondents to clarify matters that emerged from the transcriptions and did not make sense.

3.9.2.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

All interview data were treated in the strictest of confidence. The names of the participants are only known to the researcher and are not disclosed in any of the findings and documents presented in this thesis. Each of the respondents was allocated a code for ease of identification and these codes were used in the transcripts as a mechanism to ensure anonymity.

3.9.2.3 Transcription of the Interviews

Grounded theory approaches are known to have their own idiosyncratic methodology. The principles of theoretical sampling and constant comparison of data place an obligation on the researcher to analyse the interview data as and when they are completed. The timing of this task is necessary because the information acquired and analysed from an interview will inform the dynamics and type of questioning used in subsequent interviews. This process continues until theoretical saturation is reached.

Against this background, it was imperative that the transcription of interviews be undertaken as speedily as possible. To facilitate this process and to prevent any bottlenecks from occurring, the researcher employed the services of four professional transcriptionists. These individuals were known to have good track-records and were highly recommended by colleagues of the researcher. To facilitate the transcription process, the interview data were equitably distributed among the four transcriptionists and tight deadlines were set for task completion. The recorded interviews, together with the digital voice recorder were personally delivered to the transcriptionists by the researcher. On receipt, the transcriptionist would download

the recorded interview data and then proceeded to transcribe these recordings. Thereafter, these transcriptions were delivered back to the researcher for final verification.

3.9.2.4 Timescale for Interviews

The interviews were conducted over a three month period between September 2012 and November 2012. Following, is a table reflecting a breakdown of the number of participants interviewed each month.

Table 3.9.2.4 Number of Participants Interviewed Each Month

Month	September 2012	October 2012	November 2012
No. of Employees	15	12	13

3.10 Analysis of the Data

3.10.1 Analysing Qualitative Grounded Theory Data

Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that “grounded theory research is a qualitative tradition built on compared concepts” (Scott & Howell, 2008, p. 2). Inextricably linked to grounded theory is the constant comparative method which entails grouping and conceptually labelling similar data through a process called open coding (Scott & Howell, 2008). At this juncture, concepts are categorised. On completion of the open coding process, the researcher then proceeds to link and organise categories by interconnectivity and association through a process known as axial coding (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Scott & Howell, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

According to Boeije (2002), as cited in Scott & Howell (2008, p. 2) “there is wide discussion of the grounded theory tradition, yet the process for carrying out the analysis remained vague.” The literature contains many accounts of the various approaches used in the analysis of grounded theory data (Scott & Howell, 2008). Many of these approaches have diverged from Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) original method (Eaves, 2001). Backman and Kyngäs (1999, p. 150) capture the essential elements of the data analysis process in grounded theory as follows:

Data analysis is started during the data collection. In this phase, the researcher identifies the research phenomenon. The process continues while coding the data. During the analysis, categories are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions through a process involving the generation of basic categories to describe features of the data and constant comparisons between cases, instances and categories. Similar events and incidents are grouped together into categories (Glaser, 1978; Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Goulding (2002, pp. 74 – 75) offers her take on the analysis of data in the excerpt below:

The analytical process involves coding strategies: the process of breaking down interviews, observations and other forms of appropriate data into distinct units of meaning which are labelled to generate concepts. These concepts are initially clustered into descriptive categories. They are then re-evaluated for their relationships and through a series of analytical steps are gradually subsumed into higher order categories, or one underlying core category, which suggests an emergent theory. Each stage of the coding process presents dilemmas of

interpretation. How these dilemmas are dealt with depends on how one conceptualises the method, and over the years this conceptualisation has reflected tensions in philosophical definitions. However, throughout the process it is important to inference and prepositional thinking, otherwise the researcher becomes lost in a sea of facts.

Backman and Kyngäs (1999, p. 150) argued that “data analysis can also be seen as the researcher’s process.” Glaser (1978) identified three phases of this process. Phase one is referred to as the input phase. In this phase, “the data move as part of researcher’s thinking” (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999, p. 150). The second phase is known as the “drugless trip” and in this phase, “the data are in the researcher’s mind” meaning that “he or she has a lot of different ideas concerning the theory, but nothing seems clear” (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999, p. 150). Phase three has been labelled the saturation phase. This phase has been regarded as the most significant for theory development and entails “the researcher writing down the results of the analysis and then making his or her conclusions” (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999, p. 150).

Strauss and Corbin (1998), as cited in Scott and Howell (2008, p. 3) stated that “analysis is the interplay between the researcher and the data.” Scott and Howell, (2008, p. 3) add that “a researcher espousing the constructivist grounded theory paradigm addresses the participants’ ecology (McCaslin & Scott, 2003) and the meanings participants confer on their realities (Charmaz, 2000).”

3.10.2 Data Analysis of Current Study

As previously highlighted, the researcher adopted a constructivist approach to grounded theory. This constructivist approach was initially articulated by Charmaz (1995b; 2000; 2005; 2006) and, as noted earlier, “lies squarely in the constructivist/interpretive tradition, meaning that the understanding gained from the

theory developed rests squarely on the researcher's interpretation of the studied phenomenon" (Daniel, 2009, p. 109).

3.10.2.1 Initial Open Coding

All 40 interview transcripts were read a number of times by the researcher in an attempt to gain a deeper comprehension of the participants' responses provided and to ensure their accuracy and completeness. The researcher subsequently coded the data using the interview questions as a guide. Similar to the method adopted by Daniel (2009, p. 110), "each relevant participant response was marked in the interview transcripts" and "once the relevant responses were isolated from the transcript data, the researcher open-coded each response using a grounded, constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2001b)." While undertaking this first stage of coding, the researcher scrutinised each response and created abbreviated codes to match the data. This process culminated in the generation of 157 open-codes that represented a broad range of interviewee responses.

3.10.2.2 Refining the Open Coding

The next stage involved further in-depth examination of the 157 open-codes for redundancies and conceptually similar responses which had previously been coded separately. This step was necessary for the sake of parsimony and to avoid the unnecessary duplication of similar responses labelled under different categories. After a series of consolidations, the participant responses were eventually clustered into 12 principle codes: misfit definitions; attributed causal factors; misfit individual consequences; misfit organisational consequences; misfit coping behaviour; misfit management; misfit concealment; misfit conspicuousness; co-worker reactions to misfits; manager/supervisor reactions to misfit; misfit process; and misfit stages. Each of these principle codes or categories was made up of a number of sub-categories. For example, under the rubric of misfit definitions, there were a various number of sub-categories such as "a label", "a non-conformist", "a

multidimensional concept” and so forth. These principle categories and sub-categories were validated by a colleague of the researcher who independently conducted this coding process. At this juncture, after further and careful examination of all interview transcript data, the researcher came to the conclusion that the codes produced “were conceptually saturated and exhaustive” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Daniel, 2009, p. 111).

3.10.2.3 Axial Coding

The categories and sub-categories that were identified in the open coding process were further re-examined for further insight and meaning. This process involved a further re-configuration of the categories and sub-categories to make meaningful sense of the data.

3.10.2.4 Theoretical Coding

In this final stage of the coding process, the researcher combined various input from the literature review, interview data and coding processes completed thus far to create a novel theory that reveals how employees perceive and react to misfit in South African workplaces.

3.11 Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Studies

Although it has been well established that reliability and validity are significant benchmarks in inculcating and evaluating the worth of empirical studies, there has been some debate around its relevance to qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Even research scholars, who have previously acknowledged the role of reliability and validity in qualitative research, have indicated that a different posture incorporating altered meanings of terms should possibly be adopted. Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 410) listed two stances adopted by qualitative scholars in relation to this issue:

- “Assimilate reliability and validity into qualitative research with little change of meaning other than playing down the salience of measurement issues,” or
- “Judge qualitative studies according to different criteria from those of quantitative research.”

Hammersley (1992), as cited in Thyer (2001, p. 273) argues that “it is important for qualitative studies to emulate the scientific method in striving for empirical groundedness, generalizability and minimisation of bias.” Patton (2001) contends that “validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). Responding to the question: “how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” raised by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290), Healy and Perry (2000), as cited in Golafshani (2003, p. 601) argued that “the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged by its own paradigm’s terms.” It was asserted that, “while the terms reliability and validity are essential criteria for quality in quantitative research, in qualitative paradigms the terms credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are to be the essential criteria for quality” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest two fundamental criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative studies: trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.11.1 Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research has been defined as “the extent to which the set of meanings derived from several interpreters are sufficiently congruent” (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, as cited in Thyer, 2001, p. 273).

Miles and Huberman (1994), as cited in Thyer (2001, pp. 278) suggest ten criteria for assessing reliability in a qualitative study:

- “Are the research questions clear, and are the features of the study design congruent with them?”
- “Is the researcher’s role and status within the site explicably described?”
- “Do findings show meaningful parallelism across data sources?”
- “Are the basic paradigms and analytic constructs clearly specified?”
- “Were data collected across the full range of appropriate settings, times, respondents, and so on suggested by research questions?”
- “If multiple field-workers are involved, do they have comparable data collection protocols?”
- “Were coding checks made, and did they show adequate agreement?”
- “Were data quality checks made?”
- “Do multiple observers’ accounts converge in instances, settings, or times, when they might be expected to?” and
- “Were any forms of peer or colleague review in place?”

3.11.2 Validity

Kirk and Miller (1986), as cited in Thyer (2001, p. 279) state that “validity in qualitative research addresses whether researchers see what they think they see.” Guba (1981) notes that, “validity in qualitative research is also referred to as credibility” (Thyer, 2001, p. 279). According to Hammersley (1992), “credibility involves the ‘truthfulness’ of study findings, and it is researchers’ responsibility to provide chains of evidence and sets of narrative accounts that are plausible and credible” (Thyer, 2001, p. 279). Miles and Huberman (1994), as cited in Thyer (2001, pp. 281 – 282) presented a list of questions that may assist researchers to assess internal and external validity in qualitative research:

“Internal validity”:

- “How context rich and meaningful (‘thick’) are the descriptions?”
- “Does the account ‘ring true,’ seem convincing, make sense, or enable a ‘vicarious presence’ for the reader?”
- “Did triangulation among the complementary methods and data sources produce generally converging conclusions?”
- “Are the presented data well linked to the categories of prior or emerging theory?”
- “Are the findings internally coherent?”
- “Are the areas of uncertainty identified?”
- “Was negative evidence sought?”

- “Have rival explanations been actively considered?”
- “Have findings been replicated in different parts of the database?”
- “Were the conclusions considered to be accurate by original informants?”
and
- “Were any predictions made in the study, and how accurate were they?”

“External validity”:

- “Are the characteristics of the original sample of persons, settings, processes, and the like fully described to permit adequate comparisons with other samples?”
- “Does the report examine possible threats to generalizability?”
- “Is the sampling theoretically diverse enough to encourage broader applicability?”
- “Does the researcher define the scope and the boundaries of reasonable generalisation from the study?”
- “Do the findings include enough thick description for the reader to assess the potential transferability, or appropriateness, to his or her own setting?”
- “Do a range of readers report the findings to be consistent with their experiences?”
- “Are the findings congruent with, connected to, or confirmatory of prior theory?”

- “Are the processes and outcomes described in conclusions generic enough to be applicable in other settings, even those of a different nature?”

The researcher acknowledged the importance of reliability and validity in this qualitative grounded theory study. As a result, careful attention was paid throughout the research process to issues that might compromise reliability and validity standards. The questions presented by Miles and Huberman (1984) and highlighted above, served as a checklist to ensure that this study meets acceptable standards of reliability and validity.

The researcher also recognised the need to judge qualitative studies according to different criteria from quantitative studies. In this regard, use was made of Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) eight criteria for evaluating grounded theory studies. This is discussed in section 3.12, “Evaluation of the Study Results” of this chapter.

3.11.3 Reflexivity

A potential shortcoming in grounded theory research is that very often data is forced into categories based on preconceived notions held by researchers. These preconceived notions are shaped by individuals’ past experiences and history. The constant comparison method in grounded theory research necessitates that emerging themes are grounded in data rather than predetermined theoretical frameworks. This unreservedly necessitates a mindfulness of “self and a consciously reflective process called reflexivity” (McGhee *et al.*, 2007, p. 335).

Reflexivity has been described as an “integral process in qualitative research whereby researchers reflect continuously on how their own actions, values and perceptions impact on the research setting and can affect data collection and analysis” (Gerrish & Lacey, 2006 as cited in Lambert, Jomeen, & McSherry, 2010, p. 322). McGhee *et al.* (2007, p. 334) noted that reflexivity is seen as “the explicit

quest to limit researcher effects on the data by awareness of self, something seen as integral both to the process of data collection and the constant comparison method essential to grounded theory.”

Neill (2006, p. 253) explored the “value of reflexivity for Glaserian grounded theory methodology by means of examples drawn from experiences of recruiting participants for a doctoral research project.” The results suggested that “the impact of the researcher at the recruitment of participants’ stage of the project needs to become part of the study record to confirm that its impact can be explored through constant comparative analysis” (Neill, 2006, p. 253).

A number of ways have been presented to ensure that reflexivity is maintained. For example, McGhee (2007) suggested the use of memo-writing to help researchers become cognisant of their own possible effects on the data. Jomeen (2006) as cited in Lambert *et al.* (2010, p. 325) argued that “reflexive notes are not intended to provide a confession of researchers’ experiences but are to demonstrate a methodological and theoretical appreciation, openness and a truly honest awareness of interactions between researcher and participant.”

At the outset, the researcher acknowledged the fact that his previous experience and knowledge of the fit/misfit area may influence his approach to the coding of the interview data. In order to mitigate potential bias, the researcher kept copious notes in a journal that clearly identified instances where there could have been researcher interference and what steps were taken to avoid it. At various times during the research process, the researcher would undertake an introspection of himself and this exercise would often reveal warning signals to back off from forcing his preconceived ideas during the interview process and analysis data.

3.11.4 Data Triangulation

Triangulation has been defined as a grouping of methodologies and approaches to investigate the same phenomenon (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Golafshani (2003) as cited in Humble (2009, p. 37) asserted that triangulation has been identified as “a strategy for increasing the validity and rigour of a study.” Denzin (1970) as cited in Bryman (2013, p. 2) distinguished between four types of triangulation:

- “Data triangulation, which involves collecting data using several sampling approaches, thus ensuring data is collected at various times, in different contexts and on a variety of people,”
- “Investigator triangulation, which entails the use of more than one researcher in the field to collect and analyse data,”
- “Theoretical triangulation, which includes the use of more than one theoretical perspective in interpreting data,” and
- “Methodological triangulation, which requires the use of more than one method of gathering data.”

In this study, the researcher adopted a qualitative, mono-method approach using face-to-face interviews. The decision to use a single method approach was taken after careful consideration of the methodologies used in previous studies examining misfit. In the majority of these studies, a single method was used, for example, causal mapping or storytelling. The researcher concluded that when examining people’s experiences of misfit, the use of additional methods may make a substantial difference of validating the results over and above that produced by a single method. However, at certain stages of the data analysis, the researcher obtained the assistance of another person to undertake the initial open coding of the interview data. After completing of the exercise, the researcher and assistant

compared the coding categories and sub-categories developed to establish consistency.

3.12 Report of the Findings

Backman and Kyngäs (1999, p. 151) noted that “one key element in the successful dissemination and utilization of qualitative findings is a well-written research report.” They added that “in contrast to quantitative research, there is no single style for reporting the findings for qualitative research” (Backman and Kyngäs (1999, p. 151). Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 31) argued that “grounded theory can be presented as a well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties.” Backman and Kyngäs (1999, p. 151) further note that, “qualitative researchers must select from an array of representational styles and formats those that best fit their research purposes, methods, and data.” Sandelowski (1998) recognised three approaches to presenting the findings of grounded theory studies: “a) coding families, b) typology family, and c) use of strategy while coding a family” (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999, p. 151).

Glaser (1978), as cited in Goulding (2002, p. 91) argued that “it is not incumbent upon the analyst to provide the reader with descriptions of how each concept was reached, rather the method should be stated and possibly an example of how a code or hypothesis was grounded should be included.” Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted that “the researcher may also quote directly from interviews or conversations, include dramatic segments of on-the-spot field notes, construct case studies of events or persons, or quote telling phrases dropped by informants” (Goulding, 2002, p. 91). They add that “the theory will gain credibility on the part of the readers if they become caught up in the descriptions so vicariously that they feel they have been in the field” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Goulding, 2002, p. 91). Strauss (1987) cautions against presenting findings containing very little critical comment and suggests that presentations should employ sufficient data “which will speak for themselves” (Goulding, 2002, pp. 91 – 92).

The findings of this study are presented in a detailed, articulate and unambiguous narrative which coincides with the pattern and sequence of questions used during the interviews. The logic behind this format was to assist the reader to link the findings to the research questions outlined in Chapter One of this thesis. All sub-categories identified in the interview data are backed up by several uncensored quotations which serve to substantiate the veracity of the interview findings. One of the principal aims of this grounded theory research was the construction of a conceptual framework of employee misfit based on their perceptions and experiences. This objective was realised at the theoretical coding stage of data analysis wherein the various subcategories were conceptually linked to form the conceptual model (see Figure 4.7.1 in Chapter Four).

3.13 Evaluation of the Study Results

In recent years, there has been considerable debate on the quality and rigor of qualitative research (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005). This stems from the fact that reliability and validity standards have not been applied in the same manner as that practised in quantitative research. However, Daniel (2009, p. 122) argued that this did not mean that “qualitative research need not be rigorous in its approach to evaluation of a study’s results.” Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 16) stated that “it is important to recognise that in judging a research publication that claims to generate, elaborate, or ‘test’ a theory, the reader should distinguish four issues.” These are:

- “First, judgments should be made about the validity, reliability, and credibility of the data,”
- “Second, judgments should be made about the plausibility and value of the theory itself,”

- “Third, judgments should be made about the adequacy of the research process which generated, elaborated, or tested the theory,” and
- “Fourth, judgments should be made about the empirical grounding of the research findings.” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 16).

Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 17) further suggested seven criteria that can be used to assess the adequacy of the research process:

- “How was the original sample selected? On what grounds (selective sampling)?”
- “What major categories emerged?”
- “What were some of the events, incidents, actions, and so on that indicated some of these major categories?”
- “On the basis of what categories did theoretical sampling proceed? After the theoretical sample was carried out, how representative did these categories prove to be?”
- “What were some of the hypotheses pertaining to relations among categories? On what grounds were they formulated and tested?”
- “Were they instances when hypotheses did not hold up against what was actually seen? How were the discrepancies accounted for? How did they affect the hypotheses?” and
- “How and why was the core category selected? Was the selection sudden or gradual, difficult or easy? On what grounds were the final analytical decisions made?”

Strauss and Corbin (1998), as cited in Daniel (2009, p. 122) presented eight criteria that can be used to assess the empirical grounding of a study:

- “Are concepts generated?”
- “Are the concepts systematically related?”
- “Are there many conceptual linkages, and are the categories well developed? Do categories have conceptual density?”
- “Is variation built into the system?”
- “Are the conditions under which variations can be found built into the study and explained?”
- “Has the process been taken into account?”
- “Do theoretical statements seem significant, and to what extent?” and
- “Does the theory stand the test of time and become part of the discussions and ideas exchanged among relevant social and professional groups?”

A more parsimonious system of evaluation for grounded theory studies has been proposed by Glaser (1978, 1992). According to Glaser (1978, 1992), the following four criteria serve as the benchmark when evaluating grounded theory studies:

- “Fit – the categories within the theory must directly relate to the data,”
- “Work – the theory should have an explanatory power and be able to interpret what is taking place within the context of the theory,”

- “Relevance – the theory is relevant because the researcher allows the core problems and processes to emerge from the data rather than attempting to impose a preconceived theory on to the area of study,” and
- “Modifiability – given that the social world is constantly changing, the theory must be adaptable and modifiable” (McCann & Clark, 2004, p. 26).

After a careful consideration of all the above stated evaluation criteria, the researcher deemed it prudent to evaluate the present study findings using Glaser’s (1978, 1992) four criteria. This exercise was undertaken at the conclusion of the study and is reported on in the final chapter of this thesis (that is, Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research).

3.14 Ethical Considerations

The context of this qualitative grounded theory study on employees’ perceptions and experiences of misfit is an ethically sensitive research area because misfit is generally seen as an undesirable state to be avoided. Moreover, individuals who experience this condition are generally reluctant to come out in the open and admit that they are misfits for fear of victimisation from their managers, work colleagues and society in general. Kylmä, Vehviläinen-Julkunen, and Lähdevirta (1999, p. 228) assert that “qualitative research (for example, grounded theory) in general is a dynamic and process-oriented process, with close collaboration between the researcher and the participants and for these reasons, there must be continuous awareness of the ethical considerations in the grounded theory research process, especially when the topic is sensitive.”

Allmark, Boote, Chambers, Clarke, McDonnell, Thompson, and Tod (2009) conducted a literature review and discussed the ethical issues relating to in-depth interviews. They identified five themes which were common discussion issues in the various papers reviewed:

- “Privacy and confidentiality,”
- “Informed consent,”
- “Harm,”
- “Dual role and over-involvement,” and
- “Politics and power” (Allmark *et al.*, 2009, pp. 49 – 50).

The researcher adhered to all the ethical protocol governing academic studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. At every stage of the research process, key questions concerning ethical issues as they pertain to generally accepted grounded theory practice were addressed. Throughout the research process, the researcher conducted himself in a highly professional and transparent manner.

Prior to all interviews taking place, respondents were requested to peruse and ratify an informed consent document (refer to Appendix B) which confirmed that they agreed to voluntarily participate in the study. All respondents were notified of the essence and intention of the research and were guaranteed that all their feedback shall remain classified and would be utilised for academic reasons only. The researcher guaranteed that at no stage during and after the research process, would the names of the respondents be disclosed in any document relating to the study. Respondents were informed that all interview recordings and transcript data would be safeguarded and later destroyed after a prescribed period of time, as set down by the University. In place of their names, respondents were allocated a three-digit code that was used when reporting the findings and presenting the quotations to reinforce category and sub-category identification during data analysis.

It was vital that permission be obtained from respondents to record their interviews before the start of the process. All participants were made to feel at ease during the interviews by sharing a few anecdotes. They were also informed that they were not compelled to answer every question and that should they feel the need to terminate the interview, they were free to do so. None of the respondents opted to terminate the interviews prematurely. Throughout the interview process, the researcher acted in a very respectful, diplomatic and caring manner. Sufficient time was given to interviewees to reflect on the questions before answering them. At no stage during the interview process was any pressure put on participants to come out in the open and disclose that they were misfits.

The researcher adhered to the International Chamber of Commerce/European Society for Opinion and Market Research Code of Conduct for Market and Social research (ICC/ESOMAR). This code stipulates through a series of 14 articles how high quality and ethical research should be conducted (ICC/ESOMAR, 2008).

3.15 Summary and Conclusions to Chapter Three

Grounded theory studies are known to have their own idiosyncratic methodology that has been inconsistently applied from study to study. Consequently, it was imperative that the methodology used in this study was clearly articulated and presented so as to provide the reader with an in-depth and clear understanding of how this research unfolded. This chapter sought to fulfil this objective by providing a detailed account of the various technical issues pertaining to the research method selected for this grounded theory study.

In summary, by opting to use a qualitative, grounded theory approach, the researcher positioned himself within a constructivist paradigm. A total of 40 employee misfits were selected using purposeful and theoretical sampling techniques and were subjected to in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed, and data were analysed in accordance with grounded theory guidelines.

The following chapter presents the data obtained from the face-to-face interviews with the respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of the in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that had been conducted in this qualitative grounded theory study. The results are presented in a format that has been intrinsically aligned to the research questions and objectives set out in Chapter One of this thesis. It is noteworthy to highlight that the researcher had deemed it prudent to follow the layout of Daniel's (2009) unpublished doctoral thesis entitled: *“Tough Boss or Workplace Bully? A Grounded Theory Study of Insights from Human Resource Professionals.”*

This chapter begins with a brief account of the demographic profile of the study participants. Thereafter, a description of the categories that have emanated as a result of the initial/open coding process undertaken is presented. The chapter then continues with a narrative of the axial coding step. In this step, subcategories previously identified in the open coding, are reintegrated into categories which will form the basis of the development of new theory. Following, is the account of the theoretical coding process culminating in the presentation of the ultimate objective of this study, that is, the development of a theoretical model of employee misfit as perceived and experienced by South African employees. This chapter then closes with a brief summary and conclusion.

It is critical at this juncture to emphasise that this chapter simply describes the findings from the qualitative interviews undertaken. This chapter does not in any way discuss these results as this will be detailed in the following chapter of the

thesis, that is, Chapter Five (Discussion of Results and Additional Literature Review).

4.2 Demographics of the Sample

A total of 40 employee misfits participated in this study of which 24 (60%) were female and 16 (40%) were male. These misfits' ages ranged from a minimum of 22 years to a maximum of 68 years, with a resulting mean age of 35 years. The researcher was conscious of selecting participants that represented the various race groups in South Africa. Thus, the race group profile of the respondents in this study included: Indians, 20 (50%), Blacks, 14 (35%), Whites, 5 (13%) and Coloureds, 1 (2%).

The average tenure of the participants was 7 years and this ranged from a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of 33 years. A variety of industry sectors were represented in this sample: financial services, 8 (20%), higher education, 7 (18%), marketing/sales, 7 (18%), retailing, 7 (18%), supply chain/logistics, 4 (10%), health/pharmaceutical, 3 (7%), manufacturing, 3 (7%), and government, 1 (2%).

Table 4.2 on the next page provides a summary of the participant profiles.

Table 4.2. Summary of Participants' Profiles

Participant	Gender	Age	Race	Industry Sectors
EM 01	Female	35	Indian	Financial Services
EM 02	Female	33	Indian	Marketing/Sales
EM 03	Male	37	Black	Higher Education
EM 04	Male	46	Indian	Financial Services
EM 05	Female	38	Indian	Higher Education
EM 06	Female	27	Indian	Supply Chain/Logistics
EM 07	Female	29	Indian	Supply Chain/Logistics
EM 08	Male	22	Indian	Retailing
EM 09	Female	23	Indian	Marketing/Sales
EM 10	Female	25	Indian	Retailing
EM 11	Male	34	Black	Higher Education
EM 12	Male	48	Black	Higher Education
EM 13	Female	39	Indian	Marketing/Sales
EM 14	Female	30	Black	Financial Services
EM 15	Female	28	Black	Marketing/Sales
EM 16	Male	40	Black	Higher Education
EM 17	Female	26	Indian	Higher Education
EM 18	Male	51	White	Financial Services
EM 19	Female	56	Indian	Health/Pharmaceutical
EM 20	Female	25	Indian	Health/Pharmaceutical

Table 4.2. Summary of Participants' Profiles - Continued

Participant	Gender	Age	Race	Industry Sectors
EM 21	Female	59	Black	Supply Chain/Logistics
EM 22	Female	35	Indian	Marketing/Sales
EM 23	Female	46	Black	Manufacturing
EM 24	Male	31	Indian	Financial Services
EM 25	Female	47	Coloured	Financial Services
EM 26	Male	40	Black	Financial Services
EM 27	Female	38	Black	Higher Education
EM 28	Male	42	Indian	Supply Chain/Logistics
EM 29	Male	68	White	Manufacturing
EM 30	Female	27	Black	Marketing/Sales
EM 31	Female	30	Indian	Health/Pharmaceutical
EM 32	Male	25	White	Retailing
EM 33	Male	27	White	Retailing
EM 34	Male	29	White	Marketing/Sales
EM 35	Male	26	Black	Financial Services
EM 36	Female	30	Black	Manufacturing
EM 37	Female	33	Indian	Retailing
EM 38	Female	24	Indian	Retailing
EM 39	Female	27	Indian	Retailing
EM 40	Male	22	Black	Government

The next section details with the process of initial/open coding of the interview transcripts as prescribed by grounded theory methodology.

4.3 Description/Discussion of the Categories – Initial/Open Coding

This section presents an outline of the types of data that developed as the transcripts of each interview were examined on a line-by-line basis. In addition, this section

demonstrates how the review at this magnitude has augmented the granularity of the various subcategories, their properties, and their levels.

The detailed coding compiled for this section (see Appendix E) produced twelve main layers of meaning from the data, which was further divided or combined as the process evolved. This evolution of the various conceptual categories is detailed in Appendix E – from the beginning of this review process to the final conclusions detailed in this study.

The twelve categories that emanated from the initial/open coding process related to misfit definitions, attributed causal factors, misfit individual consequences, misfit organisational consequences, misfit coping behaviour, misfit management, misfit concealment, misfit conspicuousness, co-worker reactions to misfits, manager/supervisor reactions to misfits, misfit process and misfit stages. The categories and sub-categories identified have been conveniently summarised in Table 4.3 on the next page.

With reference to Table 4.3, it can be seen that each category identified (for example, misfit definitions) contained several sub-categories. These sub-categories were identified through a process of content and thematic analysis. The table further illustrates the sub-categories linked to each of the twelve categories identified.

A considerably large volume of data was produced from the interviews. Reproducing this data verbatim would result in unnecessary repetition. Consequently, the researcher provided only representative examples of each subcategory in an attempt to clarify the precise meaning of those characteristics, properties and dimensions. Moreover, the sections that follow show in parentheses the number of respondents represented in each sub-category.

Table 4.3. Summary of Code Categories from Qualitative Grounded Misfit Analysis

Category	Sub-Category	Category	Sub-Category
Misfit Definitions	Label Non-conformist Multidimensional concept Positive and negative condition Negative psychological experience Negative condition only Personality trait Positive condition only State of mind Not belonging A lack of expertise A mismatch Being incompetent	Attributed Causal Factors	Race Personality Gender Wrong career choice Educational background Organisational restructuring Individual culture Social status Homosexuality Religion Management styles Organisational culture Age Financial responsibilities Lack of confidence Lack of skills Lack of training Mismatch in placing of employees Corruption/Ethical decline Co-workers' perceptions and behaviour Language Misleading at pre-screening Working environment Family pressure High unemployment levels HIV status Low self-esteem Nepotism Personal appearance Upbringing Behavioural patterns Communication styles Debilitating Illnesses Incompetence Lack of motivation Lack of potential Lack of trust Schooling system Stress Work-life balance

Table 4.3. Summary of Code Categories from Qualitative Grounded Misfit Analysis - Continued

Category	Sub-Category	Category	Sub-Category
Misfit Individual Consequences	Decline in job performance Increase in stress Drop in self-confidence Depression Deviant behaviour Negative impact on emotions Decrease in motivation Negative physiological effect Isolation Lack of enthusiasm to work Resentment Decline in a need for belongingness Suicide Uneasiness Unhappiness Voluntary exit Decrease in concentration levels Confusion Dejection Frustration Inculcating fear Opportunity for self-advancement Personality dependent Withdrawal Loss of self-respect Boredom Deliberate attempts to get fired Give up hope Increase in guilt Hindrane to success Invasion of private time Termination Unpleasant effects	Misfit Organisational Consequences	Decline in client service levels Decrease in productivity Creating a toxic environment Decline in company reputation Increase in employee turnover Increase in creativity/innovation Destruction of team dynamics Escalating training and development costs Increase in animosity levels Decline in organisational learning Creating a challenge for managers

Table 4.3. Summary of Code Categories from Qualitative Grounded Misfit Analysis - Continued

Category	Sub-Category	Category	Sub-Category
Misfit Coping Behaviour	Organisational exit Vocal about issues causing misfit Oblivious to workplace issues Engaging in proactive behaviour Requesting a transfer Doing the minimum Engaging in deviant behaviour Personality dependent Seeking psychological counselling Working independently Accepting the misfit predicament Adapting to the conditions Changing the mind-set Staying below the radar Contemplating suicide	Misfit Management	Training and development Change in company mind-set Interventions Early misfit identification Counselling Relocation Recruitment and selection Job rotation Creative management Providing incentives Consultation Creating an open work environment Teambuilding Implementing effective strategies Embracing organisational culture Motivating to turn it around Removing negative misfits Career management Implementing exit interviews Leveraging the positive misfits

Table 4.3. Summary of Code Categories from Qualitative Grounded Misfit Analysis - Continued

Category	Sub-Category	Category	Sub-Category
Misfit Concealment	Fear of victimisation Introverted personality Being in denial Pride Fear of rejection Lack of confidence Preference for covert behaviour	Misfit Conspicuousness	Valuing uniqueness
Co-worker Reactions to Misfits	Ostracise Gossip Supportive Antagonistic Set you up for failure Unsupportive Engaging in pretentious behaviour	Manager/Supervisor Reactions to Misfits	Encouraging organisational exit Absence of a plan Interventions Dialogue Proactive behaviour Training Counselling Employee wellness programs Early identification of misfits
Misfit Process	Cognitive dissonance Instantaneous process	Misfit Stages	Multi-stage misfit Single-type misfit

4.3.1 Misfit Definitions

As the coding process unfolded, the construct definition category formed soon thereafter and comprises the following 13 sub-categories which illustrate how respondents described their understanding of misfit. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below is a list of the sub-categories, which indicate that misfit maybe understood by South African employees as:

- **A label (18)** – refers to the phrases or words that are used to describe a misfit.
- **Not conforming (18)** – relates to sticking out and not fitting to the social norms.
- **A multidimensional concept (13)** – refers to the various dimensions that make up the concept of misfit.
- **Both a positive and negative condition (12)** – relates to the by-product of being in a state of misfit.
- **A negative psychological experience (11)** – pertains to the phenomenon of misfit, being likened to an experience that the individual goes through primarily at a psychological level.
- **A negative condition (9)** – pertains to the description of misfit as an undesirable state.
- **A personality trait (9)** – relates to the personality attributes a person may possess that predisposes him or her to being a misfit.
- **A positive condition (8)** – pertains to the description of misfit as a desirable state.
- **A state of mind (7)** – refers to misfit being likened to a mental state of an individual.
- **Not belonging (7)** – refers to being left out.
- **A lack of expertise (6)** – the lack of the required skills, training and know-how.
- **A mismatch (6)** – pertains to a person being incompatible, incongruent or a bad fit.

- **Being incompetent (2)** – this pertains to a person being ineffectual at work.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.1.1 A label

The first subcategory focused on the perceptions of misfit as being akin to ‘a label.’

In this regard, the respondents supplied the following representative comments:

- “When people hear misfit, they automatically think that this particular person is a retard or he or she is an oddball. You know that sort of thing.”
- “...my perspective is finding the right person for the right job. So, when you say misfit, I would say that this person is not right for this job. He is a nonconformist.”
- “It’s a label that you give to people. If he is misfit, then he is an oddball, a maverick or he is a ‘square peg in a round hole.’”
- “I think it’s a label. We don’t follow conventions and the way that everyone else thinks.”
- “One will know that they are misfits when they feel like the odd-ones’-out or when they are the solo employees.”
- “...like everyone else is sort of in a group and you are sort of the odd-one-out.”
- “It’s more of a label that people get when they do not fit in.”
- “Misfit could be a case of one labelling themselves as the odd one or the troublemaker.”
- “Misfit is a label such as, troublemaker, maverick or a retard.”

- ‘I think it is quite a harsh term. I think it’s almost like an outcast. I think it is harsh and a term people don’t like and wouldn’t like to be referred to as.’
- ‘...in terms of organisational misfit, they won’t adapt in terms of diversity and interacting with people. So, you would find that people with the misfit condition within the organisation, would be very alienated...they wouldn’t make friends and they wouldn’t interact with others. They are loners or solo employees.’
- ‘For me, the term misfit means when you join a new organisation and you find that people who have been there before you came in. Everyone else will see you as having a different set of beliefs or ideas and this will lead to you realising that you are a misfit.’
- ‘You will either be alone because there will be those cliques that are formed and you always find yourself not being accepted and at the same time, whatever idea you might have, nobody will listen to what you are saying.’
- ‘So, you being unique will make you out to be a loner.’
- ‘It is when people are being isolated, left out and degraded at the workplace.’
- ‘When you said misfit to me, I think of some punk rock kid with pink hair and a Mohawk and rings everywhere. That is what I think of, when I think of a misfit.’
- ‘Well, for me personally, I qualify as being a misfit, because I was always a misfit whether in my family or in the work. The reason for this was because I was totally rebellious with my family. I left home, did my own things and never really followed through anything I initially set my mind to do.’
- ‘It’s like, look at me, I’m such a rebel. I’m a rebel, I don’t conform.’

4.3.1.2 Not conforming

This sub-category relates to the perceptions of misfit as being someone that ‘does not conform.’ In this regard, the respondents supplied the following representative comments:

- “I think it is difficult to define misfit but, ideally one could consider it as someone that does not fit in. Consequently, it can be bad for the organisation.”
- “Everyone is a misfit. I think that you were always a misfit; it is just at some point in time when you come to a realisation that you are a misfit. This is because you make a connection that you are not quite fitting in.”
- “In terms of my experience, misfit is when you are not fitting in.”
- “Not really fitting in for me is what misfit is.”
- “The term misfit to me implies that someone does not fit in the organisational culture, in the organisational culture milieu. If it’s an employee, an employee who I wouldn’t say is a delinquent, but is an employee who is negatively different than other employees.”
- “A misfit is somebody who doesn’t fit in. We can’t escape that, but that is an individualised comprehension, so my understanding is that you get individuals that do not fit in, even in positions of authority. That is my understanding and comprehension of the word and it is my perspective...”
- “It’s basically not fitting in the organisation, not being aligned with the goals they have or not knowing what to do. So, I think misfit is how you interpret fitting into the organisation.”
- “A misfit to me is somebody who is in a job that a person either doesn’t qualify for or doesn’t like. Those two key areas will enable a person to not fit in.”

- “If I look at the word from a literal sense, misfit means to me, somebody that is in a job or in an environment or employment or a workplace that just doesn’t fit in.”
- “...so, I think misfit for me, is someone who doesn’t really live in accordance with culture and therefore does not fit into the culture of that particular organisation. So, people will look at him or her and using myself as an example, they would look at me as someone who is not making an effort to fit in within what they perceive as a perfect employee.”
- “Misfit can be anything. You define whether you are a misfit. You can say I'm a misfit or I am not, but you got to ask somebody else whether that person fits in or not. It is not only yourself but how other people see you.”
- “Someone who doesn’t get along or is dissimilar to people they are around with or working with or in their family. That’s how I would define a misfit.”
- “According to my understanding, it’s a person who does not fit in completely with the organisation.”
- “Think of smoking. If you go to a company where no one smokes and you want to go down for a smoke break, then you will become a misfit in the eyes of your co-workers.”
- “A misfit could mean when an individual’s personality does not fit in with the organisation’s culture. There could be a misfit when the organisation is promoting teamwork and this one person likes to work alone. So obviously, this is going to result in that person being a misfit.”
- “The society or the group that conforms to certain standards will never understand the individual who does not conform and is able to bring in new and different perspectives, ideas and views on everything. This is when one realises that they misfit.”

- “...the way I understand misfit is the way in which things are being done and is the inability of allowing you room of thought to come out of challenging situations.”
- “To me, it’s somebody that doesn’t resonate with the field that they are in.”

4.3.1.3 A multidimensional concept

This sub-category pertains to the perceptions of misfit as being ‘a multidimensional concept.’ In this regard, the respondents supplied the following representative comments:

- “...you are always analysing the opportunities first. If you feel that you are a misfit in your job, but you are a perfect fit in your team and you are a perfect fit in the organisation’s atmosphere and the environment, it becomes difficult for you to say ‘I am going to quit this job and choose another.’ When you choose the other job, you may fit perfectly in your job, but not with other facets.”
- “There are various dimensions of misfit. It all depends on the individual. But also, you can’t say that the person just does not fit in with the organisation, perhaps you would have to look at whether the person is willing to change or match the organisational culture.”
- “...it could be contextual. You could be a misfit in terms of dealing with your colleagues, etc...and your work, but at home, you are fine...so, it varies. I think maybe one could call it situational. I don’t think there could be one global phenomenon that could bring about a single outcome, no!”
- “In my opinion, there are many aspects to a misfit. There are many dimensions. You can misfit at work and you could misfit with the people at work. You could also misfit in the organisation and you could also misfit at home. So, there are a lot of facets pertaining to being a misfit.”

- “It is a hell of a grey area...misfit is such a big multidimensional thing because people talk about misfitting at work, in your job, you could misfit with your fellow colleagues and you could misfit in your social environment.”
- “There are various aspects to being a misfit. A misfit could be a slacker in the organisational environment. You can fit in with your job, but simultaneously, the slacker is not good enough for the organisation.”
- “I was thinking that it is really circumstantial. You might be a misfit socially where you bring in your particular brand of upbringing into a space where it doesn’t fit and so you might be able to do the job, you are functional in that space but your social skills could make you a misfit. You might get the technological misfit...I was just thinking about the statement that was made in Die Hard 4, where this one guy says to Bruce Willis, ‘you are an analogue man in a digital world.’”
- “You could look at misfit as a multidimensional construct. You could fit in your job but not fit the organisation in the sense of being a team player...Even as managers, it may be that your management style differs from what your subordinates’ desire or there are communication styles that don’t gel well. It doesn’t always mean an employee at a lower level is a misfit. You could come into a management position and not fit the organisation or the employees can’t relate to you.”
- “There are many dimensions to being a misfit. You can be a misfit in your job, a misfit with your co-workers, and a misfit within your organisation, it could be anything and when you are a misfitting in one situation, it doesn’t mean that you will misfit in another. Do you ever watch the programme Big Bang Theory? It’s a about a group of super genius types who are a bunch of total misfits, but within the group they prop each other up.” (Informant EM 06: Female, 27 Years Old, Indian)

- “People have an influence on how you see yourself. This is due to the various aspects of being a misfit. You can become a social misfit; you could become a misfit in your job, in your organisation and in your work team. So, there are different aspects to misfits, not just a plain and simple, one-dimensional aspect.”
- “There is also various dimensions to a misfit too, your job, your social life, your company and your co-workers. Some people are academics but are misfits in every other aspect of their life. If you take for example, the most successful corporate executives, they are not technically big on social issues. Take brain surgeons, in my opinion, many of them do not have successful personal relationships, but they are the best in their field.”
- “There are many dimensions and you could misfit in your job, but you could simultaneously fit in perfectly well with your co-workers. You can also misfit at home.”
- “You could be a misfit on different levels. It also depends on the degree of misfit as well. You could be a slight misfit or an extreme misfit, where something needs to be done about it. You can be the early misfit, when you are new. I was an early misfit during my first year at work, but look at me now; I have managed to turn it around.”

4.3.1.4 Both a positive and negative condition

This sub-category focuses on the perceptions of misfit as being ‘both a positive and negative condition.’ The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “I think that misfit is a good and a bad thing. I think it’s a good thing because a misfit is someone who is a trouble-shooter and is someone that comes in and looks at information in a way that you wouldn’t ordinarily look at...usually a misfit speaks out and behaves in a particular way, against

a structure...the negative thing about a misfit is that sometimes people start reacting against the system or the environment because they can't perform, which is a genuine problem.”

- “Misfit can be a good thing and it could also be a bad thing, because in a working environment, depending on where you are, private sector or whatever the sector you might be in, it could be a good thing in a way that it can push you to focus on what you are good at and put more energy and time into that...It can also be a bad thing in terms of, if you are put into a place where you are supposed to do things excellently and perfectly but, you just cannot do it.”
- “The term misfit means either a good or bad phenomenon as it depends on the situation and the organisation. I mean, sometimes for a person, it is a good thing because once you realise you do not fit, you also realise where you do fit in and then you make the necessary changes. In other instances, misfit could be undesirable. For example, you could find that an employee generally misfits in a job and as a result could underperform or behave in a destructive manner which may be harmful to the organisation.”
- “It can be a good experience and a bad experience...it is good and bad for the individual. In terms of it being good, being a misfit can equip an employee to think outside the box and be creative. This creativity may add value to an organisation. In the case of it being a bad thing, some individuals that are inflicted by misfit can react in a very negative manner. They become disgruntled and may sabotage the work flow. This can have a deleterious effect on the organisation.”
- “It can be a desirable condition or an undesirable condition.”
- “Being a misfit can be both a positive experience and a negative experience. In terms of it being a positive experience, some misfits seem to thrive on being different or being the maverick. Being different obviously attracts

considerable attention from your co-workers and people with personality traits that thrive on this type of attention may feel that misfit is indeed a good thing. On a negative side, misfit can attract a lot of negative attention. For example, you can be isolated when you don't think like, or fit in with the crowd. You will be ostracised and in some extreme cases, verbally abused. These hostile reactions may impact on your health in a very negative way."

- "Misfit has its advantages and there may be a lot of disadvantages associated with it as well."
- "It can be good or bad, but, it depends on how one sees it. Sometimes being a misfit means that you are actually telling yourself, 'I don't belong here and I'm aiming for something higher.' Then, the second part is that you can say to yourself that I am a misfit because I don't believe in myself, because I feel insecure. So, it could be a good or bad thing. It all depends on how you see it as an individual."
- "Well, in my opinion, being a misfit is not always a bad thing because it is good to be an individualistic person and to remain true to you in all situations. But it might be a bad thing, if the organisation that you join or that group of people that you are joining, do not share your, or do not embrace your difference."
- "I don't think that it is necessarily a bad thing. In certain instances, obviously when the individual is being destructive to the organisation, then it will be bad. But I think it is good in the sense that it makes managers think about how they approach recruitment and selection...personality tests could enable the organisation to enhance on the creative and innovativeness from misfitting individuals...misfits often don't occur at the outset when they are recruited. You often become a misfit after you have entered the organisation."

- “Being a misfit could be a good or bad experience. It depends on the situation. There are times when you need a misfit to say, ‘hang on we need to change our current strategy that has not realised its objectives.’ There is a time when being a misfit is a huge disadvantage. For example, in an organisation that is predominantly team-based and each and every member of the team is required to provide their full cooperation for the success of the team. In this instance, being a misfit might work counter to team collegiality.”
- “Well, it has good points and bad points. I will start off with the bad points; if you are a misfit, it can cause your life to become unhappy. You can find it difficult to make friends, or find it difficult to find things in common with other people, because of the way your workplace is set up. You might find it difficult to get along with people. The positive side is, when you are normally good at something and different in the way you think, this might be advantageous.”

4.3.1.5 A negative psychological experience

This sub-category centres on the perceptions of misfit as being ‘a negative psychological experience.’ The respondents supplied the following representative comments:

- “I think that a misfit is a psychological experience and I see that it moves towards being a negative psychological experience.”
- “The term misfit can be referred to as a label. If I am a misfit, it’s a label that is given for me. It is basically saying that I do not fit in some social category or norm. This means that it is a psychological experience because anything that stimulates emotion is psychological.”

- “Misfit is like a mental disorder, which is a bit too much on the extreme but I would say this as it would affect the employee emotionally which can lead to this mental breakdown.”
- “Misfit is akin to a negative psychological condition that makes you feel that you do not fit in with the crowd.”
- “It is a psychological, emotional and social thing. It’s all of those experiences.”
- “I believe that it is a psychological involvement...and that also depends on what the individual wants in life or from the organisation.”
- “...your peers and your family members that are constantly putting you down, then it will lead to psychological effects. However, if you stand your ground and if you believe in something and this is the way that I am going to do it, then I don’t think it will become a psychological factor.”
- “...something that contributes to the psychological experience and results in these individuals making all the wrong choices.”
- “...my lens of viewing misfit is someone who is psychologically, emotionally and possibly technically at odds with the mainstream flow of the organisational context.”
- “...so, you find from a psychological point of view that they are not getting well in the organisation, so that also, the culture of the organisation is also going to impact on the individual psychologically and they are going to feel that they don’t fit in the organisation.”
- “It is a psychological experience because it starts to play on your mind...I haven’t been to work for three weeks because I don’t have the time and effort to deal with all the issues.”

4.3.1.6 A negative condition

This sub-category focuses on the perceptions of misfit as being ‘a negative condition.’ In this regard, the respondents supplied the following typical comments:

- “I have been to a highly reputational industry where they have different standards of how they promote people to be seen higher up within the organisation. It was found that a specific Indian female could not be given the highest ranking because they found that she did not get along with the White males in the organisation. It was all because she did not fit in with them, that her career was jeopardised.”
- “I don’t think a misfit could be a good thing. If you are a misfit, you become uncomfortable and unhappy and how then can you perform to the best of your ability.”
- “Definitely, it is not a good thing for the organisation because when you misfit, you are associated with non-performance.”
- “Perception wise, if you look at it in terms of perceptions, it is a bad thing because it’s you against the world. It’s you against the group. It’s you against culture. It’s you against the norms and standards of this particular organisation or group or team.”
- “There’s nothing really nice about being a misfit or even being called a misfit.”
- “I think it’s a bad thing, because for me I think it eats into your strengths as a person. So, if you are good at something and you doing something else where you don’t belong, it means that you not making use of your strengths, it’s like wasted skills.”

- “It’s a bad thing. It’s sad, especially if someone is 20 years of age and working with older people, then you feel you’re not good enough to be working with them.”
- “Misfit is certainly an undesirable or negative state to be in.”
- “It is a bad thing because it actually affects your performance in whatever you do...it’s important that you fit in and feel comfortable if you want to succeed and being a misfit does not allow either. So basically, I can’t say that there is anything good about being a misfit.”

4.3.1.7 A personality trait

This sub-category relates to the perceptions of misfit as being someone who has a specific set of ‘personality attributes.’ In this regard, the respondents supplied the following representative comments:

- “Misfit is a personality trait. I believe 100%, that it is part of your personality. You can’t change your personality to suit a specific time or anything. Personality is what we are and what makes us, so why change you?”
- “Due to certain personality traits, that person can become a misfit.”
- “I think that it is when you are not confident in what you are doing...”
- “I consider myself as having a unique personality and a unique outlook on life. I knew things which I used to contribute at staff meetings and everyone would just think that I am weird. This is when I was able to realise that I was a misfit, but, I didn’t care.”
- “Some people just accept that they are different, whether they regard themselves as a misfit or not is left up to the individual. People with strong personalities will not have a problem, but if you a ‘shrinking violet’ then your life will be hell. This is how I see it and have dealt with misfits and

fits. A lot of it is situational, you can be a super fit in one situation, but a misfit in another.”

- “I think it is usually the case because of the personality and you will see personality wise, this just isn’t for me. Even an outside person can see that you don’t fit in.”
- “Maybe, it is when the person is different to what others perceive as being normal or normal for that environment. Sometimes, it is the person who chooses not to fit in because they want to just be themselves, someone who is different to the norm of the environment.”
- “Also, I feel it depends on the type of misfits, personality misfits can overcome that, with experience and with technical misfits, you can’t really overcome that. There are certain skills you acquire and there are certain skills that you just don’t have.”
- “It could be the person’s personality.”

4.3.1.8 A positive condition

This sub-category pertains to the perceptions of misfit as being ‘a positive condition.’ The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “Although misfit is a negative word, I don’t actually look at misfit in terms of it being negative...I am a supply chain person and we are not negative...we are neither optimists nor are we pessimists. We just say that the glass is twice the size it has to be.”
- “I think that a misfit is someone who isn’t necessarily bad. It is just someone who is not in the right place.”
- “Misfit, actually it is not a bad thing because with a misfit, you are able to identify those employees that are not performing and managers should be able to give them that opportunity to actually better themselves and provide

them with the support. So, misfit according to my understanding is helping to identify those people that are underperforming. It is like an indicator.”

- “I think it’s a good thing to be a misfit. The reason is because it allows you to enhance yourself; your level of confidence, your knowledge, strengths and abilities...”
- “It is not a bad thing at all to be a misfit...for me, misfits are brilliant.”
- “It need not be a bad thing...if you are in tune with yourself and you know who you want to be, then you don’t have to bend who you are to fit in with the world. Maybe, the world is wrong and you are right. The world doesn’t have to be a boring place and that is why we need to capitalise on the many personalities, race groups and languages that are in existence. What is normal in your eyes may not be normal in others. There is no wrong normal.”
- “I can identify being a misfit as well, sometimes it’s not about other people; it’s just about you being an individual and how you want to express yourself. People express themselves in different ways. That is why I say it can be a good thing because who really cares about what you wear. It depends on their thinking as well. It’s what you bring into society that really matters.”
- “If you are looking at differentiation, misfit is a good thing because you want to be different from others. You want to be unique and you want to showcase your strengths and abilities.”

4.3.1.9 A state of mind

This sub-category pertains to misfit as being ‘a state of mind.’ The participants provided the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Misfit is a state of mind.”

- “I think it is somewhat a state of mind. You go into an organisation a bit scared, a bit fragile, but it is up to you as an individual to lift yourself to completely break down all barriers and make things work.”
- “...people generally believe that they are misfits because of their state of mind. Negative people constantly think that they don’t fit in...coming back to experiences, as a person, it is how you see yourself, what is your achievement rate, have you set goals for yourself, and so forth. It can be a state of mind and to a point where it can start to consume you.”
- “I think everything these days is about the mind-set, so, it could probably be the general state of mind. It is what shapes a person’s values or mind-set. It could originate from within his character. So, if his character is not linked to what is needed by the organisation, then his mind-set will definitely be impacted upon.”
- “Everything comes down to the individual’s state of mind.”
- “...if I’m not standing down on what I believe in, then that is my perception. I mean nobody can be wrong. Even if you are obese, then it is still not wrong. If there is only one obese person amongst skinny people, then it becomes the mind-set of that individual to determine whether they want to fit in or not.”
- “I think it can be a state of mind and it has to do with confidence and how you react to people and that sort of thing. It’s your choices and I think that people can change if they want to. But it is all a state of mind.”

4.3.1.10 Not belonging

This sub-category focuses on the perceptions of misfit as being someone who is akin to ‘not belonging’ in a particular workplace. In this regard, the respondents supplied the following representative comments:

- “Misfit for me is not belonging. Just ideally not belonging. Be it in a social class, be it in the work environment, no matter where it is, misfit is not belonging.”
- “Well, misfit for me is when you feel like you don’t belong in a certain place...”
- “I’d say that misfit is when a person feels out of place...at the workplace, they feel like they do not belong.”
- “Not belonging is what the term misfit means to me.”
- “They don’t belong.”
- “Misfit means that when there is a psychological effect on an individual...it can be when you feel out of place and you don’t have the expertise and it will affect you psychologically, especially when you try to find ways of dealing with it.”
- “Eventually, when a person just does not fit in a certain environment, it becomes a psychological thing, because you get stressed and it plays on your mind.”

4.3.1.11 A lack of expertise

This sub-category focuses on the perceptions of misfit as being someone who displays ‘a lack of expertise.’ The participants have provided the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I think for me it would mean being in a position where I know I am being placed somewhere where I know I don’t have the expertise to function or where I am not as qualified and do not have the skills to function in that area...so I would say that a misfit is like you are missing out on something that is supposed to be there but it is not.”

- “If you are in a position where you are supposed to do everything perfectly and you don’t have the expertise, it will be frustrating and will eventually result in what a misfit is. It will also frustrate everyone around you and you cannot perform.”
- “Okay, I think basically about the people that do not meet or ever fit in to a particular job position or description in terms of their performance or how they can carry the task or whether they like the job or not.”
- “To me, misfit means that when a person is placed in the wrong job and therefore does not have the adequate knowledge to perform the necessary tasks, they see themselves as not fitting in. It is therefore a problem that stemmed from recruitment and selection...wrong qualifications could be like a job misfit, according to my understanding.”
- “...and when we look at the skills perspective, I am talking about the position, where the person doesn’t match the position in terms of skills, then you are going to find that somebody who is fully qualified in the position, however, the organisation does not match their needs.”
- “From what I have experienced in my work, is that gender will allow someone to misfit. In some areas, females are not allowed progress, as they feel that females are not suitable for that particular area. They will give that area to a male and that is how one would become a misfit.”

4.3.1.12 A mismatch

This sub-category focuses on the perceptions of misfit as akin to an individual displaying a level of ‘mismatch’ with his/her work environment. With respect to this sub-category, the participants provided the following representative comments:

- “Misfit to me means that an employee does not match the organisation they are currently working for. It can also mean that the skills and the knowledge that the employee has, does not match the requirements of the job. Say for

instance, a person who works in an IT job and the main task is related to programming. The person however, is qualified as an HR specialist. So obviously, if he is placed in that IT job, he won't really have the skills and knowledge to complete the job. So that is where the misfit comes in."

- "It could also mean that your job and your skills are not a match. It could mean that you are just doing the things that you have to, even though you are a mismatch."
- "When my skills are not matched against the position and even when my personality does not match the position and the organisation, I feel a sense of misfit."
- "Misfit to me means that employee skills do not match the position. The alternative is the organisation does not match the employee's needs."
- "The way I understand misfit is to be like an organisation that has a prescribed set of patterns, behaviour and social adaptation skills that one has to fit in with...so, once you don't have that, especially on behaviour patterning and social behaviour, then I see a lot of large corporate organisations or parastatals regarding a person as a misfit."
- "Most of the time, people who are misfits already know that they do not fit in. It really doesn't matter what you say to them."

4.3.1.13 Being incompetent

This sub-category relates to the perceptions of misfit as being someone who is 'incompetent' at work. In this regard, the respondents supplied the following representative comments:

- "Some people view themselves as misfits because they feel that they don't have the necessary skills to match their jobs, 'I am not competent to do that

job.’ Some people view themselves as misfits when they are over competent. Misfit is therefore a dynamic concept.”

- “It’s like being unsuitable to the specific job, incompetent for the job.”

4.3.2 Attributed Causal Factors

On further reading and analysis of the interview transcripts, a second category emerged, namely that of the attributed causal factors affecting a person’s sense of misfit. A total of 40 sub-categories were identified as significant factors influencing misfit. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below is a list of the sub-categories, which indicate that misfit may be understood by South African employees to be caused by the following factors, such as:

- **Race (30)** – refers to four major race groups in South Africa: Blacks, Whites, Indians and Coloureds.
- **Personality (27)** – refers to the personality traits of an individual, for example, the Big Five personality traits.
- **Gender (23)** – male or female.
- **Wrong career choice (20)** – pertains to a persons’ vocational choice for example, accountant, teacher, and so forth.
- **Educational background (16)** – refers to whether a person has the right educational qualifications to do the job.
- **Organisational restructuring (16)** – restructuring activities could include downsizing, rightsizing, outsourcing, merges and acquisitions, and so forth.

- **Individual culture (15)** – this refers to an individual’s cultural values. The South African workforce can be best described as multicultural.
- **Social status (10)** – refers to the social standing of an individual in society. Social status is often determined by the material wealth of an individual or by family backgrounds.
- **Homosexuality (7)** – refers to gay or lesbian employees.
- **Religion (7)** – pertains to the various religions that employees ascribe to. In South Africa, there are three main religions, that is, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity.
- **Management styles (5)** – refers to the dominant style adopted by an organisation’s manager, for example, autocratic style, collegial style, and so forth.
- **Organisational culture (5)** – refers to the culture of the organisation.
- **Age (4)** – refers to the age of the employees.
- **Financial responsibilities (4)** – relates to the financial commitment that employees have for example, family commitments and other living expenses.
- **Lack of confidence (4)** – pertains to confidence levels of employees.
- **Lack of skills (4)** – relates to the skill level required to effectively excel in a position.
- **Lack of training (4)** – refers to the training that is required to effectively excel in a position.
- **Mismatch in placing of employees (4)** – this refers to employees being allocated to jobs that do not provide a match.

- **Corruption/Ethical decline (3)** – pertains to the corruption practices that are a characteristic of an organisation. This is closely linked to the ethical values adopted by a company.
- **Co-workers' perceptions and behaviour (3)** – this refers to the psychological impact of co-workers.
- **Language (3)** – language preferences of employees. In South Africa, there are eleven official languages.
- **Misleading at pre-screening (3)** – pertains to company representatives window dressing (disseminating misleading information) at the interview stage.
- **Working environment (3)** – refers to the environmental conditions in organisations.
- **Family pressure (2)** – refers to pressure from family members which could unduly influence an employee in terms of making work-related decisions.
- **High unemployment levels (2)** – pertains to the level of unemployment in South Africa.
- **HIV status (2)** – refers to whether employees are HIV positive or negative.
- **Low self-esteem (2)** – the level of self-esteem of employee misfits.
- **Nepotism (2)** – pertains to favouritism in the workplace.
- **Personal appearance (2)** – indicative of an employee's outward appearance in terms of dress codes, looks, and so forth.
- **Upbringing (2)** - refers to family upbringing of employee misfits.
- **Behavioural patterns (1)** – behavioural patterns exhibited by employee misfits.

- **Communication styles (1)** – refers to the communication styles adopted by managers in the workplace.
- **Debilitating Illnesses (1)** – the type of medical condition that an employee misfit has.
- **Incompetence (1)** – indicates whether a person has the necessary competence to satisfactorily carry out the necessary job functions.
- **Lack of motivation (1)** – refers to the lack of motivation in the workplace.
- **Lack of potential (1)** – refers to a person’s possibilities in life.
- **Lack of trust (1)** – the trust levels shown by employers.
- **Schooling system (1)** – pertains to the type of schooling system that the employee had gone through, for example, public, private or former model C schools.
- **Stress (1)** – capacity of an employee to handle stress.
- **Work-life balance (1)** – refers to the balance between employee work-life and private life.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.2.1 Race

The first sub-category focused on ‘race’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Misfit is race-based. If you are white, you will have more difficulty in the work environment and as you go further up, you will find that people are now appointed on the basis of a particular race group and not on merit.”

- “Race is an important factor based on our history in South Africa. It’s the strongest factor; actually, in terms of the workplace...race is an issue worldwide.”
- “It contributes to the working atmosphere and sometimes companies fill too much of a quota which leads to a bit of unsteadiness and tension between other members...and by distinguishing that there is many of one race, you isolate other race groups.”
- “As South Africans, you have to mention colour as well. Race is a big, big, big, factor in misfit.”
- “I feel that the South African working environment is still racist to a certain extent. It is racist. This results in many misfitting employees.”
- “I think that race causes misfit, especially with the older generations...”
- “Race can be a significant factor in causing people to misfit in the environment...”
- “The issue of race can be critical in determining whether you are a misfit or not.”
- “Race is a critical issue in the government especially in South African municipalities as most positions are filled by political appointees which favour the black majority.”
- “In South Africa, race is very big, very, very big.”
- “One of the issues in South Africa for me is race, without a doubt...you will misfit. It’s a reality...we haven’t really accepted different races yet, but we are slowly getting there.”
- “Race can be quite a big issue, especially if you are in a company and you are part of the minority race group.”

- “Race becomes a factor...from several perspectives or dimensions of race.”
- “I think as much as we have moved away from the apartheid era, peoples’ mind-sets are still fixed...what people fail to realise is that they look at you based on your skin colour. This can impact on whether you see yourself as a misfit.”
- “The race issue...makes you feel inferior.”
- “Race plays a huge part in misfitting...minorities find it hard to adjust.”
- “Race is something that is there. There will always be a misfit...the reason why we cannot accept each other, is because we don’t understand each other’s backgrounds. There will always be misfits in the workplace.”
- “In terms of race, the dynamics in a particular company can create a misfit. It becomes difficult for misfitting employees to infiltrate particular cliques.”
- “You cannot talk about misfit in any type of grouping without bringing the race issue in.”
- “...race can cause a misfit in that sense, especially in South Africa because of the past.”
- “...and also race issues...maybe, the majority are the other race and you are in the minority and you feel left out in so many ways.”
- “...it’s big. I personally worry about not getting a job...because sometimes you feel sandwiched in between the whole war going on between the various race groups.”
- “I think it will always be an issue in South Africa. It certainly plays on your mind.”

- “There’s a lot of negative connotations attached to each race...this, also can result in being a misfit.”
- “I don’t think it will ever go away really. Not like 100%, but we are getting better especially in our generation.”
- “Being from a different race group especially in South Africa causes you to misfit.”
- “Different races do different things, thus may result in misfit.”
- “Race is an issue when it comes to misfit.”
- “The race group dynamics in South Africa makes it difficult to fit in...”
- “...predominately white organisations can be racist...that’s why the South African government introduced Black Economic Empowerment and then later Affirmative Action legislation...so that they could correct past mistakes.”

4.3.2.2 Personality

This sub-category focused on ‘personality’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Personality does do a lot, because you can predispose yourself to being a misfit.”
- “Personality may apply to misfitting employees to a certain extent.”
- “A person’s personality plays a big role...you have to be responsive. I like the word responsive because each person is different and they respond to a situation differently.”

- “Personality has a big part to play in it...you act in a certain way when you are with your friends and your family and you act in a certain way at work.”
- “Different personality traits could lead to misfit as well...if you are the quiet type or a certain personality that is not sociable, that is obviously going to lead to a misfit.”
- “Personalities are very important when referring to misfit.”
- “I think being a misfit is very much a part of your personality. I believe 100% that it is part of your personality. You can’t change your personality to suit a specific time and context. Personality is what we are, what makes us. Why change yourself.”
- “One factor is a person’s character. Your personality can cause you to misfit.”
- “Personal factors like your personality traits can create a misfit.”
- “...and perhaps one of the factors which may have caused the greatest conflict me is my aggressive personality. The aggression, which is an issue, has caused me to actively engage, to be hostile and display bellicose behaviour and to be dogmatic in wanting to alter things.”
- “Some people just generally have that personality that they do not fit in, like an extremely loud person working in a quiet environment.”
- “...personality should really be taken into consideration, because if someone has a strong personality and they are not willing to adapt to change, they are going to have an effect on the whole environment.”
- “Personality traits will make you feel uncomfortable or misfit. For example, you could be of a certain character and values and the workplace just doesn’t suit your character and values.”

- “Some people just have personality traits that cause them to misfit.”
- “I don’t think race is an issue, I think now it’s purely attributable to personality traits.”
- “Intrinsic to a person is his/her their personality traits which could cause misfit.”
- “You could have a personality which over a period of time allows you to realise that the position is not for you, the company is not for you.”
- “Personality traits are a definite factor in causing misfits.”
- “You know, you get some people who are just negative. They get up in the morning and just complain. This behaviour could make those people feel like misfits in any situation.”
- “If you are a laid back person and you go into a corporate organisation, you could automatically become a misfit.”
- “Definitely personality, for example, in another club where I work, they put me on probation because their reasoning was that my personality did not meet up to the club’s requirements.”
- “A misfit is someone who is almost excluded, shunned and the fact that their personality may be too outgoing, they put themselves out there, they might start to fall and it may not be for them. It’s really not appealing.”
- “Some people just have different types of personalities. If you are this shy quiet person then you are going to always feel reluctant to voice your opinions in an environment where communication is the key. So, if you are reluctant to voice out your opinions, then you are going to feel that you don’t belong there.”
- “Personality can cause you to misfit on many levels.”

- “Personality is a factor which causes an employee to misfit.”
- “Personality can cause you to not fit in.”
- “Some people just have different personalities. Some are quiet. Some are outspoken. This can cause misfit in the workplace.”

4.3.2.3 Gender

This sub-category focused on ‘gender’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...in a corporate environment or any other working environment, you tend to see that there are also critical issues. I feel that women tend to be more prone to misfit than men.”
- “Gender plays a major role...a woman cannot lead, a woman cannot take certain positions. Thus women will always feel some form of misfit.”
- “The issue of gender...the female occupying a high level position could make men feel inferior and thus misfit.”
- “I think gender is also important. I think that dominance from the male side is still prevalent in the workforce.”
- “Gender could also cause a person to misfit. There are these people that believe that genders cannot be equal, females are females and males are males. They might feel that when you find yourself working with those people you might feel or think that you are more of a misfit in that particular environment.”
- “The issue of gender is critical because you still get some people for example, female leaders who are not getting the right treatment or are not respected by their subordinates just because they are females.”

- “I found that I get along very easily with guys, but girls tend to be funny at times. I don’t have a problem with guys, because it’s so much easier to get along with guys.”
- “Engineering is a good example of gender and misfit. Traditionally, engineering was viewed as a male dominant profession. As a consequence, newly qualified female engineers on entering the workplace tended to be ostracised by their male colleagues. This could result in these female engineers having a sense of not fitting in.”
- “Gender could be a significant factor in forming misfit perceptions.”
- “Being a female can cause you to misfit in certain jobs. An example that comes to mind is mechanical engineering. It is a male dominated workforce and as a result, females generally end up changing their professions.”
- “Gender can to a certain extent cause misfit because of stereotypes. There is a mistaken belief that there are some things that a woman can’t do that a man can do.”
- “Gender depends on the individual within the working environment. So, yes and no.”
- “Gender issues are prevalent when one talks about misfit.”
- “Misfit can result in a situation whereby a male is reluctant to take instructions from a female, thus causing a female to feel insecure.”
- “In terms of gender as well...I mean as Africans, we still have that tendency that a senior person must be a man and we feel that if a woman is occupying a higher position, she is not good enough for her job. So that is a perception that creates a misfit.”
- “I think gender to some degree. But I think we have moved away from the gender stereotyping where it’s a male dominated world. I think women

these days have been very vocal in terms of equality and I think they have come a long way.”

- “Gender has been an issue in the past but I’d say it’s changing slightly.”
- “Gender is definitely, in any environment, whether you are a chef...or even a stay-at-home dad.”
- “In South Africa I would say gender, because most industries are still dominated by males. The males still have the old perception that females should stay at home, do the cooking, the cleaning and that is their place. Consequently, on entering the workplace, females tend to be downgraded despite the fact that they are intellectually fit to do the job. This creates a perception in them that they do not fit in. So, I am convinced that gender plays a role in the perception of misfit.”
- “One thing that can cause employees to misfit is gender.”
- “Gender is a significant factor that causes an employee to misfit.”
- “Being female in the South African workplace makes it difficult for us to fit in.”
- “There are a number of factors that cause misfit, but the most significant one in my opinion is gender.”

4.3.2.4 Wrong career choice

This sub-category focused on making the ‘wrong career choice’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. In this regard, the participants provided the following representative comments:

- “...from school to tertiary education, people make the mistake of showing an interest in the wrong career...this has ramifications when entering the

workplace as choosing a wrong career often implies being employed in a wrong job (misfit). This could go on throughout a person's working cycle."

- "Misfit occurs when you have chosen the wrong career and you only realise it once you are in it."
- "99.9% of misfit is attributable to wrong career choice. Traditionally, the previous disadvantaged individuals in South Africa were forced to find jobs at a young age out of necessity. This negatively influenced people from making proper career decisions. At these young ages, many people do not really know what they want in life?"
- "Wrong career choices could be one of the major reasons for misfitting at work."
- "Wrong career choice made me so frustrated because every day was the same. I felt that I had so much more to offer and I was in the wrong place, like really, really in the wrong place."
- "A wrong career can create a misfit."
- "The wrong career choice is made due to the pressure from family, especially in the Indian community, which results in many Indians perceiving that they do not fit in at work."
- "In my particular circumstance, my career path was selected by someone else, thus impacting on the way I see myself as a misfit."
- "Being in the wrong career definitely can be a cause of misfit because you are trying to please your parents rather than pleasing yourself."
- "One of the biggest factors causing misfit is when you feel like you're doing something that you don't enjoy. Wrong career choice."

- “I left training as an accountant as I felt I did not fit in and moved over to forensics. I now simply love being in forensics.”
- “Wrong career choice depends on the circumstances. At some point you could feel that you do not fit in and decide that you desire something else.”
- “Being a misfit could relate to a situation where you could be in the wrong job.”
- “One more issue that contributed to my misfit condition was the wrong career choice...but then I see it as my problem. I need to build myself up because I chose this career.”
- “Just being in the wrong career contributes to the factor of being misfit.”
- “Choosing a career that is not appealing to an individual can influence that individual’s sense of misfit.”
- “Another significant factor that can cause a person to misfit is choosing the wrong career.”
- “When you apply for a job, you initially don’t consider yourself a misfit because you so desperately needed a job. Only after a certain time period, do you realise that it was a wrong career, thus developing feelings of misfit.”
- “Misfit can occur if you are in a wrong job or your job description does not match what you currently do.”
- “Another issue of causing misfit is wrong career choice...lucky I got out, otherwise, I would have misfitted.”

4.3.2.5 Educational Background

This sub-category focused on having the right 'educational background' as a significant causal factor of misfit. The participants provided the following representative comments:

- “A person’s level of education can be a critical factor in determining whether a person fits into a particular job or organisation.”
- “Your competence and your level of education has a big part to play in determining whether you fit in or not.”
- “People who are not suitably educated are often discriminated against or looked down upon in the workplace. Although they are competent enough to do the job, they are often side-lined when it comes to promotions. This may result in them feeling that they do not belong in that particular organisation.”
- “Some highly qualified people choose to find jobs in academic institutions. Although they have the necessary qualifications to excel in the corporate sector, they made a voluntary choice to work in a less pressurised environment. So, the point is that looking at educational levels in isolation, may not be a cogent argument for it to be a significant causal factor in misfit perceptions.”
- “...people get positions and they don’t fit because they are not even qualified. These people get jobs that they don’t qualify for.”
- “Not being qualified enough can create a misfit.”
- “I think not being qualified is what can cause misfit and feeling out of place.”

- “I think misfit is based purely on the discrepancy between the levels of education that a person has and that desired by the organisation.”
- “Educating people is vital as a lack of education can cause people to feel that they do not fit in.”
- “I was not assigned to a particular position up on the organisational hierarchy, but my colleague with fewer qualifications than I, had been assigned. This resulted in me feeling that I do not fit in the organisation.”
- “I don’t mind who gets the position, as long as the person is fully qualified. If one awards a position to an individual that lacks the necessary qualifications, that individual will surely turn into a misfit.”
- “...as a result of these misfits in the new culture, the expertise was actually reduced because we had people with many years of experience and who were well qualified walking away from their positions. This actually impoverished the organisation. New employees were hired with lesser qualifications, thus creating a situation where there was an increase in misfits.”
- “I would mention qualification because if you don’t have the right qualification, you can be a misfit in the job.”
- “Also, educational levels play a part in whether you fit in or not.”
- “Even if you have the right qualification, you still feel like a misfit due to others getting the jobs without any qualifications.”
- “Also your education level. The older generation can get jealous of you because you have a higher education or qualification than them. This can make you feel that you don’t belong in a particular organisation.”

4.3.2.6 Organisational Restructuring

This sub-category focused on 'organisational restructuring' as a significant causal factor of misfit. In this regard, the respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “One so glaring issue in this institution that can impact on misfit is restructuring. Probably one of the top ones.”
- “I think when employees misfit, it is generally as a result of people shunted into other jobs that they are ill-suited to is as a result of the restructuring process.”
- “One of the major issues at the moment is the issue of restructuring. Restructuring can cause people to misfit.”
- “...and after restructuring, many people in my organisation felt that they no longer fitted in.”
- “...nobody wants to leave their job under the current economic conditions, so, people are forced to take whatever position that has been given as a result of restructuring. They are probably not going to perform and they are going to misfit but they don't have a choice.”
- “When the company goes under restructuring, they can shunt you around wherever they deem fit and because of the whole unemployment thing, you end up staying somewhere you feel you don't fit in.”
- “I know one factor glaring in the organisation that causes people to misfit and that is restructuring. It incorrectly groups people, thus creating a lot of misfits in the organisation.”
- “The issue of restructuring is a significant causal factor because if you restructure, in some instances, you put people into jobs that they are not prepared for.”

- “Restructuring can cause people to misfit. It is something associated with a general resistance to change because of the discomfort involved... and once again, from an organisational perspective, one doesn’t try to accommodate every individual...one tries to accommodate the mainstream.”
- “In restructuring, people are just put anywhere. This can cause people to feel that they do not fit in.”
- “As a result of downsizing, to save costs, managers are often placed into positions that are below their grades. This will create tension within these managers. This can negatively impact on their perceptions of misfit.”
- “Restructuring as an organisational tool is not wrong because organisations must change to suit specific times...However, the motives for restructuring leave a lot to be desired. Most of the times, especially in our country, we change to suit certain powerful individuals and not to suit organisational needs. Consequently, things often go wrong because stakeholders are trying to please a certain individual who is on a power trip.”
- “You know for every element of change, especially when it comes to restructuring, there could be a few employees turning into misfits.”
- “...companies have spent billions on change management...However, us as individuals, we still stand separated.”
- “We are one of the institutions that went through restructuring after the process of a merger. People were placed in different positions and some eventually became redundant. Those people that were redeployed felt they were not adding value and thus developed feelings of misfit.”
- “...if you look at a classic example, here at the university with the reorganisation, people find that we have new management, new structures, and so forth. I am still trying to find my feet while others now feel that they don’t fit the organisation.”

4.3.2.7 Individual culture

This sub-category focused on the individual's 'culture' as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Culture plays an important role in perceptions of misfit...it’s an important issue especially in Africa with its diverse cultures.”
- “I think being a misfit has a great deal to do with your background, that is, your cultural background.”
- “...another factor is culture. An individual that differs from other individuals with respect to cultural values in the workplace may feel that they do not fit in.”
- “I also think that another factor that could influence misfit; is peoples’ cultural value systems. This is particularly true in South Africa with its diverse workforce.”
- “Culture, I would assume, does play an important role in causing misfit at some time or another.”
- “...culture is pervasive and is also a dynamic concept in influencing misfit.”
- “Misfit depends to what extent a person’s culture differs from that of the organisation.”
- “...the cause of misfit might be either resistance to change from the group or you might not fit in because of the different cultures. Having different cultures could mean that you do not share the same beliefs...”
- “...the misfit can be caused because by employees having different cultures.”

- "...I think the difference in culture or the misunderstanding of employees' cultures will create tension which could possibly lead to a misfit."
- "...one could be in the situation where one does not fit in due to one's culture."
- "...it's also the misunderstanding between different social groups as a result of differences in cultures that could cause people to misfit."
- "Misfit on the basis of cultural mismatches could often lead to employees trying to follow what's the coolest thing to do. This may not alleviate the misfit problem as misfit on the basis of culture is a deeply engrained factor."
- "Culture is a dominant factor causing South African employees to misfit. South African employees are often embedded in organisations consisting of employees with diverse cultural backgrounds for example, Zulus, Xhosas, Hindus, Jews, Christians, Afrikaners, and so forth."
- "Also, it is the different cultures within South Africa. The high population of misfits in South African organisations could be attributable to the cultural mismatches between these employees and their co-workers and between these employees and their organisations."

4.3.2.8 Social status

This sub-category pertains to the 'social statuses' of individuals as an important causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- "Your status can affect you being a misfit. It does play a major role. The major factors causing misfit are race, followed by gender and then social status."
- "...as a factor, you cannot relate to other people, you cannot be sociable and you cannot perform the way you are expected to perform."

- “Your social status is another factor. I mean, if you are a bubbly person, you may get along with people that are as bubbly as you are. But then, you also get people who just don’t want to associate with you because they feel superior to you as a result of your social status.”
- “Also, I think background; social background is an important factor influencing misfit perceptions.”
- “The pain may be caused by the different social backgrounds. That can cause people to misfit at work.”
- “Society puts pressure on you and says that status means money. They don’t look at it as what makes you happy...if you do what makes you happy, you wouldn’t have a problem of misfitting at work.”
- “I think sometimes social factors are an important issue when looking at misfit.”
- “I have been very fortunate in that my colleagues were very progressive and they wanted me to work with them despite my social standing. From my experience, people with a higher or lower social status than their work colleagues are often isolated. This may lead to these people developing perceptions of misfit.”
- “You can become a misfit in your social environment, like in your home. For instance, you become the misfit child, all your other siblings are professional and you are an artist, and that could impact on your job situation and that could automatically make you think you are a misfit.”
- “Being a misfit also has a lot to say about your social status.”

4.3.2.9 Homosexuality

This sub-category focused on 'homosexuality' as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Another factor that is perhaps on the taboo side is that of homosexuality and it is prevalent throughout the world, especially within South Africa. There are lots of homosexual individuals out there. Society does not accept this and due to the rejection, these people develop feelings of misfit.”
- “If you are a transgender, then you are in this environment where the employer cannot accommodate you. Even policies within my organisation do not accommodate transgenders. However hard you try, you will find that you cannot fit in.”
- “I am personally fine with openly gay or lesbians, but I don't think that in the bigger companies it is acceptable. Therefore, these gay or lesbian employees often feel that they do not fit in and tend to be loners in the workplace.”
- “With gays and lesbians, it is a sure way of becoming a misfit. As an HR practitioner, we have got gays and lesbians in our organisation. Out of interest, I asked one lady how she is adapting to the new environment...She stated that ‘they look at me as if I am some kind of case study that they need to dissect’...and you know this lady actually resigned.”
- “Homosexuality is another aspect that is important when looking at misfit; however, more recently, homosexuality is now becoming more acceptable.”
- “...homosexuality, as well. I remember before it wasn't acceptable but now it is much more acceptable. In my generation there are absolutely no problems with it at all.”

- “The issue of homosexuality could be a significant factor which causes people to feel misfit.”

4.3.2.10 Religion

This sub-category relates to the type of ‘religion’ that the individual follows as being a key factor influencing a person’s sense of misfit. The participants provided the following representative comments:

- “You might be good at your job, but, I feel your religious background to a certain extent can cause you to misfit.”
- “The factor of religion can be an issue. A Muslim person in the office environment with Muslim attire could be viewed as a misfit by non-Muslim employees.”
- “Religion does cause misfit...Each and every person is unique, but what I like, you may not like.”
- “Also the issue of religion. If you feel that your religion...now that you have got this big beard and to some people you are some sort of an enigma, you might feel that you are misfitting this environment...”
- “Religion, which is based on tradition with respect to values and the way people think or do things, can have a major impact on the way people see themselves as misfits.”
- “Religion can cause a person to misfit.”
- “...also different religions within South Africa can be a cause of people not fitting in at their workplaces.”

4.3.2.11 Management styles

This sub-category focused on ‘management styles’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I think management style is an important predictor of misfit in an organisation.”
- “Bad management styles can be a causal factor in misfit.”
- “Definitely management styles can cause misfit because not all individuals are the same and not everyone may be aligned to a particular management style.”
- “Management styles can cause a lot of conflicts in the workplace...this may result in misfit.”
- “An organisational factor is a top-down approach to managing people. In this approach, people feel left out from decision making. Thus, this could be a potential source of misfit.”

4.3.2.12 Organisational culture

This sub-category focused on ‘organisational culture’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Organisational culture and the values of an organisation play an important role. When you walk into an institution or a company, the culture there determines where you could end up, that is, either a fit or a misfit.”
- “It also stems from the type of organisational culture. I feel that it is very, very, important. It is one of the places where it starts...and you find

different cultures which are not compatible with the employees triggering a sense of misfit.”

- “...and obviously, organisational culture is a major factor causing misfit. How does one manage? Is it by force, by engaging or does one respect people and have integrity?”
- “...whether it is an organisational culture that makes you not like what you are doing or the relationship with your boss, you feel out of place. I am of the opinion that organisational culture could significantly influence an employee’s perceptions of misfit.”
- “The different organisational cultures transpire into different acts from management and causes employees, especially new employees, to misfit.”

4.3.2.13 Age

This sub-category focused on the ‘age’ of the individual employee as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I think age as well is an important factor in being a misfit. A lot of younger people are being very qualified and I think lots of them have the potential to grow and develop themselves within organisations. Employees that were in the company for long periods of time may feel intimidated by these new kids on the block and as a consequence, these kids feel isolated.”
- “It’s also an age factor, with us youngsters, I want to come up and speak my mind, therefore, people often mistakenly assume that I do not fit in with the crowd.”
- “Yeah, I mean I would mess around with all the managers because they appear to be in the same age group as I am. However, in some cases younger people or older people working in environments where the majority

of employees are old or young respectively, often feel side-lined and develop a sense of misfit.”

- “Age is a significant factor causing misfit.”

4.3.2.14 Financial responsibilities

This sub-category focused on the ‘financial responsibilities’ of the employee as a significant causal factor of misfit. The participants provided the following representative comments:

- “Some people would apply for the job without taking cognisance of whether they fit in or not. Due to their desperate situation (being unemployed) they take the job because they need the money only to later find out that they do not fit in. They eventually develop symptoms of depression which leads them to start looking for another job.”
- “You take the job because of your family responsibilities and your other responsibilities in life. So, you feel obligated to take it and once you are in, discover that you do not fit in.”
- “...their finances were not adequate and they were forced to settle on that career, especially the older generation. They were forced to work because they needed the finance to support their families.”
- “You just have to work and get paid and get the extra cash. Whether you fit in or not is not the issue.”

4.3.2.15 Lack of confidence

This sub-category focused on ‘employees’ lack of confidence’ as an important causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I think the biggest factor is people not realising their own true potential and I think it’s because they have no confidence themselves. A lack of confidence can impact on the way you see yourself as a misfit.”
- “Confidence can be a key issue to look at. If you are not confident enough to put yourself out there at first, you will never know your true potential. You have to go through failures in life to ensure that you appreciate what you have and to get to know the organisation better.”
- “Confidence is another important factor which can cause a person to misfit.”
- “If you are not confident, it could cause you to develop feelings of misfit. Likewise, if you’re over confident, you could also be perceived as a misfit.”

4.3.2.16 Lack of skills

This sub-category focused on individuals’ ‘lack of skills’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Person-job misfit is where I find myself in a job where I know I am not skilled to do it.”
- “So, that’s why eventually an employee who was not given the necessary training cannot fit in the organisation because he or she does not have the required skills.”
- “People without the right skills will feel misfit.”
- “Lack of skills can be a factor in determining whether a person fits in or not.”

4.3.2.17 Lack of training

This sub-category focused on the ‘lack of training’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The participants supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...an important factor is the level of training that is required to carry out the job functions given to employees. If employees are not adequately trained, this may result in these employees perceiving misfit with their job. This misfit could impact on their satisfaction and performance.”
- “...also, poor or no training given. So, that’s why eventually an employee who was not given the training may not fit in adequately with the organisation.”
- “...the main reason why people misfit is because in some companies, people or managers or people in managerial positions don’t get the correct training.”
- “Inadequate training will have an impact on the way people see themselves as misfits.”

4.3.2.18 Mismatch in placing of employees

This sub-category focused on the process of ‘mismatching in placing’ of individuals from a pool of employees as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...organisations shuffle people around and they reach a point where you put people in positions where they do not really fit in.”
- “You know this matching and placing as a result of restructuring is the central issue in causing people to misfit. In my company, there are a larger number of people that feel that they do not fit in because of this failed

matching and placing exercise that came about as a result of restructuring. Many people have now labelled this exercise ‘mismatching in placing’.”

- “Mismatching in placing is where people are put into a pool and then they are just dumped into jobs. The controversial process has created misfits.”
- “With mismatching in placing, people are placed in jobs which they don’t fit in...and they feel that they don’t belong together.”

4.3.2.19 Corruption/Ethical decline

This sub-category focused on the extent of ‘corruption/ethical decline’ as an important causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “It creates a kind of misfit...sometimes an organisation engages in corrupt practices because of their ambitious directors. Employees in these companies, who feel strongly against corruption, may develop into misfits.”
- “I mean people, for example, who have high morals and ethics might not feel comfortable with a company making unethical decisions. This creates tension within these people which eventually results in them not fitting in with the organisation.”
- “...maybe the reason why I felt the misfit in this job, was an ethical issue.”

4.3.2.20 Co-workers’ perceptions and behaviour

This sub-category focused on ‘co-workers’ perceptions and behaviour’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “The way your co-workers see you, has an important bearing on whether you perceive yourself as a misfit. For example, if employees perceive that I am a troublemaker because I am outspoken on many relevant issues, I could

eventually doubt myself. This self-doubt could lead me to develop feelings of misfit.”

- “When working as a team, it is imperative that you are appreciated by your co-workers. If your co-workers do not display any signs of appreciation for your efforts, you could eventually feel that you are not valued and therefore a misfit.”
- “...co-workers that are constant complainers often radiate negative energy. This negative energy could be a source of misfit.”

4.3.2.21 Language

This sub-category pertains to the ‘language’ used in the workplace as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...it’s about their languages and the native speaking accents that cause many Black employees to feel that they do not fit in.”
- “...also language barriers can cause people to misfit. For example, I know in Johannesburg, there is a major problem with the Afrikaans language. Many White employees still use Afrikaans as a primary language of communication. To the Black man, this can be insulting as the Afrikaans language has been viewed by them as a language of the oppressor. So, Black people, in a predominately Afrikaans organisation, will perceive a misfit with that organisation.”
- “The different languages can cause a person to misfit because if they want to speak their mother tongue they can be discouraged to do so as the majority of South African companies choose to communicate in either English or Afrikaans.”

4.3.2.22 Misleading at pre-screening

This sub-category focused on the organisation ‘misleading’ the potential employee at the ‘pre-screening’ stage as being a significant causal factor of misfit. The participants offered the following representative comments:

- “...you want to be able to deliver but when you are looking at the way the pre-screening of an individual especially on the psychometrics that they do, I find that it’s actually very misleading...compared to the job description...the interview questions posed to the potential candidates are no indication as to what the job function really entails. This discrepancy could lead to newly hired employees later becoming misfits.”
- “Prior to being hired in the organisation, there is a term called ‘deceptive recruitment’ where some recruiters deliberately leave out faults or negative information about the job. So, that could be a factor that could trigger employees to eventually misfit.”
- “...it starts from the process of advertising. Actually, maybe, before the process of advertising. The process of drawing up the job description. So, once the job profile is not directly linked to the expected responsibilities, it becomes a problem.”

4.3.2.23 Working environment

This sub-category focused on the ‘working environment’ as an important causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I would think that the working environment or the atmosphere at work plays a big part in whether you become a misfit or not.”
- “I just felt I was too smart, I was too smart to be there in that environment. There was no challenge.”

- “I think that sometimes in some working environments, individuals are not given the opportunity to be creative and to realise their true potential. Given this situation, I am in no doubt, that individuals will perceive misfit with their environment.”

4.3.2.24 Family pressure

This sub-category relates to the extent of ‘family pressure’ applied to individuals as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Family pressure can impact on the way you perceive yourself as a misfit. For example, in some families, if your father was a doctor or lawyer, you were expected to become a doctor or lawyer. If you followed a ‘lesser’ career path (for example, plumber), you are automatically labelled as a misfit by your family. Over time, some people begin to believe that they are misfits and carry this negative frame of reference into the workplace.
- “...it could be peer pressure, it could be family pressure. Your peers or family tell you that if you go into engineering field you will earn good money, so, from that advice you go and study engineering. After you graduate and go into the working place, you then realise that this was not for you.”

4.3.2.25 High unemployment levels

This sub-category focused on the ‘high unemployment levels’ in South Africa as a significant causal factor of misfit. The interviewees offered the following representative comments:

- “...but, also on the other level, it also comes from the employee side, with the fact that intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of high

unemployment in South Africa, you will find that you apply for something that you know fully well even before you apply, that you don't like it.”

- “The high unemployment level can be a cause of the misfit as people are forced to occupy jobs on the basis of survival rather than on the basis of a good fit.”

4.3.2.26 HIV status

This sub-category focused on the ‘HIV statuses’ of individuals as a significant causal factor of misfit. The participants provided the following representative comments in this regard:

- “A person’s HIV status, especially in a country like South Africa, that is ravaged by HIV, has an important influence on his/her misfit perceptions. Moreover, HIV is a personal thing...if you are HIV positive, then you are automatically stereotyped and bracketed as a misfit.”
- “There are people who do not mind disclosing their HIV status. However, they get that stigma from other people and this could trigger them into believing that they are not wanted and do not fit in.”

4.3.2.27 Low self-esteem

This sub-category pertains to the ‘low levels of self-esteem’ possessed by employees as a significant causal factor of misfit. The participants provided the following representative comments in this regard:

- “People do not feel they belong where they need to belong because they don't have the self-esteem that they need.”
- “On the other hand, if you brought up with obsessive parents who restrict and comment on everything you do, your self-esteem goes down and you automatically see yourself as a misfit.”

4.3.2.28 Nepotism

This sub-category focused on the extent of ‘nepotism’ practiced in the workplace as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “In South Africa, nepotism is rife in the workplace. Hiring or promoting people on the basis of nepotism can have a two-fold effect. Firstly, the people that are hired or promoted are often in jobs that they are ill-suited to. This will impact on their level of misfit. Secondly, the co-workers that were not recipients of this nepotism practice may also feel that they were not fairly given opportunities which may result in them perceiving that they do not fit in.”
- “So, just the dynamics in a particular company can create a misfit. For example, if you are coming into, not necessarily a family business, but where most of the people have fixed up jobs for friends and family, you cannot infiltrate a particular clique. As a consequence, you feel that you just do not fit in.”

4.3.2.29 Personal appearance

This sub-category relates to the ‘personal appearance’ of the individual as an important factor causing misfit in the workplace. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “People’s judgements about your personal appearance plays a role in whether you see yourself as a misfit or not.”
- “The way you dress up can make you to feel that you do not fit in because people stare at you and pass some nasty comments.”

4.3.2.30 Upbringing

This sub-category focused on the ‘upbringing’ of the individual employee as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “A lot of it depends on how you are brought up. The way you are brought up can have a significant impact on the way you see yourself as a misfit at work. If you are brought up in a conservative way and are employed in the organisation that takes risks, you might feel that the organisation is not the place for you.”
- “Upbringing is so important when it comes to the issue of misfit. How you are brought up shapes you into the person you are.”

4.3.2.31 Behavioural patterns

This sub-category focused on the ‘behavioural patterns’ displayed by an employee as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “If you are brought up in an abusive environment, you tend to be most of the time abusive yourself...and you also tend to hide it. Nobody wants to admit that they are an abuser, they usually hide these things. So, that’s one way of identifying a misfit, look at his/her behavioural patterns.”

4.3.2.32 Communication styles

This sub-category pertains to the ‘communication styles’ adopted by managers/supervisors as a significant causal factor of misfit. The participant offered the following representative comment:

- “...from a communication perspective, lots of senior management lack the ability to communicate clearly on what your output should be...this lack of

communication can lead to several misunderstandings with you and your manager. These misunderstandings could potentially be a source of misfit.”

4.3.2.33 Debilitating illnesses

This sub-category focused on the role of ‘debilitating illnesses’ as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment:

- “Physical or mental illness can have a serious impact on whether you see yourself as a misfit in the organisation. Although you might have the will to carry out your job functions, because of your physical illness, you might find it impossible. This could create a scenario whereby you find that you can no longer stay with the organisation and seek early retirement or medical boarding. Misfit on the basis of a person’s illness is a reality and should be further investigated.”

4.3.2.34 Incompetence

This sub-category focused on the ‘incompetence’ of the individual employee as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “I felt incompetent in my last job. This feeling of incompetency led me to believe that I was a misfit.”

4.3.2.35 Lack of motivation

This sub-category focused on the ‘lack of motivation’ possessed by individual employees as a significant causal factor of misfit. The interviewee supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “Another factor at work causing misfit is the lack of motivation. You could choose the right career but have a problem with motivation and support. This could trigger feelings of misfit.”

4.3.2.36 Lack of potential

This subcategory relates to the ‘lack of potential’ exhibited by an individual employee as a significant causal factor of misfit. The participant provided the following representative comment:

- “Not realising one’s own potential can indeed turn one into a misfit.”

4.3.2.37 Lack of trust

This sub-category relates to the ‘lack of trust’ between an employer and employee as a significant causal factor of misfit. The interviewee provided the following representative comment:

- “I think that an important factor in misfit is trust. A lack of trust between employer and employee could trigger an employee into believing that they are not valued by the organisation. This could be a potential source of misfit.”

4.3.2.38 Schooling System

This sub-category focused on the type of ‘schooling system’ experienced by employees as being an important causal factor of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “I think a lot has to come from your schooling system. I went to a public school, so, my experience in terms of engagement with the intellectual dialogue is lower than someone who went to a private school. This could then cause me to feel inferior and in some cases not to fit in.”

4.3.2.39 Stress

This sub-category focused on the levels of ‘stress’ as being a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “...also, the capacity of the person to handle stress, pressure and high volumes of work could significantly influence perceptions of misfit.”

4.3.2.40 Work-life balance

This sub-category focused on the ‘work-life balance’ of an individual as a significant causal factor of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “The imbalance between your work and family life can create tension within you which could lead you to developing a sense of misfit in your job. For example, as an accountant, I was often required to work long hours, sometimes over the weekends to complete deadlines. As a result, I was hardly at home to spend time with my family. At this point, I started questioning whether this job was meant for me. I was given an ultimatum by my wife to ‘shape up or ship out’. All these factors started playing a role in determining whether I fitted in or not.”

4.3.3 Misfit Individual Consequences

On further inspection of the interview transcripts, a third category emerged, namely that of misfit individual consequences.

A total of 33 sub-categories were identified as significant individual consequences of misfit. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below, is a list of the sub-categories, which show the individual effects of misfit, namely:

- **Job performance declines (29)** – relates to the performance level of the misfit employee.
- **An increase in stress (25)** – work-related stress based on symptoms that the misfitting employees display.
- **A drop in self-confidence (19)** – the confidence levels displayed by misfitting employees.
- **Depression (18)** – refers to the psychological impact that the misfit condition has on the employee.
- **Deviant behaviour (18)** – acts which are detrimental to the organisation, for example, prolong absence from the job, unauthorised sick leave, extended breaks, theft, destruction of property, and so forth.
- **A negative impact on emotions (14)** – relates to the emotional impact that misfit has on the individual (for example, resentment).
- **A decrease in motivational levels (11)** – pertains to the motivational levels of employee misfits.
- **A negative physiological effect (7)** – refers to the physiological impact that the misfit condition has on the employee (for example, high blood pressure).
- **Isolation (7)** – refers to the segregation of misfitting individuals in the workplace.
- **Lack of enthusiasm to work (6)** – the lack of interest to attend work consistently.
- **Resentment (5)** – the degree of bitterness displayed by employees as a result of not fitting in.
- **A need for belongingness (4)** – the basic need for employees to belong.

- **Suicide (3)** – voluntary termination of life.
- **Uneasiness (3)** – the negative impact that misfit has on the composure of employees.
- **Unhappiness (3)** – the negative emotions of not being aligned to the organisation or job.
- **Voluntary exit (3)** – refers to employees leaving the organisation on their own volition.
- **A decrease in concentration levels (2)** – refers to concentration levels of employee misfits.
- **Confusion (2)** – the misunderstanding levels displayed by employees as a result of misfit.
- **Dejection (2)** – loss of confidence in the organisation and its practices.
- **Frustration (2)** – the anger levels of employees as a result of their misfit conditions.
- **Inculcates fear (2)** – the impact misfit has in generating fear among employees.
- **Opportunity for self-advancement (2)** – refers to the chance to progress in one's career or organisation.
- **Personality dependent (2)** – the personality traits that the employee misfits possess which enable them to react to misfit either favourably or unfavourably.
- **Withdrawal (2)** – refers to withdrawal behaviours such as non-attendance of meetings.

- **A loss of self-respect (1)** – the impact that misfit has on the levels of self-respect.
- **Boredom (1)** – the lack of interest displayed by employee misfits with their jobs or organisations.
- **Deliberate attempts to get fired (1)** – deliberate negative behaviour shown by misfits with intention to get dismissed.
- **Give up hope (1)** – employees giving up hope in their future as a result of misfit.
- **Guilt (1)** – the guilt levels of employee misfits.
- **Hindrance to success (1)** – the degree of obstruction in terms of succeeding.
- **Invasion of private time (1)** – the degree to which the misfit condition disturbs the private time of the employee.
- **Termination (1)** – pertains to employees being either fired or being asked to resign.
- **Unpleasant effects (1)** – the unpleasant effects that the misfit has on the individual.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.3.1 Job performance declines

The first sub-category focused on the ‘decline in job performance’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Job performance obviously drops, I mean it definitely drops.”
- “You start not performing according to the minimum level that you are expected to.”
- “It affects your job performance to such an extent that you already feel that you are doing 100%, you are giving 100% on this specific task, but you are not suited for the task, so in actual fact you are not giving 100%.”
- “Your performance will drop, definitely.”
- “...misfit can lead employees to not perform as well as expected because they are unclear about their personal goals and the objectives of the job.”
- “Obviously, performance drops.”
- “Job performance drops and affects everyone.”
- “...the misfit condition can lead to a drop in productivity.”
- “Misfits will perform poorly and even cause the whole organisation to perform poorly.”
- “When you are at work, you don’t really perform...You are not really giving your job your all. You are not contributing. You are just doing what you need to do to get by.”
- “Performance drops. It drops everything and that would create an overall downside.”
- “In terms of productivity, you are going to find that misfits are not innovative...”
- “Being a misfit is going to lead to diminished productivity, diminished contribution and diminished self-worth.”

- “Misfits become incompetent in their jobs resulting in a drop in performance.”
- “Productivity drops as a result of being a misfit.”
- “...your spirit, your soul isn’t there and your productivity drops.”
- “Actually, it all leads to a drop in performance.”
- “Your performance drops. The performance is impacted because at the end of the day you do not want to give any advice, you don’t want to work because you don’t trust them anymore.”
- “Job performance drops. Non-performance...maybe in a certain environment, it could impact materially in terms of his salary and not perform if he is not earning bonuses.”
- “Productivity, no doubt, its productivity that drops.”
- “I will say misfits become very unproductive.”
- “In terms of performance in the job, obviously it is going to reduce...”
- “...and if the motivation drops, the performance drops...if they are not happy, they won’t perform well.”
- “...in your work environment, productivity drops as a result of being a misfit.”
- “...the impact that misfit will have on the employees is that of their performance. These individuals’ performance, will without a doubt, drop.”
- “If you are a misfit, your performance will go down, because even if you wake up in the morning and you start thinking about how you misfitting at work, then you are going to think; ‘why I should even go into work today?’”

- “I think that when employees discover that they do not fit in, it lowers their production rate and this means that employee’s job performance drops.”
- “When you are under stress, then you will be unable to perform. This underperforming is caused not only by the stress but by being a misfit.”
- “Misfit affects employees by decreasing their performance levels or capacity to carry out tasks.”

4.3.3.2 An increase in stress

This sub-category focused on ‘an increase in stress levels’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “You get stressed out the moment you realise you are a misfit...”
- “The point about stress, getting stressed out is a major consequence of misfit.”
- “Every day, if you don’t fit in, you will get stressed out and basically everything falls apart.”
- “As a result of being a misfit, you could feel that you are not competent enough for the position. This will actually increase your stress levels.”
- “It can also lead the employees to become stressed.”
- “When you are misfit you seem to stress a lot more.”
- “The impact of misfit is that employees will get stressed.”
- “Stress plays a big role when you are misfit, because you are there (that is, in an organisation) but your heart is not. Thus, you are always stressed.”
- “My assessment of misfits is that they are always stressed out.”

- “Misfits are going to be stressed. They are not going to reach their deadlines because they are going to be stressed.”
- “Stress, anxiety and fear are some of the common by-products of misfit.”
- “It does stress you out...and that can cause a lot of heartache.”
- “You get stressed out. As a result you want to leave the organisation.”
- “Some of the major problems that we experience as a misfit is due to stress.”
- “My relationships went downhill, I was constantly stressed out.”
- “High levels of stress are a major outcome of misfit.”
- “You stress about the quality of your work when compared to others.”
- “The impact that misfit has on the employee is that the employee is stressed.”
- “Misfit could impact the individual employee in terms of being stressed out.”
- “Misfitting is without a doubt stressful on employees.”
- “The impact of misfit on employees will lead to these individual’s stress levels going up.”
- “Stress levels are affected when employees realise that they do not fit into the organisation.”
- “The impact that misfit has on employees is stress.”
- “It is emphasised that stress can be a major factor in terms of the impact that misfit has.”

- “Misfit affects employees. The person can be stressed out.”

4.3.3.3 A drop in self-confidence

This sub-category relates to ‘a drop in self-confidence’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “Being a misfit impacts negatively on your levels of self-confidence. You begin to believe that you don’t have the ability to do your job. Your manager and co-workers get a sense of this and thus, start to push you around by giving you menial tasks, like filing.”
- “The impact of misfit really is on your morale and self-confidence. It does not take long for your morale to drop and your self-confidence levels to decline. That’s how powerful the condition of misfit is.”
- “Without a doubt, misfit will impact negatively on your confidence levels. No matter how strong a character you are, you all have an element of self-doubt, when you discover you don’t fit in.”
- “Well, the first thing that stood out was the low buoyancy displayed by these employee misfits.”
- “I think it really lowers your self-assurance. This has an impact on other aspects of your life. In my particular case, I was low on confidence in my previous job. This had a negative impact on my relationship with girls. I became less confident when approaching someone of the opposite sex. As a result, I was single for a larger portion of my adult life.”
- “Confidence. So, if you are looking at developing people in leadership positions and if they lack confidence, they might display some elements of not fitting in. This will impact on their ability to lead.”

- “Low confidence is a significant by-product of being a misfit.”
- “No matter how confident you are, the misfit condition starts to chip away at you very slowly.”
- “It depends on what type of misfit. If you are the misfit that stands up for things you believe in...your confidence levels might not fluctuate. However, if you are a misfit with a high negative affectivity personality trait, you could reach a point where you become extremely helpless.”
- “...individuals lose confidence and if they do not have strong personalities, they will have a huge problem. Lowering confidence, is therefore, one of the main impacts that misfit will have on the employee.”
- “Employee misfitting kills these individuals self-confidence.”
- “When employees realise that they are misfits, they feel less confident about performing their job functions.”
- “It has a negative impact on their self-esteem.”
- “Definitely, low self-esteem.”
- “Low self-esteem is a major consequence of being a misfit...”
- “Low self-esteem, not being able to work to the best of their ability.”
- “It does drop your self-esteem.”
- “Misfit could impact the individual employee in terms of having low morale or self-confidence, which leads to job dissatisfaction. This could make him/her feel very disillusioned.”
- “Misfit affects employees without a doubt. One impact that it may have on employees is that they could lead to a low self-esteem.”

4.3.3.4 Depression

This sub-category focused on ‘depression’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following typical comments in this regard:

- “...what I also noticed is that it affects you medically because you end up a few times on tranquilisers and I mean I know this for a fact...and a lot of the time on antidepressants just to be able to cope.”
- “On the emotional level, you get anxiety and depression and most people have high blood pressure...this tension is on-going.”
- “I had some issues, anxiety, depression...”
- “You are going to get anxiety attacks and you are going to give up, basically! You are going to feel like it’s beyond you.”
- “Stress can have a negative effect on your health as well, for example, you get depressed.”
- “If you are a weak person, it causes you to become depressed.”
- “Steve Jobs was a loner and he got tons of work done. But also the loner can go into depression.”
- “These individuals can also become depressed.”
- “It affects employees in different ways. When people realise that they don’t fit in, they become depressed.”
- “They are going to be highly depressed. They are very depressed.”
- “...going to fade into depression and may or may not recover...fifteen to twenty years ago, I was treated for depression because I was then unhappy in my workplace as a result of my misfit.”

- “Depressed...look at it from a physiological point of view.”
- “Definitely, depression.”
- “It drained me. It drained me physically and mentally.”
- “The impact that misfit has on the employee is that the employee gets depressed.”
- “The misfitting individuals could become very depressed, almost bordering on suicidal.”
- “The impact that misfit will have on employees is that they could experience anxiety.”
- “Depression got hold of me at the very point when I discovered that I did not fit in with the people in my previous workplace. I then decided to visit a clinical psychologist for the first time in my life. She actually provided me with some sound advice – ‘try and look for another career before you become a statistic’. You cannot hope to change the accounting profession with its deadlines, and so forth.”

4.3.3.5 Deviant behaviour

This sub-category relates to ‘deviant behaviour’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following illustrative comments:

- “Absenteeism...you tend to stay away a lot when you develop the misfit condition.”
- “Makes people take sick leave unnecessarily.”
- “You engage in deviant behaviour like unauthorised time off, extended sick leave, and so forth., when you feel you don’t fit in.”

- “...you stay away from work...always pretending to be sick...it can be very destructive and people can begin to engage in deviant behaviour.”
- “Individuals take long leave days, long sick leave and extended lunch hours.”
- “You find that you take a lot of sick leave and engage in deviant behaviour...longer lunch breaks.”
- “...extra time off, longer lunch breaks, extra sick leave even when you are not sick. Sometimes, you end up being deviant. I am being honest about it. You say, ‘I have other things I want to do.’ You just say, ‘I have to take leave.’”
- “Firstly, the major issue, because I am from HR, I will tell you, the major issue is absenteeism. The misfits just don’t come to work. They come up with any reason possible not to be there and that is the major problem. Once they have used up all their leave, they take further time off by coming late to work or leaving early.”
- “It can lead to absenteeism.”
- “Absenteeism...they will find any excuse...I call it destructive behaviour where you find you tend not to fit in, so you take extra-long lunch breaks...”
- “In my case, after putting up a brave front for some time, I became disillusioned. This left me with no alternative, but to visit the doctor and get a sick note.”
- “Employees take longer sick leave, unauthorised sick leave or being absent for quite a while when they are a misfit.”
- “...and amongst some of them, it causes absenteeism because these people are not happy and as a result, they stay away from work for no reason.”

- “Misfit could impact the individual employee in terms of the employee being constantly absent.”
- “The impact of being a misfit causes an employee to be unwilling to go to work. This will indeed result in increased absenteeism.”
- “...if an employee discovers that they don’t fit in, absenteeism will increase and also these misfitting employees will exhaust all of their sick leave.”
- “The impact that misfit has on employees is absenteeism.”
- “There have been a lot of negative things associated with employee misfits... absenteeism could be one of the major consequences of this.”

4.3.3.6 A negative impact on emotions

This sub-category focused on the ‘negative impact on emotions’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “The impact of misfit starts at the emotional level. Initially, you become anxious and then angry with yourself and the organisation. You develop a mentality of ‘I want to show you a point’. This becomes self-destructive as further emotions become stimulated such as resentment.”
- “Previously the person, who was doing my job, didn’t fit in. He eventually had a mental breakdown.”
- “...it emotionally has a hold on them.”
- “The impact is definitely psychological.”
- “From an emotional point of view, you start to second guess yourself.”
- “It’s quite psychological.”

- “It will affect the individual psychologically. For example, misfits develop negative emotions. You could actually see this on their faces. They no longer smile; instead they are withdrawn with drooping shoulders.”
- “...or if it’s a negative misfit, one will just bring about all the negative emotions such as; confusion, self-doubt, and feelings of inadequacy.”
- “Misfit could impact the individual employee in terms of emotions, more negative than positive. For example, I made a wrong career choice and landed up in sales. It was a nightmare as I was not suited to dealing with customers and meeting targets. The pressure was immense. I developed many negative emotions such as anger, distrust, and so forth. These negative emotions triggered negative thought patterns in my brain. My subconscious brain later became populated with many negative thought patterns. I reached a stage where, when I woke up in the morning, I was filled with negative thoughts. This affected my mood for the rest of the day. I was so soaked in negativity, that some days while driving in my car, I would believe that I am not safe and that I would meet in an accident at any time. In summary, what I am trying to say is that, misfit could lead to a person being in a perpetual negative state of mind. This negative state of mind could lead to many deleterious effects on the individual concerned.”
- “The impact that misfit will have on the employees is its effect on their emotions. For example, misfitting employees will become angry, dejected, miserable, and so forth.”
- “...you get angry at your colleagues and you think that everyone is out there to get you.”
- “That is going to give rise to anger, hostility...”
- “They can channel it in many ways, they can become very angry.”

- “The impact that misfit will have on employees is that they could become very angry. As a result of my misfit condition, I became confrontational with my manager recently. Due to a difference of opinion, on a certain matter, I became angry and aggressive when trying to make my point of view heard. I regret raising my voice to my superior as this was construed as being confrontational. I was counselled on this issue and had to submit a letter of apology which was subsequently accepted by the person concerned.”

4.3.3.7 A decrease in motivational levels

This sub-category relates to ‘a decrease in motivational levels’ as an important individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following typical comments in this regard:

- “You are not motivated to go the extra mile and to put the extra effort into completing your job tasks.”
- “...demotivation is the employees’ side of it.”
- “It would make or makes employees very demotivated...so, it affects your motivation level negatively.”
- “The employees will lack motivation to perform.”
- “Being demotivated is one of the major consequences of being a misfit. When you are a misfit, you are not prepared to put in an effort at work. You have a feeling that it is not necessary as you don’t have a long-term future with the company. Demotivation really causes you to resent your job, your co-workers and manager.”
- “Definitely, demotivation.”

- “You tend to get caught up in a vicious cycle of demotivation, low performance and low rewards. If this scenario continues for some time, you will be forced to look for another job.”
- “I will say they become demotivated.”
- “The misfit can cause the employee to not be motivated to work.”
- “The impact that misfit has on the employee is that the employee becomes dispirited. This is a sad scenario as potential is lost. I experienced this recently in my current organisation. Because of unfair treatment, I realised that I am not really valued by my organisation. Consequently, I became demotivated. I used to sit for hours at my desk, staring into space or at times drawing pictures of my favourite cartoon characters. My manager developed a negative opinion about me. Our relationship became strained. I am now considering other options.”
- “...you find that you are not motivated to do the job. This is due to you discovering that you do not fit in.”

4.3.3.8 A negative physiological effect

This sub-category focused on ‘a negative physiological effect’ as an important individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “You become very, very ill physically...so automatically you start getting an ulcer, you get these migraines that you can’t explain, and it’s not like winter you know. I have a sinus problem; I need to take care of myself...”
- “You could also become very sick and land up in hospital.”
- “People’s health can also deteriorate.”

- “In my case, I was pushed into a certain job. I then became a misfit and thus it exacerbated my illness. I’m now on chemotherapy...”
- “I put on 9 kilograms because I didn’t eat breakfast, didn’t eat lunch and I didn’t have supper...I ate junk food and I became insulin resistant.”
- “Personally, I have been through situations where, for example, on a Sunday night, my tummy will severely cramp. I lost a huge amount of weight at one time.”
- “...physically, as well...you are going to get sick, you are going to make yourself sick.”

4.3.3.9 Isolation

This sub-category focused on ‘isolation’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “It happened to me personally when I was in an audit team and what happened was I never fitted in. Eventually, there came a time when they isolated me and they left me in the office...”
- “You just have to find that place, and if you don’t find that place, then you misfit. Basically people become isolated.”
- “Personally speaking, it isolates you. It isolates you depending on your personal values. It could isolate you to the extent that you leave.”
- “They become secluded.”
- “The person becomes a loner.”
- “It can force you to become that solo employee, work alone and disengage from people.”

- “You begin to detach yourself from the rest of your colleagues in your work environment. When I did not fit in, I was reduced to doing things on my own. For example, I would go out to the shopping centres on my own and in some cases I would use every excuse, not to attend staff functions.”

4.3.3.10 Lack of enthusiasm to work

This sub-category pertains to the ‘lack of enthusiasm to work’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “...you don’t want to wake up in the morning and go to work...”
- “You are not feeling enthusiastic to wake up in the morning and go to work because you are going to be thinking, ‘what the hell I am going to be doing today.’”
- “...you can try and fit in but eventually you will realise that you wouldn’t and you don’t want to do this work anymore.”
- “They may feel like they may not wake up wanting to go to work.”
- “Not willing to work in teams.”
- “The impact that misfit has on the employee is that the employee loses enthusiasm to go to work.”

4.3.3.11 Resentment

This sub-category is in relation to ‘resentment’ as an important individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...you become bitter and resentful...”

- “I think on the extreme really, people walk around bitter with themselves.”
- “...you will probably end up being bitter all the time which affects everybody else at work as well.”
- “That is going to give rise to resentment...”
- “I was constantly bitter, sour, and fed-up with the rest of the world.”

4.3.3.12 A need for belongingness

This sub-category focused on ‘a need for belongingness’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “It affects the kind of social milieu that exists within the organisation. Remember, human beings are social beings and if you feel you are being a misfit, it’s not easy to socialise.”
- “...you work so hard that you have got two months of work done in one month and the reason for that is merely because you would rather bury yourself in work than socialise with the people around you. This could be a form of misfit as well.”
- “The person may become antisocial.”
- “It can cause the person to not belong to a particular group and can therefore be considered an outcast.”

4.3.3.13 Suicide

This sub-category relates to ‘suicide’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I read something where a guy committed suicide because he felt that he didn’t fit into the company and he really took it personally. So, it can have extreme ramifications.”
- “Misfits at work may not know how to handle themselves. This may result in these employees contemplating suicide.”
- “Misfit had an extreme impact on me personally to such an extent that I considered taking a drug overdose. I was on the verge of committing suicide.”

4.3.3.14 Uneasiness

This sub-category focused on the level of ‘uneasiness’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “I think at a personal level, it makes you feel awkward and less of a human being.”
- “Definitely, discomfort.”
- “...and sometimes it’s your superior’s personality that causes you to feel uncomfortable in that space where you can’t go to that person out of fear.”

4.3.3.15 Unhappiness

This sub-category focused on the level of ‘unhappiness’ as an important individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “They can go home unhappy and it can have an effect on their personal life.”
- “You become very unhappy with yourself.”

- “As a result of your misfit, you become unhappy and this leads to poor performance.”

4.3.3.16 Voluntary exit

This sub-category pertains to the ‘voluntary exit’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “Some people will resign and others would say; ‘I would do the same.’”
- “I came to realise that there is no amount of chemical modification that could alter my disposition because I needed to either accept the circumstance and if it was too unpleasant to contemplate, I’d have to avoid it and that meant I had to resign.”
- “You end up writing your resignation letter at least once a week.”

4.3.3.17 A decrease in concentration levels

This sub-category focused on ‘a decrease in concentration levels’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...your concentration drops so low that the normal things that you would be able to cope with, you can’t cope with...”
- “In terms of your competence levels, I think if you are too competent for a position, you are just going to get bored and thus, lose concentration. As a consequence, you are not going to work to the best of your ability.”

4.3.3.18 Confusion

This sub-category relates to the level of ‘confusion’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I say that misfit can result in the employee being confused over the goals and purposes of his/her job.”
- “You become confused and that causes a negative impact on your colleagues.”

4.3.3.19 Dejection

This sub-category focused on ‘dejection’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “...what I found from a concentration perspective is that I was so emotionally involved and engaged in the fact that I don’t belong here, I felt dejected, I felt rejected.”
- “I think there are two sides to it. One is dejection...”

4.3.3.20 Frustration

This sub-category relates to ‘frustration’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “It can also lead the misfit employee to become frustrated at work and at the supervisor as well.”
- “It’s very frustrating being a misfit.”

4.3.3.21 Inculcates fear

This sub-category focused on the ‘inculcation of fear’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “In relation to the emotions of the individual, it inculcates fear.”
- “The space just isn’t conducive to growth, it isn’t conducive, and you are totally in fear. Fear is probably a good way to describe it.”

4.3.3.22 Opportunities for self-advancement

This sub-category focused on the ‘opportunities for self-advancement’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “A person can thrive as a result of being a misfit...at the end of the day you know what you want in life, irrespective of how you are treated. The fact is that you want to progress and give it your all...and I think being a misfit motivates one even further to showcase oneself.”
- “...you could look at this as an opportunity to better yourself and if it is work related...you could use it as an opportunity to improve your skills or educational levels. In that way, you could be more marketable. Thus, finding out that you are a misfit, could be a wake-up call for you.”

4.3.3.23 Personality dependent

This sub-category relates to ‘personality’ as a significant factor in the individual consequences of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “The impact of being a misfit also depends on your personality and your ability to handle a challenge.”
- “Well, it depends on your personality traits...”

4.3.3.24 Withdrawal

This sub-category relates to ‘withdrawal’ as an important individual consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “Misfit tends to force employees to withdraw from their colleagues.”
- “Misfits withdraw from the mainstream.”
- “The impact that misfit will have on employees is that they could become withdrawn.”

4.3.3.25 A loss of self-respect

This sub-category relates to ‘a loss of self-respect’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “I think that misfit will eventually affect your self-respect in a negative way.”

4.3.3.26 Boredom

This sub-category focused on ‘boredom’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “Misfit employees may see themselves as too competent, hence, the reason for them misfitting. When these individuals are too competent for a position, they just become bored.”

4.3.3.27 Deliberate attempts to get fired

This sub-category relates to individuals' 'deliberate attempts to get fired' as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The interviewee provided the following representative comment:

- “As a misfit, you sometimes have a point to prove to your organisation...you make mistakes...you actually put yourself out there to get fired.”

4.3.3.28 Give up hope

This sub-category focused on 'giving up hope' as an important individual consequence of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “With all the stress of being misfit, these employees will be so negatively impacted upon that it will lead them to just give up...you are going to feel like it's beyond you.”

4.3.3.29 Guilt

This sub-category focused on 'guilt' as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondent provided the following representative comment:

- “The impact that misfit has on the individual employee is guilt. These employees will feel guilty about not performing at their jobs.”

4.3.3.30 Hindrance to success

This sub-category pertains to the 'hindrance to success' as an important individual consequence of misfit. The interviewee supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “The impact of misfit employees within the organisation is that it can also hinder the success of their colleagues by being obstructionists. For example, in a team environment, each and every employee’s contribution is necessary for the team’s success. Failure of the misfit to perform at the right levels, will negatively impact on the team output.”

4.3.3.31 Invasion of private time

This sub-category focused on the ‘invasion of one’s private time’ as an important individual consequence of misfit. The respondent provided the following representative comment:

- “...during the weekends you are always trying to do your best and it’s constantly on your mind and takes over your private time.”

4.3.3.32 Termination

This sub-category focused on ‘termination’ as an important individual consequence of misfit. The interviewee provided the following representative comment:

- “The impact that misfit has on employees is that it could lead to these employees eventually having their services terminated by their employers.”

4.3.3.33 Unpleasant effects

This sub-category pertains to the ‘unpleasant effects’ as a significant individual consequence of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “Personally, in terms of the employee wellbeing and behaviour, it’s terrible.”

4.3.4 Misfit Organisational Consequences

On further examination of the interview transcripts, a fourth category arose, namely that of misfit organisational consequences.

A total of 11 sub-categories were identified as important organisational consequences of misfit. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below, is a list of the sub-categories, which show the organisational effects of misfit, namely:

- **A decline in client service levels (36)** – this pertains to the drop in the level of service delivered to the organisation’s clients or customers.
- **A decrease in productivity (35)** – relates to the drop in productivity within the company as measured by the number of units produced, and so forth.
- **Creating a toxic environment (27)** – pertains to the decline in the nature of the environment.
- **A decline in company reputation (20)** – the deterioration in the image or reputation of the organisation as perceived by clients and other stakeholders in the marketplace.
- **An increase in employee turnover (14)** – this refers to the escalation of employee turnover rates in the organisation.
- **An increase in creativity/innovation (10)** – this relates to the increasing innovation, creativity and dynamism displayed by misfit employees.
- **A destruction of team dynamics (7)** – refers to changes in team coordination and interaction as a result of the deleterious impact of misfits.

- **Escalating training and development costs (6)** – refers to the rising training and development costs incurred by the organisation as a consequence of dealing with employee with misfits.
- **An increase in animosity levels (3)** – increasing confrontational, aggressive and provocative behaviour displayed by misfitting employees.
- **A decline in organisational learning (2)** – refers to the decline in the level of organisational learning practiced by the organisation as a result of misfit.
- **Creating a challenge for managers (1)** – pertains to the pressure applied to managers when trying to deal with misfits.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.4.1 A decline in client service levels

The first sub-category focused on ‘a decline in client service levels’ as a significant organisational consequence of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...you tend to have an impact on the customer, client service drops, as you are seen as being very lethargic, very negative.”
- “A misfit can have a negative impact in terms of customer services...once we lose customer service, the organisation loses credibility.”
- “Of course, there is a decline in the service we offer our customers.”
- “...customer service takes a dive if you are in an industry that deals directly with clients and you don’t fit in.”

- “Client service, customer service would be affected. If you sit at your desk and you are depressed as a result of your misfit, you are not going to speak nicely to anyone on the phone.”
- “Client service levels drop.”
- “The organisation’s clients suffer.”
- “Client service levels would be impacted on negatively.”
- “Definitely customer service takes a nosedive.”
- “Service to clients suffers. If it is in a service- related industry and you are at work and unhappy, then your mood will affect everything, from how you speak, your body language, everything...”
- “...client service drops. So, for instance, you are in a service industry, like a bank and you are in the front line and you don’t fit in, your service to the customers will lack substance.”
- “...maybe, even client service levels suffer.”
- “In my case, I will be putting people at risk. I’m very forgetful and that is a side effect of my medication as a result of misfit.”
- “Customer services will be affected unfavourably.”
- “The client service levels will drop.”
- “Customer service levels decline. I mean, really. It’s going to be difficult to go to a bank and deal with a teller that’s a misfit. You just get negative vibes.”
- “Client service is the other aspect that could be a possibility, a strong possibility. It could impact on client service negatively.”

- “The service to the internal clients of an organisation suffers, as a result of its increasing population of misfits.”
- “Client service suffers. If you are in a bank and you are a misfit, client service suffers.”
- “Client service levels will drop. For example, a misfit will lose interest in his/her job. This lack of interest can spill over into the way a misfit interacts with customers either by email, telephone or face-to-face. You can actually identify a misfit by their body language, tone of their voice and choice of words.”
- “If you are a misfit and working in a service environment, then client services levels could deteriorate.”
- “My organisation’s client service levels have dropped substantially as a result of the large population of employee misfits.”
- “...also, the other issue is that service to customers’ degenerates.”
- “The misfit would actually impact negatively on the service delivery of the organisation. As a consequence, the organisation’s reputation will deteriorate. This vicious cycle can continue indefinitely as many managers are ill-equipped to identify misfits early and proactively manage them.”
- “In the organisation, it can result in absenteeism...Thus, if this issue is not appropriately addressed by management, productivity suffers and client service levels drop. If you have employees that have established relationships with their customers, you could end up in a situation where customers could be irked if they discover that a particular employee is not at work and therefore, their query cannot be satisfactorily sorted out.”
- “...the employee might say; ‘I don’t want to go to work today’. This might have a harmful effect on the organisational service to clients. Some clients

demand around the clock personalised service. Having misfits at the coalface of the organisation can only be harmful to its clients.”

- “People are absent, so, it directly impacts on the way they function in the organisation. Unauthorised absenteeism from its misfits can hinder an organisation achieving its goals.”
- “They exhaust sick leave, doing everything wrong, take extended lunch breaks. As a result, this lost time can eventually have a cumulative effect on the morale, productivity and image of the organisation.”
- “Unauthorised absenteeism has a negative impact on the organisation in terms of its output.”
- “Absenteeism, you are going to get that when a person is not happy...”
- “Absenteeism will definitely occur with misfitting employees.”
- “...there comes a lack of quality output. The output for the client is of poor quality, especially in terms of relationships with clients.”
- “Definitely, quality of client interaction suffers as a result of misfit.”
- “It will have a detrimental impact on the quality of customer service.”
- “The organisation loses a lot of competent people if they do not proactively address its misfitting employees.”
- “They might not perform the tasks accurately or on time. In some cases, they might even do it on time, complete all tasks but not accurately at all.”

4.3.4.2 A decrease in productivity

This sub-category focused on ‘a decrease in productivity’ as a significant organisational consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I think it has a major impact on the organisation in terms of its productivity. Obviously, productivity drops. Some misfits do the bare minimum to get by, while others can be a destructive force within an organisational environment. This has a chain reaction from negatively affecting the morale of co-workers to the effectiveness of work teams. The negativity permeating from misfits becomes pervasive throughout the organisation. Every single aspect of organisational functioning becomes negatively affected as a result of its misfitting employees.”
- “Definitely, the productivity will take a nosedive.”
- “The organisation’s productivity declines.”
- “It would affect output negatively.”
- “If you are unhappy, you will not do your work properly. Thus, your performance will drop. Your drop in performance will impact negatively on the overall organisational productivity.”
- “...the effect of misfit depends on where your misfit comes from. If it comes from not having the required knowledge, skills and abilities, you will not be in a position to perform your tasks satisfactorily. This, without a doubt, will have a deleterious effect on organisational output.”
- “Productivity drops because misfits are not willing to perform up to a standard that is expected from their organisations.”
- “The impact of misfit is that productivity drops significantly...”
- “Productivity decreases...they have the capabilities to do the job but they are not performing because misfits are apathetic in most cases.”
- “Lower productivity is a common by-product of misfit.”

- “Productivity drops because misfits spend more time discussing their predicament than actually doing the work.”
- “It means that the output or the productivity of the organisation suffers.”
- “Productivity is impacted in a negative manner.”
- “Obviously, as a result of misfit, you are not going to get a lot of efficiency or high output.”
- “Employee misfits have a negative impact on the organisation in terms of its performance.”
- “An employee who is a misfit in an organisation will have a negative impact on its overall productivity.”
- “The performance of the organisation will definitely decline.”
- “It’s an automatic negative spin-off; the organisation’s productivity goes down.”
- “Productivity nosedives.”
- “I think that the company stands to lose more in terms of its image and performance, than its misfitting employees. Misfitting employees can have recourse in terms of finding another job and/or organisation. Organisations, on the other hand, are faced with the problem of trying to resurrect its image in the marketplace. This might not be an easy task and could result in the outlay of considerable resources.”
- “The organisation might be at risk in terms of losing its shareholders and the loyalty from its valued customers.”
- “If tasks are not performed to the best of their ability, it will have a negative effect on the organisation’s profit margins.”

- “Organisational performance levels will drop.”
- “...so, it will affect profitability negatively.”
- “...it’s going to increase the cost to the organisation because they are going to have to pay my salary, although I am not performing to my maximum capacity...”
- “There can be a huge impact in terms of increasing organisational costs. This will negatively impact on overall performance.”
- “Definitely, a cost to the organisation, because some misfits will resign. This will result in organisations having to fork out additional costs to advertise the vacant position and expenses entailing the recruitment, selection and induction of the new employee. If this is an on-going issue, costs may escalate substantially, resulting in a long-term negative impact on company profits.”
- “When misfitting employees are not pulling their weight, the company is losing as these individuals are getting paid for not doing their work.”
- “I would say that it would lead to the employee not performing their best which impacts on every other aspect of the business, more particularly, company profits.”
- “If an individual feels misfit, that person might not perform to their true potential. This has a cascading effect in terms of negatively influencing an organisation’s bottom-line.”
- “This will also impact on the misfitting individual’s performance. Consequently, company performance will decline.”
- “...if the misfitting individual is under performing, then the whole organisation will suffer. Eventually, the company’s financial indicators will show a steady decline.”

- “Misfits will perform below benchmark standards set by the organisation. This may result in the company not meeting its long-term strategic goals for growth and profitability.”
- “Poor performance of the organisation will be a definite by-product of its misfitting employees.”
- “The unhappier a misfitting employee feels, the more destruction it has on the organisation. If the employee is unhappy, then the employee will not be productive.”

4.3.4.3 Creating a toxic environment

This sub-category relates to ‘creating a toxic environment’ as an important organisational consequence of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Misfits can be toxic to the environment. They could also be more toxic in terms of leadership.”
- “Employee misfits can really change a normal organisational environment into a toxic one. Misfits encourage political behaviour and animosity among co-workers. The organisational climate changes for the worst.”
- “...another issue I was thinking about...it’s very lethal to have a misfit in your organisation. There is a lot of negativity.”
- “The best thing for the organisation to do is to remove their misfits or reassign them. Keeping misfits in the same environment may become toxic.”
- “Misfit behaviour is venomous to the work environment.”

- “A good word to describe misfit is ‘toxic’...it becomes very noxious to the organisation to have misfits around. Misfits often form cliques which can create a very destructive organisational culture.”
- “Having misfits in the organisation can create a toxic work environment. The negativity of misfits can spread to other workers and this can result in a decline in the climate of the organisation. When I worked for a major retailer, I experienced this phenomenon. There were quite a few misfits at the corporate office and they would actively spread their negativity to us on a daily basis. In fact, it took only a few months for the entire corporate office, to be contaminated with this negativity.”
- “Those misfits that remain can contaminate the environment by spreading their negativity. They can actually force people to turn against each other. The environmental climate of the organisation declines to a level where there is backstabbing and unethical behaviour.”
- “It can be really toxic having a misfit in the company. The toxicity can spread throughout the work environment.”
- “Misfit behaviour can become harmful and spread throughout the organisation.”
- “You can take in a large amount of negativity from your co-workers or supervisors if they are misfits.”
- “A misfit can actually make the organisational atmosphere worse. It can push up the negativity.”
- “It also impacts on the organisation. It could impact negatively as most of the time the person inflicted by misfit is demotivated or has a negative attitude.”

- “Having a misfit in the organisation can have a lethal effect on the organisation’s culture and climate.”
- “A lot of negativity emanates from the exit interview. You will get a sense that the individual misfit was not happy with the organisation from start to finish. This had a serious negative influence on the atmosphere within the organisation.”
- “In summary, employee misfits can have a harmful effect on the organisation’s climate.”
- “The other issue could be the impact misfits have on other employees. Misfits can encourage other employees to display similar negative behaviour as they do. If this spreads, the entire organisation may suffer.”
- “There is a negative impact on the organisation...it’s all negative.”
- “Being a misfit has a negative impact on the organisation and I don’t believe that there is any positive effect on the organisation.”
- “I don’t think there is any positive for the organisation, only negative.”
- “...contamination of the organisational culture is another issue associated with misfit...”
- “The atmosphere in the organisation can be irreparably damaged by a person who doesn’t fit in.”
- “The organisation may be viewed as a pack of dogs, sledging through the Alaskan wilderness. The image of one dog trying to pull out of sequence is going to slow that sledge down. It is going to create tension...this analogy can be used to describe the effects of misfit on the organisation’s atmosphere.”

- “Engaging in political behaviour and engaging in office politics are clear examples of misfit behaviour that may pollute the organisation.”
- “You are going to get the misfit individual causing problems with other employees, thus, creating tension in the office.”
- “If you are a misfit and you align yourself to certain clicks in your organisation, it can become very destructive towards the culture or atmosphere.”
- “...with the high unemployment rate, misfits don’t leave so easily. Instead, they remain and engage in destructive behaviour, such as, abuse of company benefits, free calls, etc...”

4.3.4.4 A decline in company reputation

This sub-category focused on ‘a decline in company reputation’ as a significant organisational consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “It has a bad effect on the company...the reputation of the company.”
- “...then, your company image can be severely dented.”
- “It affects the entire status of the company negatively, not only the performance aspect.”
- “When clients are getting bad service, it affects the company’s standing negatively.”
- “Eventually, the company’s reputation will suffer, as a result of the negative perception that stakeholders will have of the company.”
- “...possibly, the organisation’s image will suffer.”

- “The organisation’s good name in the marketplace might be at stake.”
- “Reputation...the company’s reputation can dwindle, in extreme cases, if there are many misfits residing in one particular company.”
- “The organisation’s reputation can dwindle...the image of the company just goes down.”
- “As a misfit in my previous job, I felt I contributed to damaging the reputation of the organisation. I did not treat clients in the appropriate manner as I was very disgruntled about my predicament. In some cases, I would not follow up on queries and clients would get agitated about this. These clients, by word-of-mouth, spread negative views about the organisation. Consequently, in a small town, like Richards Bay, news spreads quite fast.”
- “...it will tarnish the company’s image and the negative publicity can bring the company down.”
- “Eventually, the reputation of the organisation will be eroded.”
- “The company’s status suffers, all those things that the company strives for suffers.”
- “The company’s image will eventually decline.”
- “Above all, the negative effects that misfitting employees have on the company is that its reputation drops in the marketplace.”
- “The company’s reputation will also be affected and will add to the fact that a misfitting employee will impact negatively on the organisation.”
- “The misfitting employees have to interact on a daily basis with customers and if they don’t treat them well, the organisation’s standing starts to drop.”

- “The image of the company will severely deteriorate.”
- “The ripple affects regardless of one small action, for example, in the supply chain industry, the ripple effect of one tiny mistake or lack of concentration is massive. It’s massive in terms of reputational damage.”
- “...it means that you are at risk of spinning out of control...Consequently, harming the reputation of the company.”

4.3.4.5 An increase in employee turnover

This sub-category pertains to ‘an increase in employee turnover’ as an important organisational consequence of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “It can have a negative impact in terms of staff leaving the organisation...”
- “There is a lot of employee turnover, it’s unbelievable. But at the end of the day, most companies these days, when they don’t think long term, they go for inexperienced graduates and these graduates don’t know what they want.”
- “Another issue is staff turnover. High staff turnover. That is a costly affair.”
- “It can also lead to turnover which is really bad for an organisation because it could loose millions of rands each year due to employee turnover and absenteeism.”
- “...and the important issue is the high employee turnover rate. Employee misfits tend to be on a hunt for new jobs.”
- “Another issue is the high impact of staff turnover. It is costly for the company when many misfits leave at the same time. Recruitment costs will skyrocket.”

- “In bigger organisations, it is not unusual to have a larger than average number of employee misfits. In these cases, high turnover of staff could be problematic, especially, when large numbers of these misfits leave simultaneously.”
- “High staff turnover because misfits will leave and it will cost the company.”
- “... and I think the biggest issue is the turnover, staff turnover. The organisation needs to look at where the problem originates from...it seems like they are not doing proper HR screening. As a result, people that are hired do not have the passion to be there.”
- “The organisation will see many of its misfits leaving.”
- “A major outcome of misfit is the high exit of staff from the organisation.”
- “From a staff perspective, there is a definite impact in terms of turnover, as a result of misfit.”
- “Turnover of staff will be an additional expense for the organisation and can be detrimental in the long-run.”
- “...and employee turnover, as a result of the misfit, will significantly add to the cost of the company. In addition to advertising and recruitment costs, there may be further expenses in terms of relocation and induction.”

4.3.4.6 An increase in creativity/innovation

This sub-category relates to ‘an increase in creativity/innovation’ as a significant organisational consequence of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “We need a representation of misfits in South African organisations...they can be a creative spark that an organisation may need when introducing new

strategies and products. Misfits can reduce groupthink by providing alternate views to managers. This may be necessary when there's a deadlock in terms of company direction.”

- “Misfits can be advantageous to their organisations as they often have considerable potential to bringing in new innovations and ideas. Some people who feel that they misfit have totally different ideas from the rest of the people at work. They often feel that they could bring in something unique that may add value to the organisation. Some great innovators like, Steve Jobs, have often been labelled as misfits.”
- “...there can be a creative side to a misfit. I have known of misfits pitching up with new ideas for acquiring new business, creating new policies and procedures and encouraging closer cooperation between members of a team. What is necessary in this situation, is to allow misfits their space as this is the most appropriate condition for them to strive and be productive. The mistake many companies make, is that they use a top-down management style that constrains misfits and thus, frustrating them. Consequently, they become disillusioned and either engage in destructive behaviour or exit the organisation.”
- “Being a misfit is amazing because you see things that others don't...you see things differently, you think outside the box and are able to identify opportunities.”
- “...it could lead to unique ideas. Finding new ways to solving problems, but, at the same time, you must whether there are positive misfits or negative misfits. If they are negative misfits, you must let them go because they are toxic. The positive misfits, you nurture them. Maybe, use the word ‘outlier’ more, because when you start to view it that way you see the word ‘misfit’ in a different light. Use positive outlier and negative outlier, it changes the way you think.”

- “There is definitely a lot of negative and there is also a positive side to it. Someone who is a misfit in the organisation can be an important resource...misfits can generate a creative culture, if allowed to do so.”
- “Aside from the negative effects, if a misfitting individual chooses to stand up for him/her self and radiates more self-confidence, then, the organisation will prosper.”
- “There could be a positive side to having misfits in an organisation. I’ve noticed that a positive aspect is when these employees are able to think outside of the box. They are very creative and this could change the whole atmosphere, resulting in the organisation benefiting.”
- “If it’s a guy like Steve Jobs, then he will have a hell of a good influence and creativity for the organisation...misfitting employees’ thinking can be a lot different and they can bring in great ideas and we could be building on that. It can be desirable to have somebody that is different as long as they are confident about their differences. That could be something positive.”
- “On a positive note, misfit can lead an individual to increase their level of potential, if encouraged to do so.”

4.3.4.7 A destruction of team dynamics

This sub-category focused on ‘a destruction of team dynamics’ as an important organisational consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “Teamwork suffers with a misfit in the team. It creates conflict and negotiation is more personal and vindictive...”
- “It would affect the morale of the team negatively.”
- “It will negatively impact teamwork.”

- “What I found is that the hard workers seem to attract more work. People try to cover up for misfits by soaking up the additional pressure. This affects morale in a bad way because as a hard worker, you could get exhausted and suffer from burnout.”
- “Misfits tend to work in silos which may prove disastrous for the organisation.”
- “I feel that the impact will be the low morale of the misfitting employees. This low morale might affect the rest of the workforce.”
- “Their morale can drop. It can have a highly negative impact.”

4.3.4.8 Escalating training and development costs

This sub-category focused on the ‘escalating training and development costs’ as a significant organisational consequence of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Training and development costs can escalate dramatically.”
- “...if the organisation is open enough to accept that a particular person does not fit in there...they can take steps to retrain that person to fit into that position. This necessitates an increase in the spending of the training and development budget.”
- “Hiring new employees can be very costly as a result of misfits leaving the organisation. Moreover, training costs for new staff members can be astronomical.”
- “...hiring people that do not fit in can result in a serious capital outflow, when these people decide to leave the organisation. The costs that cannot be recovered include; induction and training.”

- “From a skills deficiency point of view, the first thing we should do is to up the skills of the person concerned. This necessitates spending on training...”
- “The misfitting employees who are unhappy in the working environment will require additional training and development and this will be more costly for the organisation.”

4.3.4.9 An increase in animosity levels

This sub-category relates to ‘an increase in animosity levels’ experienced by employees as a significant organisational consequence of misfit. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “...for your co-workers, they are saddled with the additional work as a result of their fellow misfits not performing. As a consequence, there is an increase in animosity in the organisation.”
- “...there’s animosity between members of the pack because there’s a dog which feels that it’s being pulled out of control. The momentum is lost and so, the organisation must suffer.”
- “I’ve been in that situation where I had employees who were misfits and didn’t like certain things and felt that they wanted to get out and then they started to rebel.”

4.3.4.10 A decline in organisational learning

This sub-category focused on ‘a decline in organisational learning’ as an important organisational consequence of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Even from an organisational development perspective, it negatively affects organisational learning or institutional learning.”

- “Organisational learning is stifled as a result of misfits.”

4.3.4.11 Creating a challenge for managers

This sub-category relates to ‘creating a challenge for managers’ as a significant organisational consequence of misfit. The respondent supplied the following representative comment in this regard:

- “It will also put a strain on the management hierarchy as it may become difficult for managers to manage these individuals.”

4.3.5 Misfit Coping Behaviour

On further reading and analysis of the interview transcripts, a fifth category appeared, namely, that of misfit coping behaviour. A total of 15 sub-categories were identified as significant types of coping behaviour. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below, is a list of the sub-categories, which indicate that South African employees engage in various forms of coping behaviour in response to misfit, such as:

- **Organisational exit (26)** – relates to leaving the organisation either to join another organisation or to be unemployed.
- **Being vocal about the issues causing misfit (18)** – voicing one’s opinion about factors causing misfit with the hope of alleviating its effects.
- **Become oblivious to workplace issues (16)** – pertains to turning a blind eye to the issues causing misfit just to be in a job.
- **Engaging in proactive behaviour (13)** – this relates to misfitting employees taking steps to improve their predicament through training and

development to improve their skills with the hope of turning around their situation.

- **Requesting a transfer (13)** – relates to an employee requesting a transfer to another division within the same organisation.
- **Doing the minimum (7)** – this relates to a misfitting employee not going the extra mile and just doing the minimal as per their job description.
- **Engaging in deviant behaviour (6)** – destructive behaviour engaged by the misfitting employee. This behaviour can include theft from the organisation, taking extended breaks, insulting co-workers, and so forth.
- **Being personality dependent (4)** – how one copes with misfit is intrinsically linked to one's personality.
- **Seeking psychological counselling (4)** – pertains to employees seeking psychological help to deal with their misfit condition.
- **Working independently (4)** – excluding oneself from the team and choosing to work alone.
- **Accepting the misfit predicament (3)** – employees accepting their misfit predicament and doing nothing about it.
- **Adapting to the conditions (2)** – employees that feel that they misfit choose to adapt to their surroundings rather than being confrontational.
- **Changing the mind-set (2)** – a change in mind-set or attitude from misfitting employees which may work for or against the organisation.
- **Staying below the radar (2)** – misfitting employees choose to be inconspicuous in the workplace. This allows them the space to deal with their predicament rather than facing the added pressures that comes with being in the limelight.

- **Contemplating suicide (1)** – employees who consider the option of suicide as a way out.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.5.1 Organisational exit

The first sub-category focused on ‘organisational exit’ as a significant form of coping behaviour in response to misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...you voice your concerns at a performance appraisal session and you leave this exiting the organisation as a last resort.”
- “I think the best option is to leave and I guess that’s what I did.”
- “Some people would resign immediately.”
- “Some people just leave their jobs.”
- “If opportunities exist outside your organisation, you can leave. But if there aren’t, then it depends on you as an individual whether you leave or not.”
- “Leaving is not an easy thing and I would be honest with you, the first option of leaving is the best solution for most people, but, because of the high unemployment rate, it’s no longer an easy way or the best solution.”
- “Unemployment is so high. If you leave your job, you are not easily going to get another. As a result, you stick it out. Leaving or resigning is a last resort.”
- “Leaving is only something one achieves on the back of opportunity. Because, if it doesn’t exist, you know you’re only going to suffer.”

- “If you are unhappy, you leave...”
- “If they feel, even after having tried to cope with misfit that it cannot work out, then leaving the organisation may be the best option.”
- “I mean, if it’s to do with the organisation and you are not fitting in, you are going to leave...eventually. However, I think it is the last resort.”
- “If you are stressed at work as a result of misfit, your well-being may be affected, then you have no alternative but to leave...”
- “If leaving is an option, it would become a last resort because as an individual, you would try your utmost to overcome the existing negativity first. However, if you cannot overcome it, then leaving becomes the only option.”
- “Leaving becomes the last resort for misfitting employees. This is due to the misfits having exhausted all other possibilities and all avenues...”
- “Leaving is a last resort because of the current economy of the country. How can you leave a job? Misfits will continue with the stress. To leave a job just like that is very difficult... it’s gone much more competitive as well, so, that makes it very difficult to leave as well.”
- “Look, the first thing that I have experienced is the use of the flight principle. People who feel that they misfit, tend to look for another job immediately.”
- “When you discover that you do not fit in, you take steps to look for another job.”
- “Personally, I would never leave a job without having another job waiting for me...so, when I became a misfit, I did not resign from my job without first finding other employment. I am of the opinion that resigning without finding another job is a knee-jerk reaction. Many people who are misfits just

exit the organisation without giving it careful thought, only to regret it later.”

- “Once you find a job, you must leave the organisation and not remain with the hope of curing your misfit condition.”
- “I think the easiest way to handle misfit, is to find a way out, just try and look for another job.”
- “The first port of call obviously is to try and find alternate employment. If you are lucky, then, you are able to leave immediately.”
- “...find a new employer and then do something that gives you satisfaction.”
- “...that situation with me not fitting in put me off the whole industry for that time that I was there and I wanted to change careers completely.”
- “Again, it goes back to your motivation, if you don’t like your job, if you feel no satisfaction from the job you are in, you can always change your job. Your job should be your passion.”
- “...I couldn’t take working for them anymore. I am not being racist or prejudiced but, being brought up in a progressive family and having friends that came from all different cultures and religions, we all treat each other as equals. Thus, having a boss that did not give females any credit was a culture shock to me. I could not bear this type of behaviour from my manager. It affected me personally and thus, I had no option but to resign.”
- “...I went in and handed in my resignation and boy, oh boy, did I not create a riot. My employer tried to convince me into staying. I was so affected by the negativity as a result of my misfit that I could hardly spend a moment at work. People don’t realise the impact of misfit on the individual. I was isolated by my colleagues and this really stressed me out. I dreaded coming

to work every day. So, no amount of convincing could change my mind to stay.”

4.3.5.2 Being vocal about the issues causing misfit

This sub-category focused on ‘being vocal about the issues causing misfit’ as a significant form of coping behaviour in response to misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “If you tried adapting and it does not work, then you need to be open, speak to someone in the organisation...You need to be vocal about it.”
- “...I was vocal about my misfit condition. My approach was to be more firm and outspoken. That is how I coped with it.”
- “In most cases, people actually try and do something about it. It is not something you can be comfortable with and leave for a long time. They become vocal about it.”
- “...also, speaking out and going to your manager can help you cope with your misfit. Very often, your manager can try and improve your working conditions or try and take steps to alleviate the causes of your misfit. Thus, being vocal about your misfit can only be a positive thing to do.”
- “So, if you decide to stay, you cope by speaking to someone higher than you...become outspoken about it, confront your manager. He has the power to change your situation.”
- “You can become open about your misfit. In my opinion, it is the progressive thing to do. However, it is personality dependent.”
- “You can be candid and say that your job does not fit in with your desired career.”

- “When it came to regional meetings...I was very outspoken about how I believe things weren’t being done right, but, no one listened, they didn’t care. So, being vocal doesn’t always work. Some organisations just cannot handle employees being outspoken on issues. These organisations believe that you are there to do a job and that they expect maximum productivity from you, irrespective of whether you fit in or not.”
- “Coping strategies are different, some people can be very extroverted about it, talking about it and say look, I am not happy about this.”
- “Misfitting employees can be vocal about it. You can go to your manager and say that you do not fit in and asked to be placed in an area where you would fit.”
- “...the grass is not really greener on the other side, so, you try to stay and open up communication in order to cope.”
- “Maybe, if you are frank about not fitting in, you could be moved to a different department where you could excel.”
- “I don’t know how you cope, but, I guess it’s just trying to find certain people who are misfits that you can relate to and just sticking with them. In that way, you could at least share your concerns with others. This could have a reassuring effect on you as you could believe that you are not alone and that there are other misfits like you.”
- “Those that decide not to leave the organisation may become outspoken about the need to improve their position. They often engage with their supervisors or managers on ways to improve their misfit condition.”
- “You try to stick it out; you try to be vocal about issues that needed the attention of management.”

- “You try and make it work by alerting your superiors about the issues that are bugging you (for example, unfair treatment) and giving them a time-frame in which to sort it out. If this does not happen, you take it to another level higher up in the hierarchy.”
- “Well if you staying, then perhaps you need to be 100% honest with yourself and everybody around you, and maybe openly discuss how you feel about the rules and conformities. You need to tell them to listen, maybe, say I got some really good ideas but I’m stifled because of you guys...having open lines of communication are very important.”
- “The first step is to admit that you do not fit in...In order for you to cope with it, you need to address it first by proceeding to become vocal about it with the hope of raising awareness throughout your organisation.”

4.3.5.3 Become oblivious to workplace issues

This sub-category relates to ‘becoming oblivious to workplace issues’ as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “It’s not that easy just to leave. People just stick it out because at the end of the day, they need to earn a salary. They become unmindful about issues that cause misfit.”
- “It’s hard to find jobs because of the declining economy in South Africa. Thus, people who feel that they misfit are forced to stay in their jobs.”
- “As a misfit, I did not consider leaving the organisation. I just worked for the money and I just didn’t really care.”
- “From my experience, in today’s working environment, misfits just keep quiet and work...then go home and have a hysterical breakdown at the end of the day.”

- “One of the major deterrents for leaving is the issue of the financial burden...I have to take care of the family that is, my wife and three kids. It doesn't matter that I am not fitting in at my workplace, the thought that I have a commitment to my family leaves me with no alternative but to stick it out at work.”
- “If you have a family to support, you can't just leave your job. As a result, you have to stick it out. However, if you are like me and you still have your parents and they don't mind supporting you, you could consider exiting the organisation as an option.”
- “You don't want to leave because you may be unemployed for a long time...you swallow it and accept it because you have kids to feed.”
- “In my experience, I have knowledge of misfitting employees coming to work to just earn a salary. Many shut out the factors that influence their sense of misfit.”
- “Some misfits just stay in the organisation for the sake of the money. They become insensitive to matters causing their misfit.”
- “...you can grin and bear it and continue to be unhappy in your job because you have no alternative. Consider the issues in South Africa – high unemployment rates, job reservation favouring Blacks, high taxation, and so forth. All these factors mentioned force someone like myself, who is a misfit, to stay in my job and thus, become oblivious to issues...”
- “They say, right, ‘I am just going to be doing my job.’”
- “...if it's your personality, you just have to work, get paid...well try because of the money...if I knew I had bills to pay, I'd stay to pay my expenses.”
- “...or you can see it as just a source of income.”

- “I believe that the main coping mechanism for misfitting employees is the realisation of earning a salary. This basically enables the employees to get by each day, even though they are constantly faced with negativity...”
- “I guess, despite their personal problems, the misfitting employees would still have to go to work and deal with it...the financial constraint is the biggest concern.”

4.3.5.4 Engaging in proactive behaviour

This sub-category focused on ‘engaging in proactive behaviour’ by individuals as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I know what it’s like to feel like a misfit and I think for employees to cope with it, they have to basically come up with their own strategies and ask themselves, ‘what do they want out of life’ and go out and get it. Therefore, engaging in proactive behaviour is the way forward.”
- “Take proactive steps. Some might react positively and say ‘can I do something in terms of my personal development plan.’”
- “I took proactive steps to try and improve my situation.”
- “Fortunately, I got out just in time as the reorganisation did not suit my personality. So, I think for a prospective employee, there is nothing wrong in engaging in pre-emptive steps to improve misfit.”
- “Most of the time, as a misfit, you take each day as it comes.”
- “By being proactive about misfitting, employees will be able to overcome the negativity and possibly begin to fit in the organisation.”
- “I know that I am not good at administration in my organisation. However, I am not going to let this get me down. I will try my level best to improve my

situation by seeking help in the form of requesting additional training to improve my skills.”

- “...improve your skills, like going for training...it will bring you up to speed.”
- “Training and development...asking your manager to send you on training programmes and evaluating your performance after these training programmes.”
- “Assess your skills and if you find that you don’t have the necessary skills, you can request to go for training.”
- “...and obviously retrain yourself or train yourself to actually fit the job.”
- “For employees to cope, I think they need to go for additional training.”
- “Training and development is another proactive approach in which an employee could cope with being a misfit.”

4.3.5.5 Requesting a transfer

This sub-category pertains to individuals ‘requesting a transfer’ as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “A possible way out of your misfit condition is to request for a transfer to another area of the organisation...However, this is not an easy option as it is supply and demand dependent.”
- “Maybe, you could request for a transfer as a way of coping.”
- “Asking your manager for a transfer is an option from personal experience.”

- “Requesting a transfer is possible, it can be done. It also depends on whether there are positions available.”
- “Can I be transferred to another division? It could be possible if there are positions available. If I have the patience to wait is another matter.”
- “Some people actually realise that they have got a problem and try to talk to their superior if they can be moved or try another job where they actually feel they fit in.”
- “...tell your manager that you would like a transfer to another division within the organisation.”
- “I moved and found my passion, I found something that I really like and the thing that is lacking today is the fact that people are not doing the job they love and that is contributing to their sense of misfit.”
- “Misfits could ask for a transfer. That’s what I did. I was in finance but I wrote such a long motivating letter and pushed for a move into HR. It was not easy, but, I had to write and persevere until I got my transfer.”
- “Some misfits tell their managers they need a transfer.”
- “Requesting for a transfer depends on what the cause of your misfit is. If it relates to the people around you, for example, members of your team that are adding to your misfit, then requesting for a transfer might be a viable option to alleviate the misfit.”
- “Misfitting employees try and adapt and make the most of it. They could also go the other route and possibly ask for a transfer out of that department. For instance, in my organisation, employees can request to go and work in administration if you do not fit in sales.”
- “...go to your HR manager and say; ‘look I cannot cope with this.’ Furthermore, I am not suited for this position but I am suited for an adjacent

position. If it is feasible to redeploy you, this may work out very well for both parties.”

4.3.5.6 Doing the minimum

This sub-category focused on individuals ‘doing the minimum’ as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I will do the absolute bare minimum...I am just going to come and do what I am required to do only...nothing extra.”
- “Misfits are very demotivated. They are often seen to be doing the very basics as required by their job descriptions. Thus, if you are in a crisis and chasing a deadline, you don’t get any cooperation from misfits. In my experience, this was seen to be the case. For example, we were on a tight deadline at financial year end and the computer system crashed. The organisation eventually got the computers up and running. However, in order for us to meet the deadline, it required the data capturers to work the weekend. One particular ‘oddball’ categorically refused to work the weekend, even after having being offered to be paid overtime. Getting him to do extra work was akin to drawing water out of a stone.”
- “...and do the bare minimum to get by.”
- “When I was a misfit in my previous job, I did not go out of my way to excel in my work. I would just do the basics just to get through each day.”
- “Besides the personal issues which may arise from being a misfit, you just have to keep working. You have to perform your tasks and by doing the bare essentials, it becomes the coping mechanism.”
- “Some people engage in impression management. When they are at work, they are often visible and loud so as to attract attention of their supervisors.

However, if you really look into it, these individuals are not really productive. They have mastered the art of just doing the bare minimum just to get by. If there are weak controls in place, like there are in my organisation, these individuals will be rewarded for their mediocrity.”

- “It’s not easy to cope when you know you don’t belong...it results in people not being very creative. People just go through the motions.”

4.3.5.7 Engaging in deviant behaviour

This sub-category relates to individuals ‘engaging in deviant behaviour’ as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “People also engage in deviant behaviour in the sense that they steal time from the company, take extended leave, sick leave, and so forth.”
- “Some people may choose to say, let me exploit the resources within my organisation...let me take unauthorised leave, let me abuse annual leave...sick leave...it all contributes towards engaging in deviant behaviour.”
- “If your manager becomes hostile or adopts a confrontational approach when they discover that you do not fit in, it impacts negatively on the way you cope with your misfit. To show your manager a point, you often engage in destructive behaviour against him or her, your colleagues and the organisation. I must be honest with you; I hope you don’t judge me for what I have to say. When I was experiencing misfit, my manager had no sympathy for me and tried to expose me at all costs. I got back at him by delaying the deadlines and taking sick leave when I was not sick. I was also privy to certain confidential information regarding company profits and salary increases. I fed this information to the trade union and they used this

as leverage in salary negotiations. This is a typical example of a person engaging in deviant behaviour to cope with their misfit.”

- “Misfit forced me to stay absent from work for lengthy periods. This became a vicious cycle as my co-workers resented me for doing this. This resentment from them, forced me to further stay away from work as I could not take their constant insinuations.”
- “Some of them just sit in their offices and use the company for studying or playing around, abusing the telephone and internet facilities.”
- “Coping is a challenge... I personally had a diary and just went through the motions, and every day I would start shading in the diary as to when I wanted to leave. It was crazy, I would tell myself, I need to go now. I would send out my CV and go for all those interviews, steal time from the company to go for those interviews, take sick leave and abuse the rules... I was unhappy.”

4.3.5.8 Being personality dependent

This sub-category focused on the issue of ‘being personality dependent’ as a significant variable that may influence how individuals cope with misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “I think the approach these people take to cope with misfit is dependent on their personalities.”
- “Misfits that are extroverted often cope differently to misfit than people who are introverted. In addition, individuals on high negative affectivity cope somewhat differently than positive individuals. For example, an extroverted individual will be vocal about issues affecting their misfit. They often engage with their managers to alleviate the impact of misfit. They also engage in proactive behaviours to improve their situation. On the other

hand, introverts keep their problems to themselves. They suffer in silence. Their health is often affected and this impacts on their performance. Managers have no idea about their predicament and often label them as poor performers. This further adds pressure on them. Consequently, introverts find it difficult to cope and often use the exit approach. Misfits that are highly negative will accept their fate and not look for alternatives to improve their situation. They often exit the organisation, often to find out that they misfit in their new jobs. In this context, misfit can be conceptualised as a state of mind rather than a condition that can be reversed.”

- “I am not entirely sure how misfitting employees would cope but I know that if it was me, I would definitely try to overcome it. This is because I regard myself as having a strong personality and this would enable me to deal with the situation before it gets worse.”
- “It depends on your personality. If I’m a strong person, I wouldn’t care if you think I’m a misfit or not. But if you have a weak personality, you are going to take it the hard way and constantly dwell on the negative aspects.”

4.3.5.9 Seeking psychological counselling

This sub-category focused on individuals who ‘seek psychological counselling’ as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...going for counselling is a good way of coping. One could learn various relaxation techniques and get objective feedback about your predicament.”
- “Counselling can help misfits cope with their situation. Employee misfits are able to raise their concerns to an objective person. This may lessen the burden.”

- “I believe that another coping mechanism for employees, whom are misfits, would be to go for counselling. This is available at many organisations and employees need to be able to openly discuss their feelings. This will enable them to find ways in which to deal with the situation.”
- “Misfitting employees need counselling in order to cope. The misfit can go for counselling with the aim of addressing the situation.”

4.3.5.10 Working independently

This sub-category focused on ‘working independently’ as an important coping behaviour of misfitting employees. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “I coped with misfit in my previous company by avoiding people and teams and working alone. I found that I was able to cope as I could be shielded from the criticism that I was likely to get from my colleagues about my ‘unusual’ mannerisms.”
- “You could be covert about it and just keep to yourself and not say anything.”
- “As a misfitting employee, one would keep to oneself. You would do the work on your own and avoid working in teams.”
- “We Africans have a peculiar way of coping with misfit. We tend to go into a shell and work on our own. Furthermore, we become averse to working in teams.”

4.3.5.11 Accepting the misfit predicament

This sub-category pertains to ‘accepting the misfit predicament’ as a significant coping behaviour. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “In order for me to cope with being a misfitting employee, I would just stay out of everyone’s way and accept my situation. In so doing so, I will avoid comments levelled at me.”
- “...be realistic. Tell yourself you don’t fit in and accept your situation. You need to be real to yourself. Don’t be in denial.”
- “If it was me personally, I would firstly be true to myself and acknowledge that I did not fit in...after this, it becomes easier to cope.”

4.3.5.12 Adapting to the conditions

This sub-category focused on ‘adapting to the conditions’ as an important coping behaviour of misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “It’s not easy to change jobs, so you have to remain in your organisation and try to adapt.”
- “Misfitting employees adapt, however, they still keep the feeling of not belonging inside of them. To them, it just becomes a job. I have to eat at the end of the day, so, I will just keep doing this job even though I’m not happy and don’t feel that I belong here, but where else will I find a job. It is difficult in South Africa with the high unemployment rate and Affirmative Action which favours the majority race group.”

4.3.5.13 Changing the mind-set

This sub-category focused on ‘changing the mind-set’ of individuals as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “...or you can have a whole mind-set change...and I am going to make this work.”
- “I need to change my attitude, change how I do it.”

4.3.5.14 Staying below the radar

This sub-category relates to individuals ‘staying below the radar’ as a significant coping behaviour of misfit. The interviewees provided the following illustrative comments:

- “I found that most people hide behind their misfit, they don’t go for organisational functions, they don’t attend meetings, and so forth. They stay in their offices all the time so that they don’t have to interact with people. They keep a low profile, below the radar.”
- “...a lot of people fly beneath the radar. Thus, shifting the focus away from them.”

4.3.5.15 Contemplating suicide

This sub-category relates to individuals ‘contemplating suicide’ as a significant coping behaviour. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “It is a big problem and some commit suicide.”

4.3.6 Misfit Management

On further reading and analysis of the interview transcripts, a sixth category emerged, namely, that of misfit management. A total of 20 sub-categories were identified as significant factors pertaining to the way misfit should be managed to proactively harness their potential. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below is a list of the sub-categories, which indicate how misfit should be managed, including the following:

- **Training and development (21)** – refers to training and development programs instituted by the organisation to assist misfits to turn their situation around.
- **A change in company mind-set (19)** – this relates to a shift in the current thinking of many organisations to look at misfits in a different light.
- **Interventions (17)** – proactive interventions from organisations to alleviate or abolish the sources of misfit.
- **Early misfit identification (14)** – this refers to the timing of misfit identification prior to any strategies or programs being instituted.
- **Counselling (13)** – pertains to the psychological counselling given to employee misfits with the objective of improving their predicament.
- **Relocation (12)** – the transfer of employee misfits to other areas of the organisation where they fit in.
- **Recruitment and selection (9)** – this pertains to the recruitment and selection, policies and procedures that a company uses to select the right type of individual.
- **Job rotation (8)** – rotating the misfitting employees to different jobs requiring different skill sets, knowledge and abilities.

- **Creative management (7)** – this refers to the creative strategies that are used by organisations to harness the potential of their misfits.
- **Providing incentives (7)** – refers to incentives such as pay raises, incentive bonuses or promotions that are used as tools to motivate misfitting employees.
- **Consultation (5)** – dialogue between management and misfitting employees about ways to improve the situation.
- **Creating an open working environment (5)** – an environment that encourages empowerment and open communication between misfitting employees and their managers or supervisors.
- **Teambuilding (5)** – this pertains to efforts by the organisation to encourage a culture of teambuilding.
- **Implementing effective strategies (4)** – pertains to the implementation of effective strategies to deal with misfitting employees.
- **Enhancing organisational culture (3)** – refers to improvements to existing organisational cultures.
- **Motivating to turn it around (2)** – the motivational strategies used on employee misfits with the objective of turning their situation around.
- **Removing negative misfits (2)** – refers to the termination of employment of the destructive misfits who add no value to an organisation.
- **Career management (1)** – the effective management of the career of an employee misfit.
- **Implementing exit interviews (1)** – this relates to the interviews that are held to ascertain why employees leave the organisation.

- **Leveraging the positive misfits (1)** – it pertains to the effective utilisation of the positive misfits in an organisation.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.6.1 Training and development

The first sub-category focused on ‘training and development’ as a significant misfit management intervention. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “You got to send them for training...you cannot send me for training on computers when I know I am bad...I will be wasting funds. You have to find out what I am good at and then train me accordingly.”
- “I think training is also important.”
- “I think that training is always an option.”
- “...training and development because you want to discover their weaknesses and you want to develop those weaknesses into strengths.”
- “I think the training and skills to an extent, but at the end of the day, you can’t train people to behave in a certain way.”
- “...you might not have the skills, but let’s train you.”
- “The organisation can invest in employee training programmes that motivate the employees and continually improve their working environment...It’s not easy to keep on training staff, only to see them leave the organisation a few months later.”
- “Personally, it depends how they are sort of misfitting. If it’s a skill sort of problem, then they can maybe undertake more training...you can rectify it

and improve it with training and development...so by maybe giving the misfitting employees more training and allowing them to voice their opinions, you could gain more from them.”

- “Another inventive issue is to actually look at retraining.”
- “Encourage training or set up training programmes for the misfit.”
- “The person can be retrained into a new position...training and development can work.”
- “If there are any misfits, the organisation should just provide guidance and training to address the issue rather than just cutting them off. In my opinion, firing them is a short-term solution because it costs the organisation more money to recruit and train new individuals, when they should rather invest in the same people and get them aligned to the organisation.”
- “Incorporate training and development.”
- “Look to see if you can actually retrain them based on their skills or expertise or passion...if you can’t, then unfortunately, you have to let these people go.”
- “...institute some training and development programmes to deal with misfits.”
- “Getting rid of misfitting employees can be costly, so, I think that organisations should try training and development with these individuals.”
- “Training and development is important. It will allow the individuals concerned to up-skill themselves and fit in.”
- “Offer training or try and place them into other jobs within the organisation. It’s not always possible but management can try.”

- “Organisations should make sure that the employees that they employ are well trained and have the correct level of education suited for a particular job description.”
- “Offer them training and development.”
- “They need to send misfit employees for training.”

4.3.6.2 A change in company mind-set

This sub-category focused on ‘a change in company mind-set’ as a significant step to effectively managing employee misfits. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “The company mind-set needs to change radically.”
- “We need that change in mind-set. It’s important...the way things were done before compare to now, it’s different and companies are losing money unnecessarily.”
- “A change in mind-set from the organisation is required to accept the reality that misfits are an integral part of the company make up and should be managed accordingly.”
- “...they need to change their mind-sets in terms of how they view misfits.”
- “What is really necessary is a change in mind-set to celebrate differences and foster innovation and creativity.”
- “Organisations need to change their mind-sets and try to look at ways of maybe handling misfits.”
- “...change of mind-set in the way organisations do things.”

- “They don’t have a plan for misfits, so maybe, the plan should be to get managers to actually rethink, change their mind-sets.”
- “Change in mind-set in a company. It needs to adapt and accept the changes taking place in the 21st century workforce.”
- “...a change in mind-sets of the companies and I think that management should also take the time to be with other misfitting employees so that they can get to know what really goes on.”
- “Organisations are required to shift their mind-sets.”
- “A change in paradigm. Companies need to change their mind-set and they need to respect every level in the hierarchy because I don’t care how good their strategy is, at the end of the day, the person that is going to execute and make the strategy work, is the person at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy.”
- “Organisations really need a change in their mind-sets.”
- “A change in organisational ‘thinking.’”
- “Companies need a change in their views. The companies need to change their thinking...try and look at ways to embrace their misfits.”
- “I think my company needs a change in mind-set from where they are currently.”
- “A change in company mind-set would be ideal.”
- “Organisations need to change their mind-set. What amazes me is that organisations have policies and procedures for everything aside from how to handle their misfitting employees.”

- “A change in paradigm from companies. They are now required to dig deeper into what is actually causing a person to misfit.”

4.3.6.3 Interventions

This sub-category focused on ‘interventions’ as a significant misfit management approach. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “...you need to be able to create an effective program to deal with misfits.”
- “...intervention in terms of creatively harnessing a misfitting individual’s ability.”
- “Employee wellness programmes will be an appropriate intervention.”
- “First things first. Create an awareness that misfit is not all about being a negative condition. If you implement this philosophy in your diversity strategies, it can be effectively addressed.”
- “Maybe, by implementing some programmes where managers can talk to misfits, find out what their problems are. In so doing, they can be on top of things.”
- “They should instil probationary programmes and wellness programmes.”
- “Make sure that HR is aware of what is going on within the organisation with regard to misfits. HR should play a more proactive role.”
- “You have got to find a way to deal with it like every other social problem in an organisation. It needs HR intervention.”
- “Wellness programmes would be effective.”

- “...some wellness programmes would be a good structured approach to dealing with misfits.”
- “Give them the support they need. Find out how they are doing...Maybe once a week, have coffee with them...find out if they are coping and if they need more guidance.”
- “Identifying the misfit correctly and then try to look at remedial action...where you can actually fit them in.”
- “More remedial than punitive...because a misfit is not necessarily incompetent.”
- “Mentorship is important in every aspect...mentors have to be chosen properly.”
- “They should have more workshops to deal with misfits.”
- “You could have seminars and workshops within the organisation.”
- “Employee assistance programmes can look at the social side of it...make them to feel part and parcel of the organisation.”

4.3.6.4 Early misfit identification

This sub-category relates to the ‘early identification of misfits’ as an important misfit management strategy. The interviewees provided the following illustrative comments:

- “I think they need to identify why the misfitting occurred...”
- “Early identification of the misfitting employee is critical...”
- “The first step is to identify the misfit at the earliest possible time.”
- “I think that identification is very, very important.”

- “Finding out the root cause of misfit is fundamental to effectively managing the condition.”
- “A very important point is identifying the type of misfit. Once you know exactly what sort of misfit, then you can find solutions on how to address it.”
- “The organisation needs to look at those individual misfits who have talent so that their talent is nurtured and does not go to waste. The organisation must therefore have measures to identify such misfits.”
- “...try to identify these misfits during the early stages before they evolve into full-blown misfits.”
- “In my opinion, almost everyone is a misfit. My recommendation would be that companies need to identify these individuals early on.”
- “My recommendation is to firstly identify why there is a misfit between the individual and the organisation.”
- “First, you got to identify what represents a misfit in a particular context, because what could represent a misfit in one context may not be the same in another.”
- “Organisations should identify the problems earlier. Instead of worrying about the productivity, they should try and concentrate on their staff’s emotions, wellbeing and feelings. This will help to understand who the misfits really are and what the cause of their predicament is.”
- “Firstly, managers should be proactive in identifying symptoms and root causes of misfit early in the tenure of the employee so that the necessary steps can be taken.”
- “Identify the positive outlier and possibly channel them into a suitable area.”

4.3.6.5 Counselling

This sub-category pertains to ‘counselling’ as a significant misfit management intervention. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Counselling is important and if you are in a position where you don’t know what the misfit employee is experiencing, then you send him/her for counselling.”
- “Perhaps providing counselling to raise their self-esteem and raise their confidence could be really the key for organisations.”
- “Industrial psychologists would identify the misfit and try to look at areas where they can actually alleviate the misfit.”
- “Have organisational social workers or industrial psychologists who can talk to them.”
- “Don’t change who I am but maybe counselling will work for some people.”
- “To start counselling the misfit person.”
- “They need to find proper ways of dealing with it...the use of counsellors may be the way to go.”
- “Counselling may be effective in finding out what’s wrong with misfits and how to motivate them.”
- “I think that misfitting employees should be provided with counselling in order for them to be re-integrated into the organisation.”
- “...some psychological counselling is also necessary in order to deal with misfits.”

- “A wellness centre with counsellors would be appropriate and this will ensure that misfitting won’t be a permanent thing.”
- “The organisation could set up a counselling unit in-house.”
- “They need to send misfit employees for counselling.”

4.3.6.6 Relocation

This sub-category focused on the ‘relocation’ of misfitting employees as a significant misfit management strategy. The interviewees provided the following illustrative comments:

- “...I fit somewhere. You can see that I am a misfit here. However, there is something that you can see I do well in. So, you will need to enhance that...people may be talented and we need to find a way to channel it.”
- “I think that once an employee comes to a manager and says that I do not belong in this specific job, the manager redeploys him/her in another area.”
- “The thing about restructuring is a whole different story. At the end of the day, I know a lot of misfits who were asked to relocate and this actually proved very successful.”
- “The organisation could restructure, move people around and consider input from misfitting employees.”
- “Match them to be a perfect representative for the organisation. This could be done by finding a niche in the organisation where these people fit in.”
- “Transfer employees to other areas where they would fit in.”
- “Transferring him/her to other places in the company once management have identified where the person wants to be.”

- “Once they identify those people who are misfits, these misfits can be used in different projects where they will fit best...look at them and match them in areas where they fit.”
- “It can be permanent, if it continues in that organisation. However, if you’re steered in the right direction, moved to another department, then, you might be able to fit in perfectly.”
- “The organisation as a whole should try and find out exactly what the misfit is good at and place this individual where they would belong and feel comfortable.”
- “Organisations should also try and look for other areas in the organisation where the misfit could fit in.”
- “They could re-allocate them into another division which might turnout to be a perfect fit.”

4.3.6.7 Recruitment and selection

This sub-category focused on the proper ‘recruitment and selection’ of employees as an important misfit management intervention. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “Hire people that have the same qualities as the organisation.”
- “...it can save costs instead of letting those employees off and spending more on training. The organisation should rather get it right the first time by concentrating on recruiting and selecting the right employees.”
- “Recruitment and selection is important...when they are selecting or employing individuals, they need to make sure that these individuals are going to fit in.”

- “So when employing people, do personality checks and ensure that the people that you recruit will fit in the organisation.”
- “They can also do appraisals more regularly and another thing is to actually highlight the problem of misfits in the interview stage when hiring, so people are aware of it...recruitment is important.”
- “Proper job placements, place them on a waiting list for relevant jobs so that they don’t have to be misfitting for long periods.”
- “Preventing misfits begins with ensuring proper recruitment and selection of individuals.”
- “So personality wise, I’d say maybe ensure that the organisation has some tool for testing personalities...this may prevent people from being selected with major personality differences when compared to the organisation.”
- “Companies hire people for positions even if it’s not in line with their qualifications. People are then required to change and this causes employees to misfit. The way forward is that organisations need to equip themselves with proper policies and procedures governing the recruitment of employees that match the organisation in terms of its culture, ethics, and so forth.”

4.3.6.8 Job rotation

This sub-category pertains to the ‘job rotation’ of individuals as a significant misfit management intervention. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “By changing job descriptions of misfits, it helps these employees feel more comfortable.”
- “One recommendation is rotation of jobs. This is without a doubt very important.”

- “Job rotation will help people who are misfits.”
- “Job rotation, channelling people in the right areas can be a remedy for misfits.”
- “...look at job rotation...put the individual in another position or in another department within the same organisation. Don’t resort to firing the person because in my view, it is short-sighted.”
- “If they feel they don’t want to be pushed into new jobs, they should just try and rotate the jobs because when you do the same job for years, you become bored, stagnant and angry and you feel that you don’t fit in and don’t want it anymore.”
- “Job rotation is an important strategy that needs to be used to effectively utilise misfits without resorting to other extreme steps like firing the individual.”
- “Rotating misfits into other jobs may go a long way into improving their predicament. They may discover that doing different functions using different skill sets, may actually improve their fit with their jobs or organisations.”

4.3.6.9 Creative management

This sub-category focused on ‘creative management’ as an important misfit management approach. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “Company’s need to be more creative and take risks when it comes to managing misfits.”
- “...organisations need to recognise the potential of their misfitting employees.”

- “Channel their potential in the right direction...and channel them into the right path or correct direction in terms of putting them into an area where they will fit.”
- “...they need to look at the individual’s potential...look at what people bring in and try and fuse it with the norms or the organisational culture.”
- “...it’s always a positive thing to have misfits in the organisation. Their potential should be channelled in the right direction for the benefit of the organisation.”
- “Companies should nurture the positive misfits because they can add value...”
- “Look at the experience that the misfit person is bringing and try and use that instead of painting all misfits with the same brush.”

4.3.6.10 Providing incentives

This sub-category focused on ‘providing incentives’ as a significant misfit management strategy. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “Reward them for being unique and bringing forth unique ideas. That could be an incentive.”
- “The organisation must incorporate them into the mainstream of the management organisation.”
- “Reward misfits for being a misfit...celebrate that you are a misfit...stay in the organisation because of your different approach.”
- “I think sometimes misfits leave because they feel maybe they are not valued. So, you work but are not being rewarded and that sort of thing. If

misfits are given some incentives for being different, this could motivate them into achieving greater things.”

- “Rewarding some people for misfitting because at times misfits can be very creative.”
- “...we want to invest in, put them on a pedestal...”
- “Reward these misfits for being different. The organisation should encourage their employees to be individuals that think out of the box. Because when you are fairly rewarded, you are happy. Your confidence increases and the company’s productivity will increase at the same time. Everything is going to increase if people are happy in their environment. Even though you might not like your job at the moment, but you like the culture, the organisation and the people around you, you automatically are going to try and do your best.”

4.3.6.11 Consultation

This sub-category relates to the offering of ‘consultation’ as a significant misfit management intervention. The interviewees supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “I found that consulting on a one-to-one basis helps to identify the problem areas.”
- “Offer a one-on-one dialogue with the misfitting employee.”
- “You could advise them to talk to someone who they can relate to.”
- “I think they need to get down to the root of the causes. This is because you can sometimes be a misfit at home which has an impact on the working environment. This can only be realised through face-to-face communication.”

- “Get the employee to come out and say why their performance is dropping. If it is due to being a misfit, then they can provide a solution and move forward.”

4.3.6.12 Creating an open working environment

This sub-category focused on ‘creating an open working environment’ as an important misfit management intervention. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “...they have it in Europe as well, more of an open culture, open working environment...that will keep that pressure on misfitting individuals lower. This needs to be practiced in many South African organisations.”
- “Also, they should work close with their top management so that they are more familiar with their jobs and this will probably increase their fit.”
- “Organisations should encourage open communication from managers or supervisors to misfits and vice versa.”
- “HR needs to play an active role. They need to encourage open communication.”
- “They have very little interaction with me...increase the amount of time you spend with that person to see what they are capable of making a decision or know what they are good at.”

4.3.6.13 Teambuilding

This sub-category pertains to ‘teambuilding’ as a significant misfit management strategy. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “Team building. It doesn’t only help with the team but helps you as well.”

- “Also you have to try and get your staff together more often so that they learn to work together and become part of the group. They should have teambuilding and events where everybody mixes together...at the end of the day, I don’t think it’s because they don’t get along. All of this can be attributed to a misunderstanding.”
- “Teambuilding is very important; make sure that they communicate with each other.”
- “I think there should be more teambuilding exercises.”
- “Teambuilding would be most effective. You can try to get employees to see that there is potential.”

4.3.6.14 Implementing effective strategies

This sub-category focused on ‘implementing effective strategies’ as an important misfit management tactic. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Having a strategy, having an effective strategy to deal with misfits.”
- “It’s a paradigm shift and having an effective strategy to deal with the issue. How many organisations can pull out their strategy and say listen, this is how they deal with their misfits.”
- “...they can initiate action for employee misfits to feel more comfortable and positive about the organisation.”
- “The organisation should have it as part of a strategy, an organisational strategy. It is such a prevalent thing in organisations and it should become a strategic issue now.”

4.3.6.15 Enhancing organisational culture

This sub-category focused on ‘enhancing organisational culture’ as a significant misfit management approach. The respondents provided the following illustrative comments:

- “Organisational culture could be enhanced. We live in South Africa, so why not promote the issues of Ubuntu and all of that in the workplace? In that way, employee misfits could become more accepting.”
- “Organisations must accommodate diversity; misfits are part of diversity so this needs to be managed.”
- “Organisations need to have a culture in place to allow misfits to feel accommodated.”

4.3.6.16 Motivating to turn it around

This sub-category focused on ‘motivating to turn it around’ as an important misfit management intervention. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “If you were a chartered accountant and you completed your articles, you had the qualifications to be there, so, it means that you can be there. However, maybe, only motivation was lacking. So, the organisation should invest in motivation.”
- “To motivate the person to turn it around is a sure way to effectively manage misfits.”

4.3.6.17 Removing negative misfits

This sub-category focused on ‘removing negative misfits’ as a significant misfit management action. The respondents provided the following illustrative comments:

- “On the other end of the spectrum, there’s no benefit of having them around...you have no alternative but to dismiss them.”
- “...and encourage the negative misfits to exit the organisation.”

4.3.6.18 Career management

This sub-category pertains to ‘career management’ as an important misfit management method. The interviewee delivered the following representative comment:

- “To maybe develop like career management programs, to manage their careers and channel them to where their interest lies.”

4.3.6.19 Implementing exit interviews

This sub-category focused on ‘implementing exit interviews’ as a significant misfit management intervention. The respondent supplied the following illustrative comment in this regard:

- “When an employee leaves, why are they leaving, is a question that should be asked. Exit interviews can be used to see whether the company is creating the misfit in the first place. If you do that, organisations could become more competitive.”

4.3.6.20 Leveraging the positive misfits

This sub-category focused on ‘leveraging the positive misfits’ as an important misfit management tactic. The interviewee provided the following representative comment:

- “Organisations should leverage the positive outliers and dismiss the negative ones, as the latter ones add no value to the organisation.”

4.3.7 Misfit Concealment

On further scrutiny of the interview transcripts, a seventh category emerged, namely, that of misfit concealment. A total of 7 sub-categories were identified as significant reasons for misfits not wanting to disclose their status. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below, is a list of the sub-categories, which show the reasons for not wanting to come out in the open and let people at work know that they misfit:

- **A fear of victimisation (38)** – victimisation can be in the form of being classified as a troublemaker, being overlooked for promotions, insulted, and so forth.
- **Having an introverted personality (14)** – refers to the personality traits of the individual.
- **Being in denial (9)** – not confronting the misfit condition by pretending that the misfit does not exist.
- **Pride (6)** – an increased sense of self-importance exhibited by misfits.
- **A fear of rejection (5)** – fear of being not being valued.
- **A lack of confidence (5)** – a lack of self-belief which negatively influences the way people react to situations.
- **A preference for covert behaviour (4)** – pertains to the propensity to be discrete about things and ‘fly’ below the radar.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.7.1 Fear of victimisation

The first sub-category focused on 'fear of victimisation' as a significant factor of individuals not being willing to identify themselves as misfits. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- "...I did not want to come forward as I was scared of being victimised."
- "The reason why I did not disclose my misfit status was because I feared being intimidated by my colleagues. My response was based on how these colleagues previously treated a gay employee who came out of the closet."
- "I would not be keen to reveal that I am a misfit as I will feel threatened by my co-workers and manager."
- "They are reluctant to come forward due to the fear of being singled out."
- "If I openly acknowledge that I am a misfit, I may be discriminated against."
- "If they bring it out in the open, maybe, they will find that there are other colleagues that are feeling the same and are being victimised."
- "If you come out in the open, you will definitely be persecuted by everyone in the work environment."
- "If you come out with it, you might be scared of harassment from your managers."
- "I feel as if they are going to become victims when they disclose their misfit status. People do not take kindly to mavericks."
- "You wouldn't want to because you'd be victimised. If its mainstream, a misfit implies that you are sitting on the outskirts, in other words, you're an outlier...and outliers are always placed in invidious positions. If you are on

the positive side of the distribution, then there's going to be envy and jealousy. On the other hand, if you're on the negative side of the distribution, you are going to be rejected."

- "Somebody might 'die' on the inside because of fear of being victimised."
- "There's that age old feeling...fear of being discriminated against because of your misfit status."
- "They are afraid of being exposed and treated badly."
- "Probably, fear of victimisation is an issue."
- "Fear of victimisation. It's not easy to come out in the open and say, 'I am a misfit.'"
- "Up to this point, I have been very silent about my misfit condition. I decided to stay this way because I fear being exposed and being the target for abuse from people at work."
- "Very few people would come out and say it because everyone fears victimisation. There is a serious lack of trust between employee and manager in South African companies. This has its roots in the apartheid era where managers viewed employees almost as 'outsiders' in a company."
- "Misfitting employees are definitely afraid of being side-lined."
- "...it's for the fear of being persecuted...if we identify ourselves as misfits, then, other employees will actually hammer you."
- "Employees will not want to be open about being a misfit as they fear being intimidated as well as being victimised by co-workers."
- "...if you do come out in the open, you fear that you will be maltreated."

- “...they don’t want to be classed and that is why they don’t come out and say, you know what, I don’t fit in.”
- “Nobody wants to be labelled as an outcast.”
- “In very rare cases are employees bold enough to come out and say; ‘I don’t really fit in.’ It’s a personal issue; it’s not an easy thing because of the label that you get the moment you come out and say that you are a misfit. I mean, look at the negative connotations here...”
- “Misfitting employees will not want to be identified as they fear being rejected or victimised by co-workers.”
- “They might not be keen to identify themselves as misfits since they will be embarrassed by their colleagues and peers.”
- “Misfits remain undercover because they are scared of being harassed by people at work.”
- “...they think that people are going to be prejudiced against them.”
- “If they come out in the open, they’ll be judged and unfairly treated.”
- “Due to the differing individuals within each organisation, it is reality that misfits will be prone to victimisation. This will be assured by repetitive verbal insults.”
- “...and I think that ideally, they don’t want to be mocked.”
- “It’s like there’s something wrong with you; like you’re retarded or you’re a bit backward or something.”
- “...you are afraid that if you do tell people, they will look down upon you. It could also happen that, if you tell your manager you are misfitting then

they might decrease your salary. You could also be fired. Moreover, people could disrespect you if you admit to being a misfit at work.”

- “You will feel threatened and will not be keen to come out and say you have a problem as you do not fit in.”
- “...they will feel threatened.”
- “Fear of being labelled as crazy or a troublemaker.”
- “Misfitting employees are scared to come out of the closet because they fear that they would be persecuted.”
- “These misfitting employees might perceive themselves as high risk and targets for layoffs.”

4.3.7.2 Having an introverted personality

This sub-category focused on an individuals ‘having introverted personalities’ as an important factor in not being willing to identify themselves as misfits. The interviewees supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “The personality of a misfit will be critical in determining whether they are keen to reveal themselves. For example, a person with a strong personality trait will not be scared of what people would think and would openly discuss their misfit. On the other hand, a person with a weak personality will tend to hide their misfit for fear of being exposed and being embarrassed.”
- “Well, I think it depends on the individual’s personality.”
- “Misfits are generally not keen to identify themselves. However, certain individuals with unique personality traits could come forward...In my opinion, once you have a certain level of intellect and understanding will you then be able to say; ‘I am a misfit’ ...allowing yourself to identify things

that may not be right in your own personal life or in your job might be considered a blessing in disguise.”

- “In my opinion, even if you misfit, it is not a problem to reveal yourself as it is not the end of the world. You might find ways of fitting into something, even if you don’t fit in at work. However, you still find a majority of misfits remaining undercover. I believe that the single most important factor in determining whether you are prepared to disclose your misfit status or not, is your personality.”
- “It all depends on the person. Some would say; ‘I don’t fit into this organisation, this is not for me’...there are also misfits who don’t want to communicate and will keep it to themselves.”
- “Employees will only be able to identify themselves as misfits depending on the type of people they are.”
- “I think it depends entirely on the type of person you are.”
- “Personality has a critical role to play in terms of whether misfits are keen to identify themselves or not.”
- “I think this will depend on personality. A person with a weak personality will be scared to identify him/herself whereas a person with a strong personality will come out and say; ‘excuse me, you are killing me here.’”
- “Definitely, a personality issue and a huge one at that too.”
- “It’s a personal thing. Therefore, misfitting employees do not find it easy to just come out and talk about it.”
- “I think people are able to recognise that they are misfits, but are not willing to let it out in the open.”

- “Sometimes, certain people with specific personality traits (for example, introverts) don’t like to come out and admit to it.”
- “It also depends on the person’s personality. If you are bold, you can say with confidence, ‘I am a misfit, but, I am also the top performer in this company. Therefore, you can’t get rid of me as I bring in the major clients and if I go, then productivity will drop.’”

4.3.7.3 Being in denial

This sub-category pertains to ‘being in denial’ as a significant factor in individuals being unwilling to identify themselves as misfits. The respondents provided the following illustrative comments:

- “Some people are in denial of their misfit condition. They just go around oblivious to the fact that they do not fit in.”
- “It takes a mature individual; emotionally mature, to be able to talk about it. Therefore, most of the time you are in denial...”
- “They are just in denial...they will come up with excuses.”
- “Some people can be in denial.”
- “...some employees just cover up being misfits...they’re in denial.”
- “I think ideally the bottom line is no one wants to say I don’t fit in. They don’t want to come out and say it...It’s like admitting defeat.”
- “They decide to leave rather than admit it...they are failing to cope and when they leave they should tell us exactly what the problem is.”
- “I think that it is human nature for most people when they don’t want to admit that they are weak in certain areas.”

- “The issue of incompatibility. It is very difficult for an employee to see him or herself as being incompatible. Consequently, most misfits are in denial of their condition.”

4.3.7.4 Pride

This sub-category focused on ‘pride’ as being an important factor in individuals being unwilling to identify themselves as misfits. The interviewees supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “They might keep quiet about their jobs and their problems and might not be able to find other jobs as well. Remember, in South Africa, employment is so hard to find, so they might just keep quiet and stick with the job...people have too much of pride.”
- “Some people just contain too much of pride. They are reluctant to publicise that they do not fit in.”
- “They pretend amongst the outsiders that they are part of this organisation, but, they know that they are not really a part of it. It seems like these misfits...have a lot of pride.”
- “You will find that people will sort of be all smiles in front of you...they will just sort of pretend that everything is ok. I think it is a matter of pride.”
- “It’s more pride that makes people not admit to being misfits.”
- “If I’m one of those misfits and I didn’t actually look to be a misfit, I will feel bad to talk about myself because of my pride.”

4.3.7.5 A fear of rejection

This sub-category focused on ‘a fear of rejection’ as a significant factor in individuals not being willing to identify themselves as misfits. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Everyone wants to fit in...no one wants to be an outcast.”
- “It doesn’t happen overnight to actually accept and realise that you are a misfit. It takes a lot of time but even if you do, some of them won’t accept you...”
- “You want to be accepted. You want to be part of the team. However, people, being human, tend to reject other people that do not conform to their standards or are different to them.”
- “Other people may resist because they think you would reject them.”
- “The reason for not wanting to be identified is because co-workers will reject you and you will be second- guessed. Nobody wants to feel left out.”

4.3.7.6 A lack of confidence

This sub-category focused on ‘a lack of confidence’ as a significant factor in individuals being unwilling to identify themselves as misfits. The respondents provided the following illustrative comments:

- “Yeah, I had one guy when I was working as a manager in the mining industry. This individual had no confidence at all, and he was a geological draughtsman so very meticulous, but every time his boss shouted at him, he would burst into tears. His life was miserable.”
- “A reason for not wanting to identify oneself as a misfit is due to the lack of confidence that one has.”

- “...it’s like admitting to certain aspects in your life which you want to keep hidden...like, if you are confident enough, then you will have no problem in identifying yourself.”
- “Employees’ level of self-confidence has a major role to play in being able to identify themselves as misfits.”
- “It takes a lot of courage to admit it...most people leave because they are not fitting in. They didn’t have any space to voice that they did not fit in.”

4.3.7.7 A preference for covert behaviour

This sub-category relates to ‘a preference for covert behaviour’ as an important reason why individuals might be unwilling to identify themselves as misfits. The interviewees provided the following illustrative comments:

- “...you are keeping it low key, under the radar...it’s not easy, especially in an organisation that doesn’t have strong measures to protect you.”
- “Most people decide to fly below the radar, operate below the radar and play it safe if they are misfits.”
- “You just keep below the radar and hope for the best.”
- “Misfits just want to keep a low down...keep a low profile.”

4.3.8 Misfit Conspicuousness

After a further in-depth examination of the interview transcripts, an eight category materialised, namely, that of misfit conspicuousness. Only 1 sub-category was identified as a compelling reason why misfits were keen to come out in the open and identify themselves. The sub-category detailed below includes in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study)

embodied in the sub-category. Below is the sub-category, which shows the reason for willing to identify oneself as a misfit:

- **Valuing uniqueness (2)** – refers to an individual appreciating the fact that they are somewhat different to the rest of the crowd and this difference can be used as a strategic weapon.

In an endeavour to clarify the sub-category highlighted above, typical comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.8.1 Valuing uniqueness

The only sub-category pertaining to individuals' willingness to identify themselves as misfits is in relation to 'valuing uniqueness'. These respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- "I would wear a T-shirt with misfit written on it because I would say to myself; 'I am a unique individual and that's part of my personality.'"
- "Being alternate could mean that you stick out in a crowd and this could mean an increased attention focused on you. Some people thrive on this type of attention."

4.3.9 Co-worker Reactions to Misfits

The subsequent detailed scrutiny of the interview transcripts yielded a ninth category, namely, that of co-worker reactions to their mifitting colleagues. Under the rubric of this category, a total of 7 sub-categories were identified as significant types of co-worker reactions to their misfitting colleagues. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below, is a list of the sub-categories, which show how co-workers react to their colleagues who do not fit in:

- **Ostracise (38)** – refers to the isolation or the shunning of misfits by their co-workers.
- **Gossip (23)** – the spreading of untrue information from one person to another with a malicious intent.
- **Being supportive (18)** – relates to the degree of support offered by the co-workers.
- **Being antagonistic (16)** – this relates to the degree of hostility displayed by co-workers towards their misfitting colleagues.
- **Setting you up (16)** – pertains to the setting up of misfits for failure.
- **Being unsupportive (12)** – refers to the lack of support offered by the co-workers.
- **Engaging in pretentious behaviour (1)** – this is behaviour that co-workers use to put on a show that things are acceptable, but in reality, this is incorrect.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.9.1 Ostracise

The first sub-category focused on ‘ostracising’ individuals as a significant co-worker reaction to misfit. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “You get isolated when there are meetings and important discussions or presentations taking place.”
- “...but not all people are sympathetic today, some co-workers can isolate you.”

- “You can become very lonely.”
- “They would like alienate you to some extent.”
- “There is always that group that will be in the forefront of isolating employee misfits.”
- “As a misfit, I was always left alone.”
- “Yes, they greet you, but they don’t want to socialise with you...they isolate you.”
- “You find that you end up always going and sitting somewhere on the side by yourself.”
- “My co-workers in a way isolated me. They wouldn’t take me out. Sometimes they would leave me in the office for some unknown reasons.”
- “They are going to alienate you and walk away.”
- “...but then, you will get some who will stay away from you and thus, isolate you.”
- “They isolated me to a certain extent which was short-sighted because they didn’t achieve anything.”
- “We have a tendency of maybe staying away from the individual that does not fit in.”
- “They will segregate you. They will determine whether you are welcome or not within the organisation.”
- “...fellow-workers sometimes, actually, tend to not associate with misfits. If they find misfits in the working environment, some workers don’t want to be associated with them because they think misfits are troublemakers.”

- “They don’t want to associate with the misfits.”
- “Sometimes they isolate you, they don’t want to associate with you, and they try to avoid you.”
- “...or at times they would not want to associate with you, so they totally keep away from you.”
- “Your team members might not want to work with you. They alienate you all the time.”
- “You are ostracised to a certain extent.”
- “I would like to believe that they wouldn’t ostracise them completely...In reality however, this is not the case.”
- “From a negative point of view, they might ostracise the individual...”
- “But sometimes they don’t help, instead, they choose to ostracise you.”
- “Co-workers tend to shun the misfits in the organisation.”
- “My co-workers used to also exclude me.”
- “Misfits are isolated. In some instances, co-workers are really critical of misfits, especially in the case of homosexuality.”
- “You are to a limited extent shunned, but it’s not openly done.”
- “The saddest thing is that you become the outcast.”
- “...you are excluded because people think that you are not good enough.”
- “Well, they just keep away from you.”
- “They back off from you.”

- “It depends; some might just brush you off and make you feel more of a misfit.”
- “I think you are not accepted...you do not find that you belong and they do not feel that you belong.”
- “You find there is this unfriendliness towards you...”
- “They treat you badly because they will not understand the reason for your actions and when they pick up that you are a misfit, they will treat you horribly because they are afraid that it will impact on them and their performance as well.”
- “Their attitude towards you becomes negative. They try as far as possible to keep a distance from you.”
- “...they can also reject the misfit and in many ways, isolate him/her.”
- “They treat you badly or differently by shunning you.”

4.3.9.2 Gossip

This sub-category relates to ‘gossiping’ as co-worker reaction to misfitting employees. The respondents provided the following typical comments:

- “They gossip about you behind your back.”
- “They would talk behind your back; gossip...I don’t think they make your life difficult on purpose. However, I think talking behind one’s back always happens. It is always going to happen.”
- “I worked with a lot of females and younger females who were more on the lines of gossiping.”
- “...they might gossip about the individual...they might want to do things that would lead the individual to leave the organisation.”

- “They gossip behind your back and rumours of all sorts are started.”
- “I think that basically the main issue that makes you perceive yourself as a misfit is the matter of people spreading malicious rumours about you.”
- “The manager has a key role in how people treat you...if the manager gossips about you behind your back, the moment you turn your back, the manager meets other employees and they start gossiping about you. Thus, it spreads like wildfire.”
- “There could be some negative reaction. For instance, the times when they gossip behind your back.”
- “My co-workers gossip about me all the time.”
- “...then there is always gossiping about you.”
- “They constantly scandal about the misfits.”
- “They have a good old gossip. They extract information to pass it on to another forum where they discuss you.”
- “Some of them do talk about you behind your back.”
- “Sometimes, they spread malicious rumours about you to your managers.”
- “Sometimes, their fellow-workers talk behind their backs, gossip.”
- “...and sometimes they talk, maybe not directly to you, but about you in the presence of other people.”
- “...they talk behind your back.”
- “My co-workers would gossip behind my back and spread rumours about me. They start up stories which are not actually true and spread it to all and

sundry. Eventually, the entire office has a misplaced negative opinion about me. If you are not thick-skinned, you will crack under this pressure.”

- “...they could actually speak ill of you behind your back.”
- “Some co-workers will actually talk behind your back, with the intention of trying to humiliate you. You have to be strong in character to withstand this type of onslaught.”
- “They talk behind your back, they talk about you constantly.”
- “They could scandal behind your back, gossip about you. You become the headline news on a daily basis.”
- “They blather about you incessantly. This eventually gets to you.”

4.3.9.3 Being supportive

This sub-category relates to ‘being supportive’ as an important positive co-worker reaction to misfitting individuals. The interviewees supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “My co-workers tried to give me the support that I needed. This support came in the form of expertise and emotional support.”
- “Some of your colleagues could be supportive and they could help you out and be your friend.”
- “You get those individuals that take the initiative to come and sit down with you...make an attempt to get to know you...but it’s also imperative that the individual misfit also makes the attempt to engage with his/her co-workers.”
- “My co-workers are supportive in a way...they will try to do their very best.”

- “From a positive point of view, some could be of assistance in terms of trying to speak to the misfit.”
- “There was a young employee who had recently joined a company and felt that she did not fit in. On discovering that she did not fit in, her supervisor became abusive and threatened her. A co-worker got involved and protected her from the malicious rumours and threats by taking up this issue to higher management.
- “...or you could have someone coming over and helping you.”
- “...some will try and support you...”
- “...and then sometimes, in really odd cases, you actually do get some people who do care. As a misfit, I have experienced it to a certain extent.”
- “Some of them will talk to you and have sympathy towards you...some people will feel pity and will actually try and assist.”
- “People can help you and show you some support.”
- “But on the other hand, there are some good co-workers who will support you and then become friends with you and develop a working relationship...make everyone feel comfortable and some co-workers will empower you to overcome the situation.”
- “Some of them make you feel more welcome...you do get nice people out there.”
- “...you get people who will help and support you. I remember that at my previous workplace, I felt intimidated, but there were people who helped me and encouraged me.”

- “It also depends on your co-workers’ personality. They could get along well with you as a misfit. However, the negative ones will try and get rid of you.”
- “Some co-workers tend to be very supportive and accepting of differences.”
- “They tend to give you a sympathetic ear.”
- “A few of those who you speak to and tell them about your misfit condition will listen and encourage you...”

4.3.9.4 Being antagonistic

This sub-category relates to ‘being antagonistic’ toward misfits as a possible co-worker reaction. The respondents provided the following illustrative comments:

- “...whereas for some of them, it’s a doggish world for your own self-worth, they will start teasing you...”
- “I think what they try and do is to belittle you.”
- “...maybe, bad mouth you to your managers so that you are never going to feel comfortable.”
- “Co-workers are threatened by positive outliers. These good misfits tend to be very creative and often expose the shortcomings of their co-workers. Co-workers thus, become very vindictive and in some cases very aggressive towards these positive misfits. I am aware of a case where a good misfit was physically threatened by a co-worker.”
- “They start insulting you.”
- “The bossy co-workers will always want to take control of a situation and tell you what to do...they know that you are vulnerable and they think that they have some divine power over you.”

- “...and the reality of this is that of the ‘crab mentality’, everyone wants to climb on each other to get to the top. So, if you are a misfit, you are actually, like in terms of schools, being bullied and there is no way of you actually coming out of it.”
- “Sometimes, they ask you the following questions: ‘but why don’t you know how to do it?’...‘can’t you learn?’ They attack you and that kind of thing.”
- “They can be more intimidating.”
- “They feel intimidated by you, thus, they antagonise you.”
- “Co-workers dump responsibilities on the misfit in their team. They often take advantage of the misfit for their personal gain.”
- “They can make you do all the work for them because they know that you are trying to fit in. So, they basically take advantage of you as a misfit.”
- “You would aggrieve people because you highlight their inefficiencies. Thus, you find that your co-workers will react in an uncharacteristic manner toward you by threatening, intimidating and verbally abusing you.”
- “Misfits are always the minority; obviously, your co-workers will always react negatively toward you. They will have something to say about you which will affect you psychologically.”
- “There was also a lot of aggressive and threatening behaviour stemming from my co-workers as a result of my misfit.”
- “Some of them start embarrassing you.”

4.3.9.5 Setting you up

This subcategory focused on 'setting you up' as a potential co-worker reaction to misfits. The respondents supplied the following typical comments in this regard:

- "...or they will start leading you up the wrong way so that you get out of that job."
- "I mean really, they set you up to fail and report you to the managers. For example, if you are not back on time from your lunch break, you will be reported upon."
- "...'I am going to report you', is a common remark from co-workers...you find that collegiality doesn't even exist."
- "Your co-workers can set you up. They find that you are not fitting in so they set a trap for you."
- "They also set you up...they are aware that you do not fit in and have many vulnerable points. In addition, your relationship with your manager might be strained. Your co-workers thus, exploit the situation by looking at ways to set you up."
- "They often set up the misfit, often getting them into trouble with management."
- "You know, I have also encountered a problem where people have tried to set me up and put the blame on me, for something that I was not involved with."
- "They generally try and set you up for failure."
- "Some of their fellow workers complain to the manager about the misfit. In some cases, these fellow workers work in cohorts with the manager to concoct a plan to involve the misfit in some misdemeanour."

- “Co-workers are quick to point out those who don’t perform and they are going to constantly say this person is not up to scratch...they can set you up to fail.”
- “Sometimes, they set you up for failure, trap you.”
- “My co-workers used to try and set me up and get me into trouble.”
- “...try to set you up for failure sometimes, carry tales to your manager whenever you hit a blunder or if you are not there at your workstation...petty issues, you know.”
- “Some co-workers actually set you up for failure. I was a misfit in a way and they tried to set me up a couple of times. The culture was very different and we often had to work until late at night. I had sport to do and when I used to leave at 5 o’ clock, they would report me to the manager. Too much office politics and it was childish.”
- “They sometimes even set you up for failure, report you to your manager and sabotage your work.”
- “They could even set you up for failure, at times. They look for any excuses to nail you.”

4.3.9.6 Being unsupportive

This sub-category relates to ‘being unsupportive’ toward individual misfits as a typical co-worker reaction. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “They are not supportive. Everyone is more interested in themselves...At the end of the day; you have got to be more proactive. It’s very rare that somebody will stand up for you unless they are also a misfit in their own right.”

- “From my experience, I found that people around me were oblivious to my misfit. In some cases, if they were aware that people misfit, they would recognise it, but offer no assistance.”
- “I think co-workers, have a tendency not to support the views of misfits.”
- “Some co-workers would not care at all.”
- “Some co-workers remain neutral, choosing not to pass judgement and not become involved.”
- “They discriminate...I have been deliberately left out of their social circle.”
- “Your co-workers are unsupportive of you once they discover that you are a misfit. I have experienced this treatment at my previous company where I struggled to fit in.”
- “Most of the time they react negatively, because they are threatened. They don’t want somebody different to be around them.”
- “Co-workers generally act negatively around misfits and this makes the misfit feel very uncomfortable.”
- “You even get some co-workers who envy you...”
- “They show jealousy toward you.”
- “They do not treat you with the respect you deserve.”

4.3.9.7 Engaging in pretentious behaviour

This sub-category focused on ‘engaging in pretentious behaviour’ toward misfits by their co-workers. The respondent supplied the following illustrative comment in this regard:

- “They pretend to care, some of them just pretend. This is really hurtful.”

4.3.10 Manager/Supervisor Reactions to Misfits

After a further examination of the interview transcripts, a tenth category, namely, that of manager/supervisor reactions to misfits emerged. Within this category, a total of 9 sub-categories were identified as significant kinds of manager/supervisor reactions to their misfitting employees. The sub-categories detailed below include in parentheses the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Following, is a list of the sub-categories which show how managers/supervisors react to misfits:

- **Encouraging organisational exit (31)** – refers to management using questionable tactics to get rid of individuals.
- **The absence of a plan (23)** – inaction from management with regards to approaching and dealing with misfits.
- **Interventions (14)** – refers to management interventions to sort out misfit issues.
- **Engaging in dialogue (12)** – pertains to management engaging in dialogue with the hope of sorting out the factors influencing misfit.
- **Engaging in proactive behaviour (12)** – proactive steps taken by management to work out a way for employees to conform or fit in.
- **Training interventions (6)** – training needs identified by management.
- **Counselling (4)** – psychological counselling offered to misfitting employees.
- **Setting up employee wellness programs (3)** – programs instituted by management to improve the wellness of their misfitting employees.

- **Early identification of misfits (2)** – refers to managers identifying misfit behaviour displayed by their employees at the early stage.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.10.1 Encouraging organisational exit

The first sub-category focused on ‘encouraging organisational exit’ as a significant manager/supervisor reaction to misfit. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “They work them out...frustrate them and work them out.”
- “I am going to just be real. In a work situation, they frustrate you to leave.”
- “They work the misfit employee out...”
- “They are looking to squeeze you...they want to frustrate you and work you out.”
- “They just work their employees out. That’s what they do. They work them out.”
- “They stifle you...”
- “They can go the harsher route, they can frustrate you to leave, if they see you as a misfit, they will force you leave.”
- “In my organisation, the managers frustrate you to get out.”
- “They frustrate you to leave...they make it a personal thing and they make your life so miserable that you have no alternative but to get out.”

- “In most cases the managers are quite arrogant. They just say, ‘it’s either you fit in or ship out.’”
- “Managers want to force you to work it out. They also try to frustrate you to leave.”
- “The easy option is to get rid of them. That is the quickest way.”
- “Managers work you out.”
- “I think that most of the time managers frustrate you to leave.”
- “They are indirectly telling you to find another job and they ask you to resign. It’s a common approach.”
- “...and then he actually said, ‘you know what, the thing is at the end of the day, if you are not happy here, then you must go’...He didn’t even convince me to stay.”
- “Bad managers will actually tell you that there are a lot of people that are looking for jobs and just ask you to leave.”
- “They tell you to find another job...that kills your spirit.”
- “When employees are hired, it is generally because there was potential in them necessary for the organisation’s success. However, when these employees misfit, managers ask these employees to leave...”
- “...or they fire them.”
- “...they just ignore you because they want to get rid of you...they pretend that you don’t exist and take the work and give it to someone else.”
- “Management is invariably about an individual who has a vision. I think that it is very infrequent that you would find a person who is able to represent a corporate goal without imbuing it with some personal silo...the

majority of managers say; 'we can terminate the services of these misfits as soon as possible.' Their thinking is to 'euthanize the dog, put it away.'"

- "They give them negative performance ratings. These will demoralise the misfits. This indirectly is a signal for them to leave."
- "In my case, my manager told me that she doesn't like me. She would discourage me and verbally abuse me around others and sometimes even in front of customers. They try to scare you because you are a misfit...it has an impact on your life."
- "It's so difficult to identify yourself as a misfit. You stick around below the radar and hopefully no one finds out. Because if they do, you will be victimised by your manager who will try and force you out."
- "They exploit you to the maximum and then try and push you out because you are a misfit..."
- "I found a lot of the time they attack the person and not the problem. That's what I have experienced."
- "They wouldn't give you the opportunities within the company for you to grow. Especially, considering you for higher positions, why will they do that when they consider you a misfit? They will just keep you in the same area. You might not be comfortable in staying there too long. You will find that your manager will start to become hostile toward you, looking for every opportunity to frustrate you and try to get you out."
- "They can sweep it under the rug, and ignore the situation, or it means fire the misfits. As a misfit, you are constantly pressurised to leave. Your manager can sometimes feel that outliers can be a threat. Managers don't always want to change their work culture."

- “...so they hire and fire quite easily. They see it as many other people are queuing up for jobs and that you are not indispensable.”
- “...you can be replaced with another. In my experience, that is how managers react to their misfitting employees.”

4.3.10.2 The absence of a plan

This sub-category relates to ‘the absence of a plan’ to deal with misfits as a typical manager/supervisor response in the South African workplace response. The respondents provided the following representative comments:

- “...organisations don’t really have a plan...it’s very antagonistic.”
- “They have no plan...instead of coming up to you straight and tell you that you are not cut out for this, they start to send out little messages.”
- “I don’t think that managers have a plan to deal with misfits.”
- “From my personal experience, I can say that my organisation did not have a plan.”
- “They don’t have a plan; they make it your problem.”
- “They don’t have a strategy; as long as the work gets done...they are not concerned as to whether you fit in or not.”
- “They don’t have a plan. Really most of the time they don’t.”
- “That is a very, very huge problem in the workplace because managers don’t look for solutions. They don’t have a strategy. It’s likely that they are looking to squeeze you out.”
- “They do not have a blueprint at all.”
- “There’s no plan...they need to prevent it from happening.”

- “Manager’s don’t have a blueprint. First of all, they need to connect to their human side. Everything is just so professional around them and they forget that they have a human side.”
- “Managers are not prepared to deal with the misfits and I don’t think they have the time for it either.”
- “I don’t think they have the time to focus on people not fitting in. All they are interested in is saving costs and improving the bottom-line.”
- “Managers will keep you at a certain level and would refuse your request for a transfer to another division. It’s either you fit in or you don’t.”
- “A lot of managers have a negative view about having a structured approach to dealing with misfits. They are conditioned into thinking that misfit is a ‘soft’ issue affecting the organisation and that HR should deal with it. Many managers have no idea about the ramifications of employee misfits in the organisation.”
- “I have seen individuals coming here not even smoking. Three months down the line, because of the pressure that they get and they see everyone getting the same pressure...as a result, they start smoking...the reaction from the organisation is that once they discover that you are a misfit, they do everything possible to squeeze you out. In the corporate world, it’s all about profit. There is no room for sentiment.”
- “I don’t think this issue is dealt with properly within the organisation. The organisation is just concerned about profit margins and not about how their employees feel.”
- “They don’t care. The manager is in a position of power and they can do whatever, they don’t really care about the employees.”

- “Most of them just brush it off, they will be like, they will adapt, and it is a new job.”
- “Managers don’t have the right attitude.”
- “I think that a lot of the time, they just overlook it.”
- “Sometimes, they just push it under the carpet.”
- “It’s very robotic. There’s no concrete plan.”

4.3.10.3 Interventions

This sub-category relates to ‘interventions’ as a significant manager/supervisor reaction to misfit. The interviewees supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “Managers often look at interventions that will assist misfits to fit in with the organisation.”
- “...say okay, here’s your problem, can I give you some interventions.”
- “You will find very, very, few managers who are very transformational and who would want to get to the bottom of it and will say; ‘let’s go for teambuilding.’”
- “In order to say a person has to fit, they try and make teambuilding a compulsory exercise, so that they can try and bring everyone into this one big family.”
- “Start developing, try to discover what their weaknesses are, try to discover what they lack and develop strategies to overcome those weaknesses.”
- “There are people who are big enough to see a bigger picture, those who care, and those who will see the potential in you...”

- “You give incentives based on performance. That motivates an employee to perform better.”
- “They provide incentives to make you happy.”
- “Job rotation. Try and move them around in an organisation and try to see where they fit best in an organisation and the job.”
- “It does have a ripple effect...it would be nice if managers or supervisors actually stand up for the misfits within their team as well...”
- “Managers don’t take sides and are neutral and treat everyone fairly and equally.”
- “...they could have some trained HR people who are good with dealing with people and their problems and their disputes and things like that.”
- “Our organisation has motivational effort. You know you try to show the employee that they are valued, regardless of the capacity of work they are doing.”
- “Interventions like employer assistance programming to check how those employees can be dealt with.”

4.3.10.4 Engaging in dialogue

This sub-category focused on ‘engaging in dialogue’ between the employee and employer as an important manager/supervisor reaction to deal with their misfits. The interviewees provided the following representative comments:

- “From a manager’s point of view, you could sit down with your employee...and talk things through.”
- “I was lucky because I actually got support from my manager.”

- “Let’s talk about it...is a response that I often received from my manager. I was fortunate in this regard as I was able to deal with my misfit condition in a positive way.”
- “They try and resolve the issues.”
- “Look, a good manager will realise that something is going on and approach that person...and you have got to find a way to mediate that, ‘period’...’we can accommodate you in this, we will ask so and so to help you with that.’”
- “I think that many managers actually sit down with the misfitting employees and speak to them about their problems.”
- “I think that managers motivate you if they think you are possibly a good worker and when they don’t want to lose you to another company. They empower the employee to be confident to continue working as expected, even though you do not fit in.”
- “Sometimes they try to help the misfit employees to gain their confidence.”
- “I think it also depends on what kind of people they are. With me, I did my work and I was fine and as much as I felt like I didn’t belong, they still valued me because I performed. So, they didn’t pay much attention because I was doing what I was there to do.”
- “I would say that organisations deal differently with this issue because it all depends on what type of manager you have. Is he really interested in people’s feelings...?”
- “Try to communicate with the person, and you listen to what they have to say and maybe they just need different things like ‘I don’t want to come to work in smart pants, I want to come in jeans, because my comfort might allow my ideas to germinate faster.’”

- “Communication is the key to resolving many issues that impact on your misfit.”

4.3.10.5 Engaging in proactive behaviour

This sub-category relates to ‘engaging in proactive behaviour’ as a significant manager/supervisor reaction to employee misfits. The respondents supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “You follow a process, you talk to your supervisor, and you talk to your manager. You work through it. You give it a specific duration. Once that duration has passed and they do not assist you, you explain to them that you need to move on. If you don’t move on immediately, you work with your HR to find something that works for you.”
- “They try and get you to fit in.”
- “The organisation should deal with misfits by trying to match up their skills to another job.”
- “They want you to find something that is going to suit your personality.”
- ““I don’t think you are sitting in the right position...How about we move you to this new position?” This is the reaction that I got from my manager.”
- “If you have got a good manager, they will actually try and address your misfit issues. Managers are responsible for monitoring the staff performance and attitude. Thus, they should actually pick up these things in your performance appraisals.”
- “Just reassign you...”
- “They will move you to another department.”
- “They will try to change people to conform.”

- “...if training fails, you sit down with the person and you try and analyse where the problem is....redeploying that staff member to another section...the manager needs to sit with the staff member and try to find a balance.”
- “...or move you to another position. The reality is that not all organisations have the capacity to do that.”
- “If the organisation is suffering, then maybe the managers need to relax the rules and try and find out what is wrong. In government offices, it is a requirement to have employee assistant officers which are known as wellness officers, to help with counselling.”

4.3.10.6 Training interventions

This sub-category focused on ‘training interventions’ as an important manager/supervisor reaction toward employee misfits. The interviewees provided the following illustrative comments:

- “Training will assist employees to fit in the organisation.”
- “Training and development becomes part of the process.”
- “When they see that a person is not performing, they provide training for that person.”
- “Obviously long-term, dealing with an employee that is a misfit, you are going to retrain them if it’s a skills issue.”
- “They try and embrace it by implementing more training and development.”
- “Managers can offer training for their misfit staff.”

4.3.10.7 Counselling

This sub-category relates to ‘counselling’ as a significant manager/supervisor reaction toward employee misfits. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Counselling will help employees to deal with their misfit.”
- ““Can I send you to some counselling, can I refer you to somebody you can chat to?” This was the overture that I received from my manager.”
- “Sometimes, the person just needs to go for counselling. I think that counselling is the key to resolving many issues surrounding misfit.”
- “...they could have a counselling system in place to deal with misfits.”

4.3.10.8 Setting up employee wellness programs

This sub-category focused on ‘setting up employee wellness programs’ as an important manager/supervisor reaction toward their employee misfits. The interviewees provided the following illustrative comments:

- “...however, there are organisations that have employee wellness programmes in place and they care, they go the extra mile.”
- “They sit down with you and find out what the problem is and then if you are able to come up with something, they will try and organise motivation sessions or any counselling to see if that would help.”
- “They put more programs in place, such as; wellness programs and workshops to deal with people that do not fit in. These programs provide the opportunity for misfits to rehabilitate themselves and possibly enter the mainstream employment with confidence.”

4.3.10.9 Early identification of misfits

This sub-category pertains to the ‘early identification of misfits’ as a significant manager/supervisor reaction toward their employee misfits. The interviewees supplied the following illustrative comments in this regard:

- “I think what is important is managers must identify misfits at the early stage of onset and do not treat them as ‘squares in round holes’ and vice versa...the timing of the identification process is very, very important.”
- “I think that these days; HR practices are quite strong, so people look first at identifying where the issues are.”

4.3.11 Misfit Process

As the coding process extended, an eleventh category emerged, namely, that of the process of becoming a misfit. A total of 2 sub-categories were identified as forming part of the initial awareness of being a misfit. The sub-categories detailed below include in parenthesis the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below, is a list of the sub-categories which indicate how misfits initially form perceptions of not fitting in:

- **Cognitive dissonance (36)** – differences found during a cognitive appraisal assessment.
- **Instantaneous process (4)** – an instinctive reaction to a triggered event.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.11.1 Cognitive dissonance

The first sub-category focused on ‘cognitive dissonance’ as a significant event in the initial process of becoming a misfit. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “The recent restructuring process in my organisation was the event that got me into assessing my fit with different dimensions of the environment. I immediately began to take stock of my situation and made a mental comparison with what I desired from job and what my job actually entails. Similarly, I made this comparison with my team. I found a discrepancy between myself and these aspects of the environment. This made me realise that I did not fit in.”
- “The process of misfit begins with some sort of mental appraisal...”
- “Becoming a misfit is a gradual process. A stressor (for example, injustice) could initiate a series of responses from an individual employee such as making a mental assessment of his/her fit with various aspects of the environment. Some aspects of the environment (for example, organisation) will be more salient than other aspects...”
- “The process of turning into a misfit may occur as a result of the wrong recruitment and selection process or during tenure as a result of an employee carrying out some sort of cognitive appraisal exercise...”
- “I was unhappy for quite some time at work. This feeling of unhappiness made me take stock of my situation. The question I tried to seek answers for was; ‘what was causing my unhappiness?’ After doing some soul searching, I measured myself against the environment and discovered that although I did fit in with my team members, I was a misfit elsewhere. The process of discovering this was tedious...”

- “The process of becoming a misfit is an evolutionary process. It starts off with the employee making some sort of cognitive appraisal...”
- “Misfit can occur at the onset through bad recruitment. It could also occur sometime later during the organisational tenure of the employee. How a person’s becomes a misfit is difficult to explain. What goes on in the mind of an individual is a mystery. I guess it all comes down to some sort of dissonance.”
- “After a few months in the organisation, I realised that I just did not fit in. I tried to come up with a cogent explanation as to why this was the case. The mental inconsistencies that I felt with my job and co-workers instigated my first feelings of misfit.”
- “The process of becoming a misfit does not just happen automatically. There is a trigger point, followed by some sort of dissonance as a result of a cognitive appraisal of the various aspects of the environment.”
- “The misfit process is a complicated one. I guess people have to compare themselves with various dimensions of the environment. The resulting differences on dimensions salient to them may instigate a feeling of not fitting in.”
- “My transformation into a misfit has been an intriguing one. Firstly, I fitted in perfectly well on joining the organisation. However, after a few months, my employers started shifting the goal posts by demanding additional responsibilities outside the scope of my original job description. This organisational practice impacted in the way I saw myself. In other words, I feel frustrated and emotionally disturbed. These new demands placed on me triggered some negative reaction in my brain. I was full of self-doubt and wanted to get out.”

- “Misfitting is not a once-off, static process. You continue undertake appraisals between yourself and the environment. This is done at a cognitive level. One could become a misfit at some point in one’s organisational tenure, only to be transformed into a fit later. This is a dynamic process.”
- “My understanding of the process is that there is an external event that triggers something inside an individual. This individual then responds by mentally comparing his fit with salient aspects of the work environment. A dissonance experiences will lead to this particular person to feel a sense of not fitting in. This feeling of misfit impacts negatively on the psychology and physiology of the individual.”
- “The process of becoming a misfit is dynamic, iterative...”
- “I did not wake up one morning and say; ‘today, I think I am a misfit.’ The process is far more complicated. It is difficult to put into words...”
- “In my opinion, becoming a misfit is a slow evolutionary process.”

4.3.11.2 Instantaneous Process

The second sub-category describes the initial awareness of becoming a misfit as an ‘instantaneous process.’ The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “After being redeployed by my organisation, It did not take me long to realise that I was a misfit.”
- “I knew that instant that I was a misfit. I perceived misfit as one global dimension.”
- “There was external (or shock) event that initiation a series of reactions that culminated in me believing that I was a misfit.”

- “The very first time I entered my previous company, I knew that I did not fit in. They had misled me at the interview stage. I quickly developed a negative state of mind. My attitude toward management and my co-workers changed drastically. I could not cope with my predicament and suffered with stress.”

4.3.12 Misfit Stages

During the final phase of the coding process, a twelfth category emerged, namely, that of the misfit stages. A total of 2 sub-categories were identified when describing how an individual could develop and evolve into a misfit. The sub-categories detailed below include in parenthesis the number of respondents (out of a total of 40 that participated in the study) embodied in each sub-category. Below, are the sub-categories which show the reasons for responding:

- **Multi-stage misfit (35)** – the various stages an individual can experience as a misfit (stage 1 – early misfit, stage 2 – moderate misfit and stage 3 – full-blown misfit).
- **Single-type misfit (5)** – the notion that there exists a single form of misfit.

In an endeavour to enlighten each of the sub-categories highlighted above, representative comments of the respondents are encompassed as follows:

4.3.12.1 Multi-stage misfit

The first sub-category demonstrated that people can develop into various types of misfit depending on the severity of the condition. This has been described as ‘multi-stage misfit.’ The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “Based on my misfit experience, I can confidently tell you that I went through a series of stages, before I realised that I was at the tipping point.

Initially, I showed mild symptoms of my misfit condition. This could be described as the early stages of misfit. In this stage, I was unsure of what really was happening to me. I could not put my finger what exactly was wrong with me. I kept telling myself, that maybe, it was a passing phase and that I would eventually ‘weather the storm’. After a few months, my situation worsened. I started losing interest in my job and I became stressed out. My co-workers changed their attitude toward me and I felt isolated. This next level of misfit can best be described as ‘moderate misfit.’ After a year, I became desperate to get out as I had become a ‘full-blown misfit.’ misfit.”

- “In the workplace, I have noticed many different types of misfits reflecting the various stages that they were in. These stages ranged from mild to extreme.”
- “When I started out in my current job, I formed misfit perceptions with my job. I could best describe myself as an early misfit. My manager was able to identify this and ‘nip it in the bud’ by providing me with counselling and sending me for training. These steps reversed my situation from the negative to the positive. I have seen some of my colleagues that were in some advance stages of misfit. It was disheartening.”
- “Definitely, misfits progress through a series of stages, from mild to severe.”
- “Based on my experience, I have identified three categories misfits: early misfits, moderate misfits and full-blown misfits.”
- “In the workplace, there are various types of misfits...”
- “A misfit could evolve from an early misfit to a full-blown misfit if no remedial action is taken.”

- “The misfit condition degenerates as time elapses. This can be irreversible if left unattended.”
- “... and after two years, I could not stomach it anymore. I had to leave as I became increasingly negative about everything in life...I became a hard-core misfit.”
- “People slip in and out of misfit. I would say that there are various phases that people go through when they misfit. These phases are based on the severity of misfit that is, mild, temperate and severe.”
- “The misfits at work seem to undergo a metamorphosis. They initially start out as mild-mannered individuals...only later turn into these ‘toxic’ employees that are troublemakers.”
- “In South African workplaces, you often come across various types of misfits depending on the severity of their disorder...”
- “I was a total misfit, in the final stages...I was so stressed out and demoralised that I was considering suicide.”
- “In my opinion, there is no one generic type of misfit...”
- “...depending on the circumstances, some individuals transform directly into full-blown misfits, while other individuals move through the various stages from the initial to moderate and finally full-blown.”

4.3.12.2 Single-stage misfit

The second sub-category showed that there exists only one type of misfit, known as ‘single-stage misfit’ in South African workplaces. The respondents supplied the following representative comments in this regard:

- “I perceived that I was a misfit on my first day at work. When I compared myself to others who did not fit in, we basically displayed the same characteristics. In my opinion, all misfits are the same.”
- “Once you become a misfit, you either try to cope or leave the organisation. You don’t have the luxury of going through different stages...”
- “A misfit means not fitting in. There are no half measures to this concept. There is no mild form of misfit. This just does not exist.”
- “The moment I discovered that I did not fit in, I developed this highly negative attitude. I stayed in this ‘zone’ until I left the organisation.”
- “You cannot distinguish between different types of misfits. They are all ‘painted with the same brush.’”

4.4 Summary of Initial Coding Review

The aforementioned sub-categories identified combine to reflect some perspective on what misfit exactly is, its causes, consequences, coping behaviour and other relevant issues pertaining to the management of misfit in the South African work context. One of the major objectives of the initial coding review, especially in presenting examples of relevant excerpts from the interview transcripts with the 40 respondents, was to demystify the elusive construct of misfit.

The findings of the initial coding review have been summarised in Tables 4.4.1 to Table 4.4.12 on the proceeding pages. These tables display a summary of the code sub-categories with relevant examples (quotes) for the categories identified, namely; misfit definitions, attributed causal factors, misfit individual consequences, misfit organisational consequences, misfit coping behaviour, misfit management, misfit concealment, misfit conspicuousness, co-worker reactions to misfits, manager/supervisor reactions to misfits, misfit process and misfit stages.

Table 4.4.1. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Definitions Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Label	“When you said misfit to me, I think of some punk rock kid with pink hair and a Mohawk and rings everywhere. That is what I think of, when I think of a misfit.”
Non-conformist	“The society or the group that conforms to certain standards will never understand the individual who does not conform and is able to bring in new and different perspectives, ideas and views on everything. This is when one realises that they misfit.”
Multidimensional Concept	“It is a hell of a grey area...misfit is such a big multidimensional thing because people talk about having misfits at work, in your job, you could misfit with your fellow colleagues and you could misfit in your social environment.”
Positive & Negative Condition	“It can be good or bad but it depends on how one sees it. Sometimes being a misfit means that you are actually telling yourself, ‘I don’t belong here and I’m aiming for something higher’...”
Negative Psychological Experience	“Misfit is like a mental disorder, which is a bit too much on the extreme but I would say this as it would affect the employee emotionally which can lead to this mental breakdown.”
Negative Condition Only	“It is a bad thing because it actually affects your performance in whatever you do...it’s important that you fit and feel comfortable if you want to succeed and being a misfit does not allow either. So basically, I can’t say that there is anything good about being a misfit.”

Table 4.4.1. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Definitions Category – Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Personality Trait	“I consider myself as having a unique personality and a unique outlook on life. I knew things which I used to contribute at staff meetings and everyone would just think that I am weird. This is when I was able to realise that I was a misfit but I didn’t care.”
Positive Condition Only	“If you are looking at differentiation, misfit is a good thing because you want to be different from others. You want to be unique and you want to showcase your strengths and abilities.”
State of Mind	“I think it is somewhat a state of mind. You go into an organisation a bit scared, a bit fragile, but it is up to you as an individual to take yourself to completely break down all barriers and make things work.”
Not Belonging	“Misfit for me is not belonging. Just ideally not belonging. Be it in a social class, be it in the work environment, no matter where it is, misfit is not belonging.”
A Lack of Expertise	“I think for me it would mean being in a position where I know I am being placed somewhere where I know I don’t have the expertise to function or where I am not as qualified and do not have the skills to function in that area...”
A Mismatch	“Misfit to me means that an employee does not match the job they are currently working for. It can also mean that the skills and the knowledge that the employee has, does not match the requirements of the job.”
Being Incompetent	“Some people view themselves as a misfit because they feel that they don’t have the necessary skills to match a job, ‘I am not competent to do that job.’ Some people view themselves as misfits when they are over competent. Misfit is therefore a dynamic concept.”

Table 4.4.2. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Attributed Causal Factors of Misfit Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Race	“I think as much as we have moved away from the apartheid era, peoples’ mind-sets are still fixed...what people fail to realise is that they look at you based on your skin colour. This can impact on whether you see yourself as a misfit.”
Personality	“Definitely personality, for example, in another club where I work, they put me on probation because their reasoning was that my personality did not meet up to the club’s requirements.”
Gender	“In terms of gender as well...I mean as Africans, we still have that tendency that a senior person must be a man and we feel that if a woman is occupying a higher position, she is not good enough for her job. So that is a perception that creates a misfit.”
Wrong Career Choice	“...from school to tertiary education, people make the mistake of showing an interest in the wrong career...this has ramifications when entering the workplace as choosing a wrong career often implies being employed in a wrong job (misfit). This could go on throughout a person’s working cycle.”
Educational Background	“People who are not suitably educated are often discriminated against or looked down upon in the workplace. Although they are competent enough to do the job, they are often side-lined when it comes to promotions. This may result in them feeling that they do not belong in that particular organisation.”

Table 4.4.2. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Attributed Causal Factors of Misfit Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Organisational Restructuring	“...If you look at a classic example, here at the university with the reorganisation, people find that we have new management, new structures, and so forth. I am still trying to find my feet, while others feel that they don’t fit in with the organisation.”
Individual Culture	“Another factor is culture. An individual that differs from other individuals with respect to cultural values in the workplace may feel that they do not fit in.”
Social Status	“... From my experience people with a higher or lower social status than their work colleagues are often isolated. This may lead to these people developing perceptions of misfit.”
Homosexuality	“Another factor that is perhaps on the taboo side is that of homosexuality and is prevalent throughout the world and within South Africa as well. There are lots of homosexual individuals out there. Society does not accept this and due to this rejection, these people feel that they do not fit in.”
Religion	“Also the issue of religion, if you feel that your religion...now that you have got this big beard and to some people you are some sort of an anathema, you might feel that you are misfitting this environment...”
Management Styles	“... A top-down approach to managing people. In this approach, people feel left out from decision making. Thus, a potential source of misfit.”

Table 4.4.2. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Attributed Causal Factors of Misfit Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Organisational Culture	“Organisational culture and the values of an organisation play an important role. When you walk into an institution or the company, the culture there determines where you can end up, that is, either a fit or a misfit.”
Age	“Yeah, I mean I would mess around with all the managers because they appear to be in the same age group as I am. However, in some cases younger people or older people working in environments where the majority of employees are old or young respectively, often feel side-lined (misfit).”
Financial Responsibilities	“Some people would apply for the job without taking cognisance of whether they fit in or not. Due to the desperate situation (being unemployed) they take the job because they need the money only to later find out they do not fit in. They eventually develop symptoms of depression which leads them to start looking for another job.”
Lack of Confidence	“I think the biggest factor is people not realising their own true potential and I think it’s because they have no confidence within themselves. A lack of confidence can impact on the way you see yourself as a misfit.”
Lack of Skills	“Person-job misfit is where I find myself in a job where I know I am not skilled to do it.”
Lack of Training	“...an important factor is the level of training that is required to carry out the job functions given to employees. If employees are not adequately trained, this may result in these employees perceiving misfit with their job. This misfit could impact on their satisfaction and performance.”

Table 4.4.2. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Attributed Causal Factors of Misfit Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Mismatch in Placing of Employees	“You know this matching and placing as a result of restructuring is the central issue in causing people to misfit. In my company, there are a larger number of people that feel that they do not fit in because of this failed matching and placing exercise that came about as a result of restructuring. Many people have now labelled this exercise ‘mismatching and placing’.”
Corruption/Ethical Decline	“It creates a kind of misfit...sometimes an organisation engages in corrupt practices because of their ambitious directors. Employees in these companies, who feel strongly against corruption, may develop into misfits.”
Co-workers’ Perceptions & Behaviour	“The way your co-workers see you, has an important bearing on whether you perceive yourself as a misfit.”
Language	“...it’s about their languages and the native speaking accents that cause many Black employees to feel that they do not fit in.”
Misleading at Pre-screening	“...you want to be able to deliver but when you are looking at the way the pre-screening of an individual especially on the psychometrics that they do, I find that it’s actually very misleading...compared to the job description...the interview questions posed to the potential candidates are no indication as to what the job function really entails. This discrepancy could lead to newly hired employees later becoming misfits.”
Working Environment	“I think that sometimes in some working environments, individuals are not given the opportunity to be creative and to realise their true potential. Given this situation, I am in no doubt, that individuals will perceive misfit with their environment.”
Family Pressure	“Family pressure can impact on the way you perceive yourself as a misfit. For example, in some families, if your father was a doctor or lawyer, you were expected to become a doctor or lawyer. If you followed a ‘lesser’ career path (for example, plumber), you are automatically labelled as a misfit by your family. Over time, some people begin to believe that they are misfits and carry this negative frame of reference into the workplace.

Table 4.4.2. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Attributed Causal Factors of Misfit Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
High Unemployment Levels	“The high unemployment level can be a cause of the misfit as people are forced to occupy jobs on the basis of survival rather than on the basis of a good fit.”
HIV Status	“There are people who do not mind to disclose their HIV status but they get that stigma from other people which could turn them into a misfit.”
Low Self-esteem	“On the other hand, if you brought up with obsessive parent’s, restricting and commenting on everything you do, then your self-esteem goes down and you see yourself automatically as a misfit.”
Nepotism	“In South Africa, nepotism is rife in the workplace. Hiring or promoting people on the basis of nepotism can have a two-fold effect. Firstly, the people that are hired or promoted are often in jobs that they are ill-suited to. This will impact on their level of misfit. Secondly, the co-workers that were not recipients of this nepotism practice may also feel that they were not fairly given opportunities which may result in them not fitting in.”
Personal Appearance	“People’s judgements about your personal appearance plays a role in whether you see yourself as a misfit or not.”
Upbringing	“The way you are brought up can have a significant impact on the way you see yourself as a misfit at work. If you are brought up in a conservative way and are employed in the organisation that takes risks, you might feel that the organisation is not the place for you.”
Behavioural Patterns	“If you are brought up in an abusive environment, you tend to be most of the time abusive yourself...and you also tend to hide it. Nobody wants to admit they are an abuser, they hide things. So, that’s one way of identifying a misfit, look at their behavioural patterns.”
Communication Styles	“...from a communication perspective, lots of senior management lack the ability to communicate clearly on what your output should be...this lack of communication can lead to several misunderstandings with you and your manager. These misunderstandings could potentially be a source of misfit.”

Table 4.4.2. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Attributed Causal Factors of Misfit Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Debilitating Illnesses	“Physical or mental illness can have a serious impact on whether you see yourself as a misfit in the organisation. Although you might have the will to carry out your job functions, because of your physical illness, you might find it impossible. This could create a scenario whereby you find that you can no longer stay with the organisation and seek early retirement or medical boarding. Misfit on the basis of a person’s illness is the fact that it should be further investigated.”
Incompetence	“I think the more you know whether you can actually do the job, that is, your competency, then I think your competency has a big part to play.”
Lack of Motivation	“Another factor at work causing misfit is the lack of motivation. You could choose the right career but have a problem with motivation and support. This could trigger feelings of misfit.”
Lack of Potential	“Not realising one’s own potential can indeed turn one into a misfit.”
Lack of Trust	“I think that an important factor in misfit is trust. A lack of trust between employer and employee could trigger an employee into believing that they are not valued by the organisation. This could be a potential source of misfit.”
Schooling System	“I think a lot has to come from your schooling system. I went to a public school, so, my experience in terms of engagement with the intellectual dialogue is lower than someone who went to a private school. This could then cause me to feel inferior and in some cases not to fit in.”
Stress	“Also, the capacity of the person to handle stress, pressure and high volumes of work could significantly influence perceptions of misfit.”
Work-life Balance	“The imbalance between your work and family life can create tension within you which could lead you to developing a sense of misfit in your job. For example, as an accountant, I was often required to work long hours, sometimes over the weekends to complete deadlines. As a result, I was hardly at home to spend time with my family. At this point, I started questioning whether this job was meant for me. I was given an ultimatum by my wife to ‘shape up or ship out’. All these factors started playing a role in determining whether I fitted in or not.”

Table 4.4.3. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Individual Consequences Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Decline in Job Performance	“...misfit can lead employees to not perform as well as expected because they are unclear about their personal goals and the objectives of the job.”
Increase in Stress	“Stress plays a big role when you are misfit, because you are there (that is, in an organisation) but your heart is not. Thus, you are always stressed.”
Drop in Self-confidence	“Being a misfit impacts negatively on your levels of self-confidence. You begin to believe that you don’t have the ability to do your job. Your manager and co-workers get a sense of this and thus, start to push you around by giving you menial tasks like filing.”
Depression	“...what I also noticed is that it affects you medically because you end up a lot of times on tranquilisers and I mean I know this for a fact...and a lot of the time on antidepressants just to be able to cope.”
Deviant Behaviour	“Firstly, the major issue, because I am from HR, I will tell you, the major issue is absenteeism. They are not coming to work. They are going to pull any reason possible not to be there and that is the major problem. You would see punctuality as being a problem because if I used up all my leave...so I am going to leave early, come late.”
Negative Impact on Emotions	“The impact of misfit starts at the emotional level. Initially, you become anxious and then angry with yourself and the organisation. You develop a mentality of ‘I want to show you a point’. This becomes self-destructive as further emotions become stimulated such as resentment.”

Table 4.4.3. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Individual Consequences Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Decrease in Motivation	“Being demotivated is one of the major consequences of being a misfit. When you are a misfit you are not prepared to put in an effort at work. You have a feeling that it is not necessary as you don’t have a long-term future with the company. Demotivation really causes you to resent your job, your co-workers and manager.”
Negative Physiological Effect	“You become very, very ill physically...so automatically you start getting an ulcer, you get these migraines that you can’t explain, and it’s not like winter you know. I have a sinus problem; I need to take care of myself...”
Isolation	“You begin to detach yourself from the rest of your colleagues in your work environment. When I did not fit in, I was reduced to doing things on my own. For example, I would go out to the shopping centres on my own and in some cases I would use every excuse, not to attend staff functions.”
Lack of Enthusiasm to Work	“The impact that misfit has on the employee is that the employee loses enthusiasm to go to work.”
Resentment	“...You will probably end up being bitter all the time which affects everybody else at work as well.”
Decline in Need for Belongingness	“...you work so hard that you have got two months of work done in one month and the reason for that is merely because you would rather bury yourself in work than socialise with the people around you. And that is a form of misfit as well.”
Suicide	“Misfit had an extreme impact on me personally to such an extent that I considered taking a drug overdose. I was on the verge of committing suicide.”
Uneasiness	“I think at a personal level, it makes you feel awkward and less of a human being.”

Table 4.4.3. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Individual Consequences Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Unhappiness	“As a result of your misfit, you become unhappy and this leads to poor performance.”
Voluntary Exit	“I came to realise that there is no amount of chemical modification that could alter my disposition because I needed to either accept the circumstance and if it was too unpleasant to contemplate, I’d have to avoid it and that meant I had to resign.”
Decrease in Concentration Levels	“In terms of your competence levels, I think if you are too competent for a position, you are just going to get bored, thus, losing concentration. You are not going to work to the best of your ability.”
Confusion	“I say that misfit can result in the employee being confused over the goals and purposes of the job.”
Dejection	“...what I found from a concentration perspective is that I was so emotionally involved and engaged in the fact that I don’t belong here, I felt dejected, I felt rejected.”
Frustration	“It can also lead the misfit employee to become frustrated at work and at the supervisor as well.”
Inculcating Fear	“The space just isn’t conducive to growth, it isn’t conducive, and you are totally in fear. Fear is probably a good way to describe it.”
Opportunity for Self-advancement	“...you could look at this as an opportunity to better yourself and if it is work related...you could use it as an opportunity to improve your skills or educational levels. In that way, you could be more marketable. Thus, finding out that you are a misfit, could be a wake-up call for you.”

Table 4.4.3. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Individual Consequences Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Personality Dependent	“The impact of being a misfit also depends on your personality and your ability to handle a challenge.”
Withdrawal	“Misfit tends to force employees to withdraw from their colleagues.”
Loss of Self-respect	“I think that misfit will eventually affect your self-respect.”
Boredom	“Misfit employees may see themselves as too competent hence the reason for them misfitting. When these individuals are too competent for a position, they just become bored.”
Deliberate Attempts to Get Fired	“As a misfit, you sometimes have a point to prove to your organisation...you make mistakes...you actually put yourself out there to get fired.”
Give Up Hope	“With all the stress of being misfit, these employees will be so negatively impacted upon that it will lead them to just give up...you are going to feel like it’s beyond you.”
Increase in Guilt	“The impact that being misfit has is guilt. These employees will feel guilty about not performing at their jobs.”
Hindrance to Success	“The impact of misfit employees within the organisation can also hinder the success of their colleagues by being obstructionists. For example, in a team environment, each and every employee’s contribution is necessary for the team’s success. Failure of the misfit to perform at the right levels, will negatively impact on the team output.”
Invasion of Private Time	“...during the weekends you are always trying to do your best and it’s constantly on your mind and takes over you private time.”
Termination	“The impact of misfit employees in the work environment could also lead you to lose your job.”
Unpleasant Effects	“Personally, in terms of the employee wellbeing and behaviour, it’s terrible.”

Table 4.4.4. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Organisational Consequences Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Decline in Client Service Levels	“...client service drops. So for instance, you are in a service industry like a bank and you are in the front line and you don’t fit in, your service to the customers’ lacks substance.”
Decrease in Productivity	“I think it has a major impact on the organisation in terms of its productivity. Obviously, productivity drops. Some misfits do the bare minimum to get by, while others can be a destructive force within an organisational environment. This has a chain reaction from negatively affecting the morale of co-workers to the effectiveness of work teams. The negativity permeating from misfits becomes pervasive throughout the organisation. Every single aspect of organisational functioning becomes negatively affected as a result of misfitting employees.”
Creating a Toxic Environment	“Having misfits in the organisation can create a toxic work environment. The negativity of misfits can spread to other workers and this can result in a decline in the climate of the organisation. When I worked for a major retailer, I experienced this phenomenon. There were quite a few misfits at the corporate office and they would actively spread their negativity to us on a daily basis. In fact, it took only a few months for the entire corporate office, to be contaminated with this negativity.”
Decline in Company Reputation	“As a misfit in my previous job, I felt I contributed to damaging the reputation of the organisation. I did not treat clients in the appropriate manner as I was very disgruntled about my predicament. In some cases, I would not follow up on queries and clients would get agitated about this. These clients, by word-of-mouth, spread negative views about the organisation. Consequently, in a small town, like Richards Bay, news spreads quite fast.”
Increase in Employee Turnover	“...and employee turnover, as a result of the misfit, will significantly add to the cost of the company. In addition to advertising and recruitment costs, there may be further expenses in terms of relocation and induction.”

Table 4.4.4. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Organisational Consequences Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Increase in Creativity/Innovation	“...there can be a creative side to a misfit. I have known of misfits pitching up with new ideas for acquiring new business, creating new policies and procedures and encouraging closer cooperation between team members. What is necessary in this situation is to allow misfits their space as this is the most appropriate condition for them to strive and be productive. The mistake many companies make, is that they use a top-down management style that constrains misfits and thus, frustrating them. Consequently, they become disillusioned and either engages in destructive behaviour or exit the organisation.”
Destruction of Team Dynamics	“What I found is that the hard workers seem to attract more work. People try to cover up for misfits by soaking up the additional pressure. This affects morale in a bad way because as a hard worker, you could get exhausted and suffer from burnout.”
Escalating Training and Development Costs	“...if the organisation is open enough to accept that a particular person does not fit there...they can take steps to retrain that person to fit into that position. This necessitates an increase in the spending of the training and development budget.”
Increase in Animosity Levels	“...there’s animosity between members of the pack because there’s a dog which feels that it’s being pulled out of control, the momentum is lost and so the organisation must suffer.”
Decline in Organisational Learning	“Even from an organisational development point, it negatively affects organisational learning or institutional learning.”
Creating a Challenge for Managers	“It will also put a strain on the management hierarchy as it may become difficult for managers to manage these individuals.”

Table 4.4.5. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Coping Behaviour Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Organisational Exit	“Leaving is an option. It would become a last resort because as an individual, you would try your utmost to overcome the negativity. However, if you cannot overcome it, then leaving becomes the only option.”
Vocal About Issues Causing Misfit	“Also speaking out and going to your manager can help you cope with your misfit. Very often, your manager can try and improve your working conditions or try and take steps to alleviate the causes of your misfit. Thus, being vocal about your misfit can only be a positive thing to do.”
Oblivious to Workplace Issues	“...You can grin and bear it and continue to be unhappy in your job because you have no alternative. Consider the issues in South Africa – high unemployment rates, job reservation favouring Blacks, high taxation, and so forth. All these factors mentioned force someone like myself, who is a misfit, to stay in my job, become oblivious to issues...”
Engaging in Proactive Behaviour	“I know what it’s like to feel as a misfit and I think for employees to cope with it, it is to basically come up with their own strategies and say to themselves, ‘what they want out of life.’ Therefore, being proactive is the way forward.”
Requesting a Transfer	“Misfits could ask for a transfer. That’s what I did. I was in finance but I wrote such a long motivating letter and pushed for a move into HR. It was not easy but I had to write and persevere until I got my transfer.”

Table 4.4.5. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Coping Behaviour Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Doing the Minimum	“When I was a misfit in my previous job, I did not go out of my way to excel in my work. I would just do the basics just to get through each day.”
Engaging in Deviant Behaviour	“Coping is a challenge... I personally had a diary and just went through the motions, and every day I would start shading in the diary as to when I wanted to leave. It was crazy, I would tell myself, I need to go now. I would send out my CV and go for all these interviews, steal time from the company to go for these interviews, take sick leave, abuse the rules, I was unhappy.”
Personality Dependent	“It depends on your personality. If I’m a strong person, I wouldn’t care if you think I’m a misfit. But if you have a weak personality, they are going to take it the hard way and constantly dwell on negative aspects.”
Seeking Psychological Counselling	“...Going for counselling is a good way of coping. One could learn various relaxation techniques and get objective feedback about your predicament.”
Working Independently	“I coped with misfit in my previous company by avoiding people and teams and working alone. I found that I was able to cope as I could be shielded by the criticism that I was likely to get from my colleagues about my ‘unusual’ mannerisms.”

Table 4.4.5. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Coping Behaviour Category - Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Accepting the Misfit Predicament	“In order for me to cope with being a misfitting employee, I would just stay out of everyone’s way and accept my situation. In doing so, I will avoid feeling even more of a misfit.”
Adapting to the Conditions	“Misfitting employees adapt, but they still keep the feeling of not belonging inside of them. To them, it just becomes a job. I have to eat at the end of the day so I will just keep doing this job even though I’m not happy and don’t feel that I belong there, but where else will I find a job. It is difficult in South Africa with the high unemployment rate and Affirmative Action which favours the majority race group.”
Changing the Mind-set	“...or you can have a whole mind-set change...and I am going to make this work.”
Staying Below the Radar	“I found that most people hide behind their misfit, they don’t go for organisational functions, they don’t attend meetings. They stay in their offices all the time so that they don’t have to interact with people. They keep a low profile, below the radar.”
Contemplating Suicide	“It is a big problem and some envisage committing suicide.”

Table 4.4.6. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Management Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Training & Development	“Personally it depends how they are sort of misfitting. If it’s a skill sort of problem, then they can maybe undertake more training...you can rectify it and improve it with training and development...so by maybe giving the misfitting employees more training and allowing them to voice their opinions, you could gain more from them.”
Change in Company Mind-set	“Change in mind-set from the organisation is required to accept reality that misfits are an integral part of the company make up and should be managed accordingly.”
Interventions	“...intervention in terms of creatively harnessing a misfitting individual’s ability.”
Early Misfit Identification	“Firstly, managers should be proactive in identifying symptoms and root causes of misfit early in the tenure of the employee so that necessary steps can be taken.”
Counselling	“Perhaps, providing counselling to raise their self-esteem and raise their confidence could be really the key for organisations.”
Relocation	“Once they identify those people who are misfits, they can be used in different projects where they will fit best...look at them and match them in areas where they fit.”

Table 4.4.6. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Management Category – Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Recruitment & Selection	“Recruitment and selection is important...when they are selecting or employing individuals, they need to make sure that these individuals are going to fit in.”
Job Rotation	“Rotating misfits into other jobs may go a long way into improving their predicament. They may discover that doing different functions using different skill sets, may actually improve their fit with their jobs or organisations.”
Creative Management	“Company’s need to be more creative and take risks when it comes to managing misfits.”
Providing Incentives	“Reward these misfits for being different. The organisation should encourage their employees to be individuals and think out of the box. Because when you are fairly rewarded, you are happy. Your confidence increases and the company’s productivity will increase at the same time. Everything is going to increase if people are happy in their environment. Even though you might not like your job at the moment, but you like the culture, the organisation and the people around you, you automatically are going to try and do your best.”
Consultation	“I think they need to get down to the root of the causes. This is because you can sometimes be a misfit at home which has an impact on the working environment. This can only be realised through face-to-face communication.”
Creating an Open Work Environment	“...they have it in Europe as well, more of an open culture, open working environment...that will keep that pressure on misfitting individuals lower. This needs to be practiced in many South African organisations.”

Table 4.4.6. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Management Category – Continued

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Teambuilding	“Also you have to try and get your staff together more so that you know they learn and work together to become part of the group and not so individualised. They should have teambuilding and events where everybody mixes together...at the end of the day, I don’t think it’s because they don’t get along, it’s misunderstanding.”
Implementing Effective Strategies	“It’s a paradigm shift and having an effective strategy to deal with the issue. Because how many organisations can pull out their strategy and say listen this is how they deal with their misfits.”
Embracing Organisational Culture	“Organisational culture could be enhanced. We live in South Africa, so why not promote the issues of Ubuntu and all of that in the workplace? In that way, employee misfits could become more accepting.”
Motivating to Turn it Around	“To motivate the person to turn it around is a sure way to effectively manage misfits.”
Removing Negative Misfits	“On the other end of the spectrum, there’s no benefit of having them (negative misfits) around...you have no alternative but to dismiss them.”
Career Management	“To maybe develop like career management programs, to manage their careers and channel them to where their interest lies.”
Implementing Exit Interviews	“When an employee leaves, why are they leaving, is a question that should be asked. Exit interviews can be used to see whether the company is creating the misfit in the first place. If you do that, organisations can become more competitive.”
Leveraging the Positive Misfits	“Organisations should leverage the positive outliers and dismiss the negative ones, as the latter ones add no value to the organisation.”

Table 4.4.7. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Concealment Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Fear of Victimisation	“The reason why I did not disclose my misfit status was because I feared being intimidated by my colleagues. My response was based on how these colleagues previously treated a gay employee who came out of the closet.”
Introverted Personality	“Sometimes, certain people with specific personality traits (for example, introverts) don’t like to come out and admit to it.”
Being in Denial	“Some people are in denial of their misfit condition. They just go around oblivious to the fact that they do not fit in.”
Pride	“Some people just contain too much of pride. They are reluctant to publicise that they do not fit in.”
Fear of Rejection	“The reason for not wanting to be identified is because co-workers will reject you and you will be second guessed. Nobody wants to feel left out.”
Lack of Confidence	“Yeah, I had one guy, when I was in mining. This individual had no confidence at all, and he was a geological draughtsman so very meticulous, but every time his boss shouted at him, he would burst into tears. His life was miserable.”
Preference for Covert Behaviour	“...you are keeping it low key, under the radar...it’s not easy, especially in an organisation that doesn’t have strong measures to protect you.”

Table 4.4.8. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Conspicuousness Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Valuing Uniqueness	“I would wear a T-shirt with misfit written on it, because I would say to myself, I am a unique individual and that’s part of my personality.”

Table 4.4.9. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Co-Worker Reactions to Misfits Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Ostracise	“You get isolated when there are meetings and important discussions or presentations taking place.”
Gossip	“They gossip behind your back and rumours of all sorts are started.”
Supportive	“My co-workers tried to give me the support that I needed. This support came in the form of expertise and emotional support.”
Antagonistic	“...and the reality of this is that of the ‘crab mentality’, everyone wants to climb on each other to get to the top. So, if you are a misfit, you are actually, like in terms of schools, being bullied and there is no way of you actually coming out of it.”
Set You Up For Failure	“I mean really, they set you up to fail and report you to the managers. For example, if you are not back on time from your lunch break, you will be reported upon.”
Unsupportive	“They are not supportive. Everyone is more interested in themselves...At the end of the day; you have got to be more proactive. It’s very rare that somebody will stand up for you unless they are also a misfit in their own right.”
Engaging in Pretentious Behaviour	“They pretend to care, some of them pretend.”

Table 4.4.10. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Manager/ Supervisor Reactions to Misfits Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Encouraging Organisational Exit	“They are looking to squeeze you...they want to frustrate you and work you out.”
Absence of a Plan	“They have no plan...instead of coming up to you straight and tell you that you are not cut out for this, they start to send out little messages.”
Interventions	“Managers often look at interventions that will assist misfits to fit in within an organisation.”
Dialogue	“Let’s talk about it...is a response that I often received from my manager. I was fortunate in this regard as I was able to deal with my misfit condition in a positive way.”
Proactive Behaviour	“...I don’t think you are sitting in the right position...‘How about we move you to this new position?’ This is the reaction that I got from my manager.”
Training	“Training will assist employees to fit in the organisation.”
Counselling	“‘Can I send you to some counselling, can I refer you to somebody you can chat to?’ This was the overture that I received from my manager.”
Employee Wellness Programs	“They put more programs in place, such as; wellness programs and workshops to deal with people that do not fit in. These programs provide the opportunity for misfits to rehabilitate themselves and possibly enter the mainstream employment with confidence.”
Early Identification of Misfits	“I think what is important is managers must identify misfits at the early stage of onset and do not treat them as ‘squares in round holes’ and vice versa...the identification process is very, very important.”

Table 4.4.11. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Process Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Cognitive Dissonance	“I was unhappy for quite some time at work. This feeling of unhappiness made me take stock of my situation. The question I tried to seek answers for was; ‘what was causing my unhappiness?’ After doing some soul searching, I measured myself against the environment and discovered that although I did fit in with my team members, I was a misfit elsewhere. The process of discovering this was tedious...”
Instantaneous Process	“I knew that instant that I was a misfit. I perceived misfit as one global dimension.”

Table 4.4.12. Summary of Code Sub-Categories with Examples: Misfit Stages Category

Sub-categories	Examples (Quotes)
Multi-stage Misfit	“A misfit could evolve from an early misfit to a full-blown misfit if no remedial action is taken.”
Single-type Misfit	“I perceived that I was a misfit on my first day at work. When I compared myself to others who did not fit in, we basically displayed the same characteristics. In my opinion, all misfits are the same.”

At this juncture, the next step in a grounded theory coding process referred to as axial coding, commenced. According to Charmaz (2006, p. 60), “axial coding relates categories to sub-categories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis.” Creswell (1998) stated that “the purposes of axial coding are to sort, synthesise, and organise large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60).

4.5 Moving from Description to Conceptualisation – Axial Coding

Strauss (1987, p. 64) conceptualises axial coding as “building a dense texture of relationships around the ‘axis’ of a category.” Daniel (2009, p. 154) stated that “axial coding refers to the process of reintegrating sub-categories back into categories that give meaning to the experience and provide the basis for developing new theory.” In this study, the initial coding process provided the researcher a platform to identify separate sub-categories and their labels emanating from the transcribed interview data.

In this second phase of the coding process, the sub-categories previously identified, were re-examined for further insight and meaning. The objective of axial coding “was to define more objectively, the basic elements on which the open codes were based” (Daniel, 2009, p. 154). Emanating from this process of further elaboration, followed by re-organisation, a number of categories and sub-categories identified under initial coding were re-grouped or re-configured to make more meaningful sense of the data.

In the sub-sections listed below, the categories that were compiled as a result of the axial coding exercise are briefly discussed, proceeding to the summary presented in the section on theoretical coding. It is worthy to note that the specific comments from the respondents have not been repeated as they were exhaustively dealt with under the initial/open coding section.

4.5.1 Re-Grouping of Specific Categories and Sub-Categories

4.5.1.1 Personal, Organisational and External Attributed Causal Factors

On detailed examination of the attributed causal factors’ category and sub-categories, it was deemed practical by the researcher to group these various factors into three headings: personal, organisational and external attributed causal factors. The sub-categories falling under the rubric of the personal and organisational attributed causal factors were easily identifiable. However, a few sub-categories deserved a specific grouping outside that of the individual and organisational

factors. These sub-groups include; ‘financial responsibilities’, ‘family pressure’, ‘high unemployment levels’ and ‘work-life balance.’ It was thus deemed sensible to reallocate these sub-categories under the umbrella of the external attributed causal factors.

4.5.1.2 Moderating Variable

After careful examination of the categories and sub-categories, it became apparent to the researcher that a certain specific variable, namely, the personality trait of an individual, could have more utility if viewed as a moderating variable. Consequently, it was decided that ‘personality trait’ should be reassigned to a group under the rubric of the moderating variable.

4.5.1.3 Positive Individual Consequence

Following the in-depth scrutiny of sub-categories within the misfit individual consequences category, it was concluded that amongst the negative consequences listed, there appeared to be a consequence that may be of benefit to the individual concerned. This positive consequence was labelled as ‘opportunities for self-advancement.’ The researcher thus, came to a decision that it would be more accurate to split this grouping into both negative and positive categories.

4.5.1.4 Positive Organisational Consequence

After the in-depth examination of sub-categories within the misfit organisational consequences category, it was concluded that amongst the negative consequences listed, there appeared to be a consequence that may be of benefit to the organisation concerned. This positive consequence was labelled as an ‘increase in creativity/innovation.’ The researcher thus, came to a decision that it would be more accurate to split this grouping into both negative and positive categories.

4.5.1.5 Organisational Exit

On closer examination of the sub-categories identified in the initial coding process, organisational exit had been mentioned as a common reaction to misfit. The respondents were ambivalent as to when exiting the organisation actually takes place. However, after re-examining the transcripts, it became evident that the majority of participants indicated that leaving the organisation was the last resort. As a result, it became apparent that organisational exiting has a special place in the overall effects of misfit. Thus, the researcher deemed it wise to group this variable in a separate stand-alone category.

4.5.1.6 Other Misfit Study Related Factors

The categories of misfit concealment and misfit conspicuousness were generated in response to the following question: Were you keen to identify yourself as a misfit? Although this question was not directly linked to the key research questions, it was nevertheless considered significant by the researcher to our understanding of the misfit experience. These two categories were regarded as being part of ‘misfit identification’ and were grouped under the umbrella of ‘other misfit study related factors.’ There were other categories that were also not directly linked to the key research questions of this study but were considered important. For example, the categories of misfit process and misfit stages were appropriately labelled ‘misfit dynamics’ and were grouped under ‘other misfit study related factors.’ The final categories that were grouped under ‘other misfit study related factors’ included: co-worker and manager/supervisor reactions to misfits.

4.5.2 A New List of Revised Categories and Sub-Categories

Tables 4.5.2.1 to 4.5.2.5 shows a list of revised categories and sub-categories that emanated from the changes made as a result of the axial coding process.

As illustrated in Table 4.5.2.1, the attributable causal factors of misfit have been demarcated into three major categories; personal, organisational and external factors. Under the rubric of each of these major categories, several sub-categories emerged.

Table 4.5.2.1		
Attributed Causal Factors of Misfit		
Personal	Organisational	External
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Race - Personality - Gender - Wrong Career Choice - Educational Background - Individual Culture - Social Status - Homosexuality - Religion - Age - Lack of Confidence - Lack of Skills - Lack of Training - Co-workers' Perceptions and Behaviour - Language - HIV Status - Low Self-esteem - Personal Appearance - Upbringing - Behavioural Patterns - Debilitating Illnesses - Incompetence - Lack of Motivation - Lack of Potential - Schooling System - Stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisational Restructuring - Management Styles - Organisational Culture - Mismatch in Placing of Employees - Corruption/Ethical Decline - Working Environment - Misleading at Pre-screening - Nepotism - Communication Styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial Responsibilities - Family Pressure - High Unemployment Levels - Work-Life Balance

With reference to Table 4.5.2.2 on the next page, the misfit consequences have been conveniently grouped into those impacting on the individual and those impacting on the organisation. From the table, it can be deduced that there are an overwhelming number of negative sub-categories of consequences experienced by individual employee misfits and their organisations. In addition, misfit has also impacted on both the individual and the organisation in a positive manner.

Table 4.5.2.2 Consequences			
Individual Consequences		Organisational Consequences	
Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - job performance declines - an increase in stress - a drop in self-confidence - depression - deviant behaviour - a negative impact on emotions - a decrease in motivational levels - a negative physiological effect - isolation - lack of enthusiasm to work - resentment - a need for belongingness - suicide - uneasiness - unhappiness - voluntary exit - a decrease in concentration levels - confusion - dejection - frustration - inculcates fear - a loss of self-respect - deliberate attempts to get fired - give up hope - hindrance to success - invasion of private time - termination - unpleasant effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opportunity for self-advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a decline in client service levels - a decrease in productivity - creating a toxic environment - a decline in company reputation - an increase in employee turnover - a destruction of team dynamics - escalating training and development costs - an increase in animosity levels - a decline in organisational learning - creating a challenge for managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an increase in creativity/innovation

Table 4.5.2.3 on the next page displays a variety of coping behaviours that South African employees resort to when faced with misfit.

Table 4.5.2.3
Coping Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - becoming vocal about the issues causing misfit - become oblivious to workplace issues - engaging in proactive behaviour - requesting a transfer - doing the minimum - engaging in deviant behaviour - seeking psychological counselling - working independently - accepting the misfit predicament - adapting to the conditions - changing the mindset - staying below the radar - contemplating suicide

As illustrated in Table 4.5.2.4 below, participants cited a number of approaches that managers could adopt to effectively deal with misfits at the workplace. These factors range from training and development to leveraging the potential of the positive misfits.

Table 4.5.2.4
Misfit Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training and development - a change in company mind-set - interventions - misfit identification - counselling - relocation - recruitment and selection - job rotation - creative management - providing incentives - consultation - creating an open working environment - teambuilding - implementing effective strategies - enhancing organisational culture - motivating to turn it around - removing negative misfits - career management - implementing exit interviews - leveraging the positive misfits

This study also sought to investigate other issues surrounding a person's misfit experience in the South African work environment. As highlighted in Table 4.5.2.5, many South African employee misfits were not too keen to identify themselves as misfits citing numerous reasons such as fear of victimisation, pride, and so forth. Table 4.5.2.5 also illustrates a variety of reactions that both co-workers and supervisors display towards misfitting employees. The dynamics of the misfit process and stages have also been reflected in Table 4.5.2.5 below:

Table 4.5.2.5					
Other Misfit Study Related Factors					
Misfit Identification		Co-worker Reactions	Supervisor Reactions	Misfit Dynamics	
Misfit Concealment	Misfit Conspicuousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ostracise - gossip - being supportive - being antagonistic - setting you up - being unsupportive - engaging in pretentious behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encouraging organisational exit - the absence of a plan - interventions - engaging in dialogue - engaging in proactive behaviour - training interventions - counselling - setting up employee wellness programs - early Identification of misfits 	Misfit Process	Misfit Stages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a fear of victimisation - being in denial - pride - a fear of rejection - a lack of confidence - a preference for covert behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - valuing uniqueness 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dissonance - instantaneous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - multi-stage misfit - single-stage misfit

4.6 Summary of Axial Coding

The axial coding process placed an obligation on the researcher to review the categories and sub-categories that were formed following the initial coding process. This review entailed searching for commonalities, interrelationships and duplications among the various categories and sub-categories. The resulting outcome of this exercise identified 'personality traits' as a moderating variable,

compiling a new groups of attributed causal factors labelled personal, organisational and external factors, splitting the individual and organisational consequences into negative and positive categories respectively, recognising that organisational exit deserves to be allocated on its own. In addition, there was a re-grouping categories/sub-categories such as co-worker and supervisor reactions to misfits, and so forth, under the rubric of ‘other misfit study related factors.’

4.7 From Conceptualisation to Theory Building – Theoretical Coding

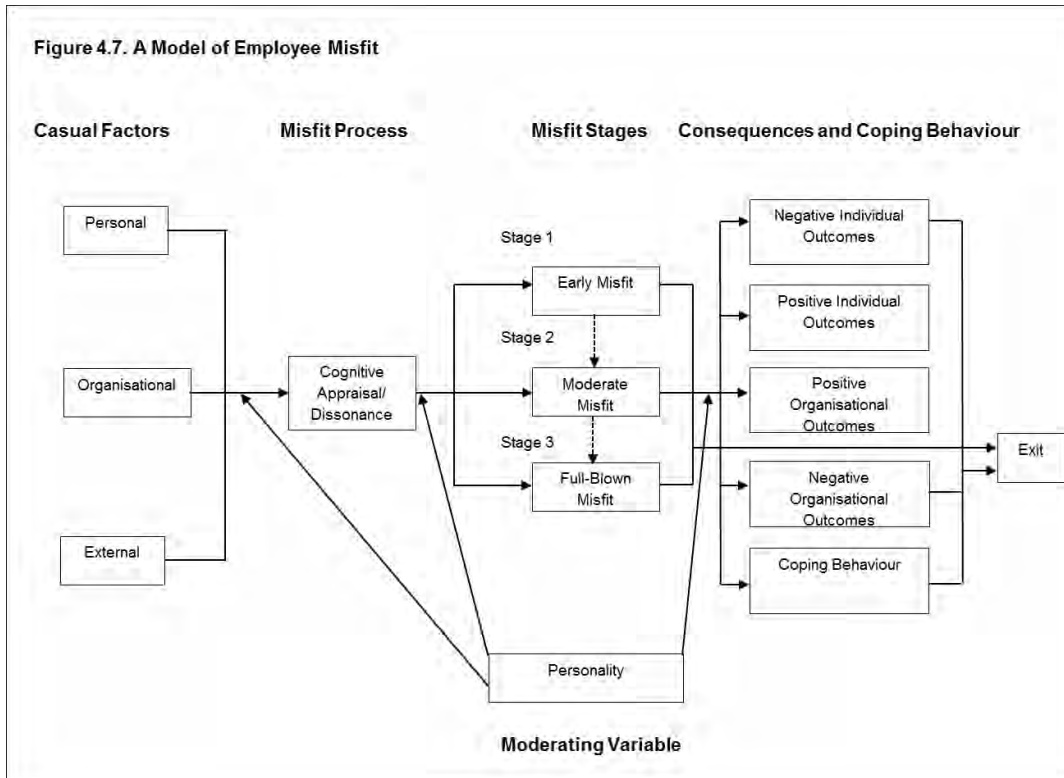
Theoretical coding represents the final stage of coding and category organisation in this grounded theory study. Holton (2007, p. 283) asserts that “theoretical codes conceptualise how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory and help the analyst maintain the conceptual level in writing about concepts and the interrelations.” According to Charmaz (2006, p. 63), “theoretical coding is a sophisticated level of coding that follows the codes you have selected during focus coding.” Her understanding of the theoretical coding process was succinctly encapsulated in the following excerpt from her book entitled: “*Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*.”

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, p. 63).

The initial and axial coding processes together with the interpretation of the interview data, served as input to the enactment of the theoretical coding exercise. The culmination of theoretical coding produced a new theory which is depicted in the form of a conceptual model as shown in Figure 4.7 Daniel (2009, p. 156) claimed that the new theory developed in this fashion was “an attempt to

understand and explain the data at the highest level of abstraction.” In line with this, the researcher integrated the various outcomes of the literature review, initial coding, axial coding and interpretation of interview data to form a new theory that sheds light on how the concept of misfit is perceived and experienced by employees in the South African organisational context. This new theory as expressed in the conceptual model (Figure 4.7) suggests that:

- Misfit, as experienced by South African employees, may be caused by a variety of factors which have been conveniently grouped into personal, organisational and external factors.
- The process of becoming a misfit has been understood to occur in two ways. The most cited was through a process of cognitive appraisal, with the resulting dissonance culminating in feelings of misfit. A minority of participants indicated that misfit was an instantaneous reaction to an external stimulus.
- Employee misfits have been known to traverse through a number of stages: stage 1 – early misfit; stage 2 – moderate misfit; and stage 3 – full-blown misfit. It is noted that not all misfits experienced all these stages; instead, in some instances, some employees became full-blown misfits at the outset.
- The impact of misfit in South African employees is widespread, ranging from negative to positive individual and organisational outcomes. In addition, South African employees when faced with misfit engaged in a variety of coping behaviours. It was noted by the majority of participants that exiting the organisation was the last resort after all other avenues have been exhausted. However, in some cases, it was cited that exiting the organisation at the onset of misfit was the only viable option.
- An individual’s personality was found to be a significant moderating variable in two areas: on the impact between the causal factors and misfit perceptions and on the effects of misfit.



In summary, the model demonstrates that misfit may be triggered by an event or stimulus emanating from a variety of sources, for example, personal, organisational or external. This trigger point sets off a series of responses from the individual concerned. Firstly, the individual undertakes a mental comparison between himself/herself and the environment. If there is dissonance, the individual develops feelings of not fitting in. These feelings of misfit can proceed through several stages depending on its severity. Usually, individuals go through early misfit, then, moderate misfit before turning into full-blown misfits. In some cases, individuals immediately turn into full-blown misfits as an outcome of a trigger event. The model shows that the personality of an individual may play a significant moderating role in how individuals develop into and/or react to misfit. Once an individual develops a misfit condition, he/she proceeds to respond in a variety of ways depending on particular personality traits. In the majority of cases, leaving the organisation was considered the last option.

4.8 Summary of Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding was undertaken with the objective of developing a new theory. The culmination of this process was depicted in the form of a conceptual model detailing the attributed causal factors, the dynamics and consequences of misfit as experienced by South African employees. It should be noted that categories and sub-categories pertaining to misfit management and other study-related factors (with the exception of the misfit process and stages) have been omitted in the model as it does not directly influence the relationships depicted.

4.9 Summary and Conclusions to Chapter Four

This chapter presented the results of the interviews undertaken with the 40 participants. The researcher used a structure that was successfully adopted by Daniel (2009) in her doctoral thesis entitled: *“Tough Boss’ or Workplace Bully? A Grounded Theory Study of Insights from Human Resource Professionals.”*

The results show that the demographic profile of the respondents varied. After the initial coding process, a total of twelve categories were identified: misfit definitions, attributed causal factors, misfit individual consequences, misfit organisational consequences, misfit coping behaviour, misfit management, misfit concealment, misfit conspicuousness, co-worker reactions to misfits, manager/supervisor reactions to misfits, misfit process and misfit stages. Under each category, a series of sub-categories were identified. Each sub-category was backed up by uncensored quotes taken directly from the interview transcripts to justify the formation of these sub-categories and to ensure completeness. Subsequent to this, the researcher regrouped certain conceptually similar sub-categories through a process known as axial coding. The final stage of the coding process, known as theoretical coding, integrated input from a variety of sources including the literature and the previous open and axial coding steps to form a new theory which was depicted in the form of a conceptual model.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND ADDITIONAL LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Introduction

This present chapter serves two purposes: First, to critically discuss the results that were reported in the previous chapter (that is, Chapter Four). Second, to present the second phase of the literature review, in line with the ‘middle-ground stance’, adopted by the researcher as an attempt to reconcile the principles of classic and contemporary grounded theory.

The first part of the chapter provides a critical discussion of the results reported in this thesis (see Chapter Four). This discussion is structured to coincide with the order of the objectives as set out in Chapter One. A discussion of how South African employees define and understand misfit is followed by a critique of the factors that could influence a person’s sense of misfit. The impact of misfit on the individual employee and organisation is then articulated. The chapter continues with a discussion of how employees cope with misfit, followed by an account of the steps that South African organisations could implement to effectively manage their misfitting employees. A discussion of other study related factors surrounding misfit issues is then provided. The first part of this chapter ends with a critical appraisal of the conceptual model of employee misfit developed from the findings of this study and illustrated in Figure 4.7 (see Chapter Four).

Part two of this chapter presents the second phase of the literature review. Included in this phase, is a review of the related theoretical concepts and new literature pertaining to organisational misfit. Firstly, the principles of Schneider’s (1987a) framework are discussed. This is followed by a review of critique of Chatman *et al.*

(2008) paper entitled “*When Do People Make the Place? Considering the Interactionist Foundations of the Attraction-Selection-Attrition Model.*” The second part of the literature review proceeds with a discussion of Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) unfolding model of voluntary employee turnover. This model has assisted organisational behaviour researchers in their understanding of how and why individuals make the decision to quit their jobs as a result of misfit. The concept of job embeddedness and its relevance to misfit is articulated. Part two of the additional literature review ends with a discussion of Hobfoll’s (1988, 1989) conservation of resources (COR) theory and its usefulness as a framework for conducting future studies involving the misfit construct.

Following the second phase of the literature review is a discussion of how the use of constructivist grounded theory methods has illuminated our understanding of the newly-developed employee misfit theoretical model.

Finally, this chapter ends with a summary and conclusion.

5.2 Discussion of how South African Employees Define and Understand Misfit

There is a paucity of research on how individuals define and understand misfit. This section will discuss how misfit is conceptualised in the extant literature, and in terms of the analysis of the data collected during this research study.

Cooper-Thomas and Wright (2013, p. 32) argued that “an issue worthy of further consideration is our definition of misfit” and that “future research should explore and refine this.” Harrison (2007) as cited in Billsberry and De Cooman (2010, p. 1) asserted that “it is now well-established that problems with the definition of ‘fit’ and ‘misfit’ have dogged organisational fit research since inception.” According to Billsberry and De Cooman (2010, p. 1), “there are many reasons for these difficulties including multiple definitions and usages in common parlance, a failure

to explore what fit and misfit means for the individual, and early work that used alternative wordings (for example, congruence, similarity) to study 'fit'." Kristof-Brown as cited in Wheeler (2010, p. 2) indicated that "we need to clearly define what we mean by 'fit' and 'misfit'." She adds: "how fortunate we were to have started this discussion now so we as a field might avoid the fragmentation seen in the PE fit literatures".

To date, the literature has presented a scenario where misfit has been depicted as an amorphous abstract concept commonly associated with low levels of PE fit (Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a). Wheeler (2010, p. 2) provocatively argued that we need to consider "which of these is not like the others: PE fit, lack of PE fit, and misfit." To add to the confusion surrounding this definitional conundrum, Billsberry *et al.* (2005a) have suggested that misfit may be a qualitatively different construct from that of fit. Subsequent studies undertaken by Talbot and Billsberry (2010) have confirmed that this may indeed be the case.

In the past, the term misfit has been used in the context of a label that one attaches to an individual that does conform to some organisational norm or social standard. Consequently, the business and popular press are littered with examples of instances where people who do not fit in, are described as mavericks, oddballs, square pegs in round holes or in some cases troublemakers. The term misfit has also been used to describe a psychological attitude, overwhelmingly a negative experience. It is worth noting that each of these aforementioned characteristics and definitions of misfit have been confirmed in the present study.

At the outset, it must be stated that many of the respondents acknowledged that misfit remains an elusive construct and had difficulty in defining misfit in the limited time period of a face-to-face interview. Moreover, talking openly about not fitting in takes a substantial amount of courage, as it is perceived in some quarters as admitting failure. Consequently, the feedback generated from the interviews should be viewed in the context of these challenges and caution should be exercised

when prematurely judging whether the participants are indeed *au fait* with the construct of misfit.

Based on the results presented in Chapter Four of the thesis, it can be seen that the subjects who participated in the interviews suggested a broad array of terms and enunciations when questioned on what they understood the term misfit to mean. Participants understood misfit both in terms of an external and an internal dimension. In terms of an external dimension, a large number of respondents (18 out of 40) perceived misfit to be synonymous with a label or tag that is attached to persons who are somewhat different from what society or some organisations expect them to be. The same number (18 out of 40) understood a misfit to be someone that does not conform to an organisation's culture. Viewing misfit through an external lens has elicited several nouns that have been used to describe these individuals such as retards, oddballs, troublemakers, square pegs in round holes, rebels, and so forth. Each of these terms carries a negative connotation, signifying that misfit may be something that is undesirable.

The above findings are consistent with the outside-in approach highlighted by Billsberry and De Cooman (2010) in their conference paper entitled: *Definitions of Fit and Misfit in Northern Europe: Insights from a Cross-national Research Collaboration*. In this paper Billsberry and De Cooman (2010, p. 3) reported that misfit, when translated into Dutch, appears to be interpreted from an outside-in perspective with fewer emotional connotations, as highlighted in the following excerpt:

Rein De Cooman (who is of Dutch descent) sees misfit as a label that an individual may receive in a certain social environment. Misfits are individuals who deviate from their immediate surroundings due to their appearance, conceptions, or behaviours. They are maladjusted to a particular environment which makes 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 own perception of the environment. Similar to the condition of fit, individuals may or may not be aware of the misfit label and they may or may not be motivated to get rid of it (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 3).

In terms of misfit being viewed as an internal dimension, fewer participants (11 out of 40) perceived misfit to be a psychological experience, albeit a negative one. Moreover, nine out of 40 participants likened misfit to a negative condition or state that an individual experiences after he or she discovers that he or she does not fit in at work. This finding lends support to previous research that examined misfit from an “inside-out” approach (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a; Talbot & Billsberry, 2007a; 2010), “where the thoughts, feelings and desires of the individual are paramount” (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010, p. 1). Furthermore, the participants’ conceptualisation of misfit as a negative psychological experience or condition appears to echo the view held by Billsberry (2008, p. 3) that “misfit may be seen as an abnormal and undesired psychological state (that is, a psychopathology).” Billsberry (2008, p. 2) argues that “adopting this definition of misfit that positions the condition as an illness or a psychopathology opens up a completely new research agenda.”

In their conference paper entitled: *Comparing and Contrasting Person-Environment Fit and Misfit*, Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 3) emphasised the importance of conceptualising misfit as a deeper level psychological construct in the following paragraph:

A further similarity was that demographic factors were infrequently cited, either in relation to fit or misfit perceptions. This suggests that neither fit nor misfit results from people being similar or different in race, age, gender, religion, education or

socio-economic background. This is in line with Elfenbein and O'Reilly (2007) and Jackson and Chung's (2008) work suggesting that a person's fit or misfit in an organisation is not due to people being similar or dissimilar at a superficial level but rather that whether one fits or not is a deeper, psychological construct (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 3).

Some participants displayed ambivalence on whether or not misfit is an entirely negative condition. Twelve out of 40 participants indicated that misfit is both a positive and negative condition, while fewer (eight out of 40) indicated that misfit may be an outright positive condition. This finding contradicts the widely held view that misfit is a negative state to be avoided (Billsberry, 2008; Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005; Le Fevre *et al.*, 2003; Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). The rationale for suggesting that misfit may indeed be a "good thing" resonates from the idea that "thinking differently stimulates creativity." This viewpoint finds support in Schneider's (1987a) contention that an organisation populated with too many employees that fit in may lead to group think and stifling of innovation. The respondents also asserted that being a misfit stimulates individuals to engage in introspection. This, they said, serves as a platform to identify personal or workplace areas that require further development.

Thirteen out of 40 study respondents perceived misfit as a multidimensional concept. They indicated that individuals could simultaneously experience misfit with several aspects of the environment. For example, it was acknowledged that a person could misfit with their job, co-worker, the culture of the organisation, and with factors outside their work environment such as family or community.

A particularly interesting finding is that, in some instances, an individual might fit in with his or her organisation but at the same time misfit with his or her job. In other words, a person may display elements of both fit and misfit; which aspect is dominant depends on the circumstances and character of each person. This finding

appears to echo the rationale behind Wheeler *et al.*'s (2005) multidimensional fit/misfit model which proposed that individuals may perceive misfit with different dimensions of the environment such as the organisation, vocation, job, culture and team. Furthermore, this result supports the findings of the causal mapping studies undertaken by Talbot *et al.* (2007) and Talbot and Billsberry (2010), which suggested that employees could distinguish misfit along a number of different dimensions. Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 3) succinctly capture the multidimensional nature of misfit in the following excerpt:

We found that the majority of the participants' causal map concepts could be coded using the PE fit dimensions, with 69.5% of the causal maps overall, 67.7% of the concepts on the fit chains and 72.2% of the misfit concepts being coded with PE fit codes. This broad analysis showed that fit and misfit were similarly perceived to result primarily from interactions with the organisation, job, and groups of co-workers, with person-supervisor, person-individual, and person-vocation fit seemingly less important (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 3).

A few participants (nine out of 40) identified misfit as an independent streak in one's personality. They cited individuals who tend to come across as being rude, insulting, egotistical, pompous and aggressive as prime candidates that match a misfit profile. In many instances, these misfits are oblivious of their condition and thus believe that they are doing nothing wrong. However, details of exactly which personality traits engender misfit were not forthcoming from these participants. Examining the personality traits that are integral to people not fitting might trigger a new research agenda.

The extant literature suggests that "misfits are only too conscious of their misfit" and "when prompted; they produce richly elaborated cognitive maps of their misfit and talk eloquently and angrily about their sense of misfit" (Billsberry, 2008, p. 2).

The association between misfit and personality traits was alluded to by Tolles (2009) in her critique of the character Steve McGarrett in the television series *Hawaii Five-O*. Tolles (2009, p. 1) described Steve McGarrett as “an organisational misfit” and as one who “flies by the seat of his pants.” She (2009, p. 2) goes on to suggest that there might be an “independent personality streak in an individual that predisposes him or her to being misfit;” her remarks are captured in the following excerpt:

We can't really know what made Steve McGarret the way he was. What makes a person an organisational misfit or one who flies by the seat of his pants? Is it simply an independent streak in his personality, or is it the result of trauma in some point in his life? Could it be both or could it be a reason with which we are not familiar? Possibly, all the aforementioned! (Tolles, 2009, p. 2).

A novel finding of this study relates to the perception that misfit is a “state of mind.” Seven out of 40 participants presented this view. Conceptualising misfit as a “state of mind” has not been mentioned in the literature thus far. Various respondents alluded to the fact that in some instances, highly negative individuals will constantly see themselves in a bad light. Consequently, they will assume the worst in every situation and thus, see themselves as not fitting in. One respondent summed this up as follows:

...people generally believe that they are misfits because of their state of mind. Negative people constantly think that they don't fit in ... coming back to experiences, as a person, it is how you see yourself, what your rate of achievement is and whether you have set goals for yourself. It can be a state of mind to a point where it can start to consume you.

The view that misfit is a “state of mind” raises the question of whether misfit could be more illusory than real. Future research could explore this angle of misfit and thus shed more light on this conundrum.

Overall, the findings generally confirm previous conceptualisations of misfit. The participants were unable to clearly and precisely articulate what exactly misfit or being a misfit really means. When questioned about their understanding of misfit, the respondents described it through various different lenses, using a potpourri of terms, thus further adding to the existing state of confusion. The study revealed that misfit could be perceived as many different things, depending on a person’s underlying beliefs and world view. Consequently, how one sees misfit is “in the eye of the beholder.”

The sample of South African misfitting employees appeared to perceive and understand misfit in very much the same way as their Western counterparts in the US and UK. However, there are few idiosyncrasies worth highlighting. The view held by some South African participants that misfit may indeed be a “state of mind” that is unique to each and every individual is a novel finding that could introduce a new research direction. It is also noteworthy that some South African employee misfits conceptualised misfit in both a negative and positive way. This finding seems to contradict the prevailing view in the literature that misfit is an undesirable state that should be avoided at all costs.

One particular respondent conceptualised misfit in a way that, in the opinion of the researcher, could revolutionise our understanding and usage of the term. This respondent described a misfit using the term ‘outlier’, a statistical term that has been used to indicate that something is distant or aloof from the rest of the crowd. The participant indicated that using this term removes the negative connotation that has been associated with misfit. He stated that two kinds of outliers exist in organisations; the positive and negative. Positive outliers are of tremendous benefit to the organisation and should be nurtured and retained. On the other hand, negative

outliers could be viewed as destructive to the organisation and their services should be terminated.

The significance of using different approaches such as in-depth interviews, as in this study, or causal mapping to broaden our understanding of what misfit means to individuals, is highlighted by Talbot and Billsberry (2008, p. 4) in the paragraph below:

In order to further our understanding of misfit, new approaches must be taken to explore what misfit means to people and what factors are seen to be causing this state in individuals. It is anticipated that by interviewing people who perceive themselves not to fit in at work and mapping their perceptions of misfit, an initial understanding and tentative taxonomy of misfit may be developed. Further research will be based on this underpinning, such as ‘do misfits leave?’ and ‘is misfit necessarily negative?’ Accordingly, an initial qualitative exploration may pave the way for future large scale, quantitative studies (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, p. 4).

The current study attempted to address some of the concerns and suggestions presented by Talbot and Billsberry (2008) and highlighted in the above excerpt by exploring what misfit means to individuals using in-depth interviews with minimal prompting. As discussed previously, most of what had been documented in the extant literature about the meaning of misfit was confirmed except for a few idiosyncrasies which were unique to South African employees, such as misfit being perceived as a “state of mind” and possibly the understanding that misfit may be a positive or negative condition which was a shift from the traditional thinking that misfit is all negative.

It is important to state at this juncture, that the current study was unable to produce a clear, concise and accurate definition of misfit in one sentence which reflected the participants' underlying understanding. This challenge echoes the research to date that describes the field of fit and misfit as being fraught with definitional inconsistencies (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010). Based on the feedback obtained during the interviews, the researcher constructed a definition that, in his opinion, accurately sums up the participants' sentiments around the concept of misfit. This definition is presented below:

An outlier (or misfit) could be 'a state of mind or a psychological experience or an external dissimilarity that differentiates one person from the next either in a positive or negative way.'

The above definition is ground-breaking in several areas:

- Firstly, it presents a new subtle term that could be used in place of misfit, namely outlier. The use of the term outlier instead of misfit reduces the defensiveness displayed by individuals when mentioning misfit, as it is viewed in a very negative light and is akin to admitting failure which could result in various deleterious effects.
- Secondly, it offers three lenses through which misfit could be perceived; "a state of mind", "a psychological experience" or "an external dissimilarity." The existing literature adopts a singular, myopic approach by defining misfit mainly on the basis of it being a measurement of differences in some external characteristic (Billsberry & De Cooman, 2010; Talbot & Billsberry, 2008). This one dimensional approach to misfit is still evident in a recent paper by Cooper-Thomas and Wright (2013, p. 31) who defined misfit as "a perceived mismatch between the individual and the environment on a dimension that was salient to one or both parties."

- Thirdly, it attempts to portray that an outlier (or misfit) can be either positive or negative. This contradicts the dominant thinking around misfit hitherto that it is an undesirable, negative condition to be avoided at all costs (Billsberry, 2008).

5.3 Discussion of the Factors that Influence South African Employees' Sense of Misfit

Talbot *et al.* (2007, p. 2) asserted that “thus far therefore, there have been a number of studies investigating how individuals fit in organisations and there have been relatively few investigating what it means to be a misfit at work.” They add that “what has not been answered in these studies is what causes misfit, nor how misfit can be conceptualised” (Talbot *et al.*, 2007, p. 2). A serious attempt was made in Section 5.2 above to address the question of how misfit can be conceptualised. What causes a person to misfit at work will be addressed in this present section, initially by presenting a few notable results from past studies and then discussing the findings of the current study.

Hollyoak (2010, p. 1) stated that “one crucial step forward is to explore the nature of misfit and how it might be defined and once done, the challenge is to look at the causes of misfit.” Furthermore, as highlighted previously (see Section 5.2 above), crucial to our understanding of misfit is to explore “what factors are seen to cause this state in individuals” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2008, p. 4). Billsberry *et al.* (2005b, p. 558) argued that “they are an enormous number of factors that might be expected to influence PO fit given the diversity in people.”

The scarce research to date has revealed that there may indeed be a wide range of factors that could influence a person's sense of misfit. In an exploratory study into the construction of fit and misfit, Talbot *et al.* (2007), using causal mapping supplemented with a projective technique known as the “Blob Tree”, found that

there were a total of 44 root causes of misfit. Their findings are encapsulated in the paragraph below:

Of the 44 root causes of misfit, identified from the causal maps, the vast majority related to either, the organisation's culture, policies and procedures or related from managerial action or inaction. Again, the participants looked within themselves for the causes of misfit and gave examples such as being shy, highly qualified or having an illness. Of the root causes of misfit only two stemmed from colleagues (5%) and one from the job itself (2%) (Talbot *et al.*, 2007, p. 7).

In addition to the root causes, other factors were identified that could possibly influence an individual's sense of misfit. These are captured by Talbot *et al.* (2007, p. 8) in the following excerpt:

In relation to misfit, the factors mentioned ranged from broken promises, political correctness and the slow pace of work to perceiving that the organisation had changed and no longer feeling needed. Interestingly, the causes of misfit mentioned as part of the causal chain were somewhat different to the root causes. Whereas the root causes of misfit generally related to the organisational policies, procedures and culture, management and the individuals themselves, the causal chain included 26 references to emotions and psychological states. The commonly cited emotion was one of 'frustration' mentioned by 70% of the participants. Such feelings were never the root cause of misfit (Talbot *et al.*, 2007, p. 8).

In a later study, Talbot and Billsberry (2010) explored the differences between fit and misfit in a much larger and more diverse sample of employees using the same

methodology as Talbot *et al.*'s (2007) study that is, causal mapping. It was found that "poor organisational practices, mismanagement and imposed, petty bureaucracy were shown to cause strong perceptions of misfit" (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 4). The results confirmed many of the findings presented in Talbot *et al.*'s (2007) study and highlighted above.

Wright and Cooper-Thomas (2009) present the most comprehensive picture of the extent and pervasiveness of factors that may be attributable to employee misfit perceptions. Following an extensive review of the literature and an on-line survey on a sample of New Zealand and Australian employees, they concluded that perceptions of PO fit may be influenced by a variety of factors which they conveniently grouped into individual differences, demographics, organisational and role factors. In terms of individual differences, the following factors were presented: values, cognitive style, anti-social and hostile behaviour, shyness, work skills, tenure, and relationship disinterest.

A range of demographic variables were perceived to influence misfit perceptions such as: sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, race, age and stage of development. The organisational elements that were highlighted in their study included: policies, constant change and upheaval, a competitive climate, high employee turnover, divisive cliques and a lack of social opportunities. A variety of role factors were suggested by previous research and the study participants which refer to: time pressure, role changes, type of employment contract (for example, part-time, casual, and so forth), group/team disruptions, professional distance, feedback and norms/practices.

The findings of this study confirmed many of the causal factors previously identified in the misfit literature. In addition, this study produced a set of new factors that have previously not been mentioned and are deemed worthy of greater scholarly attention. For ease of convenience, the causal factors were grouped into individual, organisational and external factors. Forty dimensions were identified

from respondents' feedback in this study, making this one of the most comprehensive lists known to the researcher to date. It should be noted that due to the sheer numbers of factors presented, the researcher considered it economical to discuss only those factors which were different from those identified in the literature.

Race was cited by the largest number of participants (30 out of 40) as influencing a person's sense of misfit. This finding seems to contradict the views held by Elfenbein and O'Reilly (2007) and Jackson and Chung (2008) who suggested that "a person's fit or misfit in an organisation is not due to people being similar or dissimilar at a superficial level but rather that whether one fits or not at a deeper, psychological construct" (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 3). Furthermore, Talbot and Billsberry's (2010, p. 3) research showed that "demographic factors were infrequently cited, either in relation to fit or misfit perceptions, which suggests that neither fit nor misfit results from people being similar or different in race, age, gender religion education or socio-economic background." The overwhelming endorsement of race as a major predictor of misfit in this study reflects the prevailing obsession with race in the South African work context. Twenty years after the abolition of apartheid and the advent of democracy in South Africa, race is still blamed for many of the inefficiencies and setbacks that organisations and their employees experience (Bendix, 2010). South African's fixation with race was expressively captured by Stokes (2009, p. 1) as follows:

Months after the country's fourth 'free and fair' elections, South Africa remains as obsessed with race as the day the Nationalist Party implemented apartheid as a policy back in 1948. You cannot apply for a job, approach a government department for a tender, or employ or promote an employee without first ticking a range of race-based checkboxes. South Africa's employee equity policies must appear laughable to the multinational companies that ply their trade in truly integrated

societies. Corporate South Africa is forced to contend with an entirely new category of government imposed regulation. We no longer ask whether an employee can do the job; but focus instead on whether the appointment advances the company's racial dynamic (Stokes, 2009, p. 1).

The preoccupation with race in South African workplaces has been further highlighted by Oosthuizen and Naidoo (2010) in their study that investigated attitudes to and experience of employment equity. They found that “reverse discrimination and racism were demarcated as the main experience of non-management employees” (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010, p. 1). In addition, it was stated that “for previously disadvantaged employees, the main concerns were lack of training and development, whereas for the non-previously disadvantaged, the primary concerns were reverse discrimination, racism and victimisation” (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010, p. 1). It was also further noted that “people who are stuck in this race mind-set often play the ‘blame game’ when things don’t go according to plan or when they discover that they are not in alignment with other members of society or with organisations” (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010). Pather’s (2013, p. 13) article encapsulates the current trepidations about race in South Africa in the excerpt below:

It’s also an inconvenient truth about present day South Africa that even after two decades of a new non-racial democratic dispensation, many of its citizens – from all race groups, including Indians still appear obsessed with the notion of race. It’s so deeply embedded in their psyches; many apparently find it hard to wash off. We may take credit in having an impressive non-racial constitution that measures among the best in the world and take pride in having established progressive institutions like equality courts and the human rights commission to protect us from the racist

behaviour and attitudes, but old habits, it would appear die hard. So cheap racial stereotyping becomes common currency.

The results of this study further demonstrate that other demographic variables were also considered important in influencing a person's perceived sense of misfit among the sample of South African employee misfits. These variables include: gender (23 out of 40 participants), educational background (16 out of 40 participants), individual culture (15 out of 40 participants), social status (10 out of 40 participants), sexual orientation (seven out of 40 participants), religion (seven out of 40 participants), age (four out of 40 participants) and language (three out of 40 participants). While it has been noted that "deeper" dimensions such as a person's values were considered more important than "surface" factors such as demographics in influencing misfit (Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2007), other studies have acknowledged the significance of demographic factors in causing misfit (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010; Wright & Cooper-Thomas, 2009).

Gender issues still dominate the discourse in South Africa. Commenting on the sorry state of gender equality in South Africa De Matos-Ala (2012, p. 1) asserted that "culturally, the patriarchal status quo remains relatively unchanged, and unless the mind-set behind gender discriminatory practices is challenged through debate, media campaigns, education, and so forth, nothing much is going to change." The gender inequality debate in South Africa is eloquently captured by Morna (2006, p. 1) in the paragraph below:

Patriarchy is one common denominator that reaches across all 11 ethnic groups in our nation. South Africa is supposed to be a democracy. We should be a country that is 'of the people, by the people and for the people,' not 'of men, by men and for men.' Obtaining gender equity has been a huge challenge for South Africa because it is a country of many

cultures, and each is steeped in traditions that often run contrary to male/female equality.

The issue of gender inequality has spilled over into South African workplaces. Davis (2006) reported that women continue to be unfairly discriminated against in terms of lower salary scales for doing the same jobs as their male counterparts, being overlooked for promotion in favour of far less qualified and experienced male colleagues, and so forth. Thus, study participants raising gender as a critical predictor of misfit perceptions is considered relevant. It should, however, be noted that the majority of study participants were female (60%, that is, 24 out of 40) and this could have played a role in highlighting the significance of gender as a potential predictor of misfit perceptions.

The other demographic variables that are potential predictors of misfit such as individual culture, social status, language and religion are features of the multicultural South African society. One would therefore expect these issues to be salient in this context, especially in instances where people are discriminated against because they differ from the majority in terms of the aforementioned demographic factors. For example, language seems to be an issue that creates tension in the workplace and this could trigger feelings of misfit in individuals.

Although South Africa has 11 official languages, English appears to be the primary language of communication in the workplace. An employee that is conversant with one of the ethnic languages such as Xhosa may feel ostracised on entering the workplace and this could lead to the person developing feelings of not fitting in. A similar argument could be presented for other demographic variables such as social status, religion, and so forth. According to Human (1996), the concepts of managing diversity and multiculturalism are not fully understood in most countries in the democratic world and more particularly in South Africa. Effectively, managing diversity “is often hampered by an over-emphasis on ‘national culture’ at

the expense of broader individual identity and power relations” (Human, 1996, p. 46).

Personality was the second most cited causal factor (27 out of 40 participants) of misfit. This result echoed Wright and Cooper-Thomas’s (2009, p. 21) assertion that “sexual orientation emerged at the individual level, as well as specific personality orientations, such as being shy, hostile, anti-social, and disinterested in social relationships at work.” Personality was also alluded to by Talbot *et al.* (2007, p. 7) who stated that “again, the participants looked within themselves for the causes of misfit and gave examples such as being shy, highly qualified or having an illness.” Participants in this study mentioned various personality characteristics as possible predictors of misfit such as: negative, shy, aggressive or assertive individuals. In the literature, the five-factor model (FFM) has been a popular framework to describe the prominent features of an individual’s personality (Goldberg, 1990). The FFM comprises the personality dimensions of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Trull & Sher, 1994).

The first three dimensions listed are considered pertinent to a discussion of personality as a predictor of misfit. Judge, Heller, and Mount (2002, p. 531) note that “because of their essentially negative nature, neurotic individuals experience more negative life events than other individuals, in part because they select themselves into situations that foster negative affect.” They add that “to the extent that such situations occur on or with respect to the job; they would lead to diminished levels of job satisfaction” (Judge *et al.*, 2002, p. 531). Thus, it can be posited that neurotic individuals will tend to view themselves in a negative light in the workplace and thus have a greater propensity to perceive misfit than more positive people.

Vogt and Laher (2009, p. 40) describe extraversion as “a general tendency toward sociability, assertiveness, activeness and being talkative.” Similarly, Rothmann and Coetzer (2003, p. 69) note that, “extraversion includes traits such as sociability,

assertiveness, activity and talkativeness.” They further state that “extroverts are energetic and optimistic” in contrast with introverts who are “reserved, rather than unfriendly, independent, rather than followers” (Rothmann & Coetzer, 2003, p. 69). The respondents in this study cited introverts as being the most vulnerable to becoming misfits. Introverts are mistakenly perceived as being anti-social and lacking the inclination to work in teams. Consequently, they are ostracised in the workplace and this may trigger feelings of misfit.

Openness to experience is associated with “scientific and artistic creativity, divergent thinking, low religiosity, and political liberalism” (Judge *et al.*, 2002, p. 531). Vogt and Laher (2009, p. 40) define openness to experience as “the degree to which a person is imaginative and curious as opposed to concrete minded and narrow thinking.” Employees displaying this trait normally “think outside the box” and are thus perceived as not fitting in with the crowd. Consequently, these employees feel that they misfit, albeit in a positive way.

Factors external to the workplace such as financial responsibilities, family pressure, high unemployment rates, and so forth, were also identified by the study participants as potential predictors of employee misfit. As far as the researcher is aware, this study represents one of the first to acknowledge that factors external to organisations may play a significant role in determining whether or not one fits in at work.

Talbot and Billsberry (2010) alluded to the possible importance of these external factors in their study comparing fit and misfit; however, this was not explored further. They found that people who felt that they were fitting in well with their organisations cited job embeddedness dimensions (links to their communities) more often than individuals who misfitted (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 4) concluded that “however, factors outside of work are beyond the boundaries of PE fit, despite calls in the literature to consider these (see Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005).”

In this study, a few employees (four out of 40) cited financial responsibilities in terms of family commitments and other living expenses that force employees to take on jobs that they are ill-suited to. This was prevalent among people who are sole breadwinners and single parents. Family pressure (two out of 40) also was mentioned as a possible causal factor. In this regard, participants stated that their parents and immediate family placed undue pressure on them to consider careers which were perceived to be status oriented such as accountants, engineers, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, and so forth, rather than jobs that were congruent with their values, knowledge, skills and abilities. As a consequence, these individuals develop feelings of misfit.

The high unemployment rate was also referred to by some employees (two out of 40) as a potential causal factor of misfit. Unemployment in South Africa was estimated at 25% of the working age population for the first quarter of 2013 (Statistics, South Africa, 2013). As a result of the scarcity of jobs, many participants indicated that they have no alternative but to accept any position regardless of whether they fit in or not, simply to survive.

An unexpected finding emanating from this research study relates to the considerably small number of participants (two out of 40) who cited a person's Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) status as a predictor of misfit in the workplace. This response is ironical considering the fact that South Africa has one the highest population of employees that are Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) positive. These employees are often ostracized in the workplace resulting in them feeling left out, not wanted or even misfitting (Jantjie, 2009). Hall (2004) as cited in Jantjie (2009, p. 72) stated that "HIV/AIDS will have an effect on jobs in terms of job load, stress level, job satisfaction, performance and relationship with co-workers and may ultimately influence the employee's decision either to leave or stay or stay with the employer." The inconsistent response in this study could be attributed to the fact

that HIV/AIDS is a very sensitive issue and that many employees are reluctant to speak openly about it for fear of stigmatisation.

In total, the findings of this study into the causes of misfit generally confirm the extant literature. However, there were factors that were novel and possibly unique to the South African context that were considered significant potential predictors of misfit.

5.4 Discussion of the Consequences of South African Employees' Misfit

Previous studies examining misfit have tentatively demonstrated its association with a variety of individual and organisational outcomes. For example, misfit has been linked to stress (Edwards & Cooper, 1990; Le Fevre *et al.*, 2003), a decline in performance (Trautmann *et al.*, 2011), job dissatisfaction (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2005; Lovelace & Rosen, 1996), deviant behaviour (Liao *et al.*, 2004), proactive behaviours (Devloo *et al.*, 2011; Simmering *et al.*, 2003) and employee turnover (Sacco & Schmitt, 2005). Ostroff, Shin and Kinicki (2005) as cited in Naus *et al.* (2007, p. 198) stated that “incongruence ... is likely to result in frustration, difficulty in working effectively with others, lack of role clarity, and so forth.” This section will discuss the consequences of misfit as reflected in both the literature, and from the findings of this study.

As highlighted in Chapter Four, the data revealed that there were two major types of consequences of employee misfit. The first was understood to have an impact on the individual (individual consequences) and the second affected the organisation (organisational consequences).

A considerable number of participants (29 out of 40) indicated that a person's job performance declines as a result of misfit. This finding lends credence to previous empirical studies that showed a negative relationship between misfit and performance. For example, Trautmann *et al.* (2011, p. 339) demonstrated that misfit

had “adverse effects and interfered with job performance measures.” In an earlier study, Fuller and Kaplan (2004) showed that cognitive misfit negatively impacted on task performance in a sample of auditors. Takase *et al.* (2001) also found a negative association between misfit and performance in a sample of Australian nurses. The findings of Chan’s (1996) study appear to contradict the general consensus that misfit is negatively related to performance. Chan (1996, p. 194) examined the relationships among cognitive misfit, job performance, and actual individual turnover after three years in a sample of engineers. The findings showed that “cognitive misfit was uncorrelated with job performance” (Chan, 1996, p. 194).

The findings of this study have also shown that misfit could have a variety of deleterious effects on a person’s psychology, physiology and health. A large number of participants (25 out of 40) indicated that misfit causes an increase in stress. This study also found that misfit may lead to a drop in self-confidence (19 out of 40 participants), depression (18 out of 40 participants), a negative impact on emotions (14 out of 40 participants), a decrease in motivation (11 out of 40 participants), ill-health for example, high blood pressure, ulcers, cancer, and so forth. (seven out of 40 participants), resentment (five out of 40 participants), suicide (three out of 40 participants), uneasiness (three out of 40 participants), unhappiness (three out of 40 participants), a drop in concentration (20 out of 40 participants), confusion (two out of 40 participants), dejection (two out of 40 participants), frustration (two out of 40 participants) and fear (two out of 40 participants).

The effects of misfit on stress levels reported in this study, lend credence to previous research that has unequivocally demonstrated an association between misfit and stress or stress-related symptoms. Edwards and Cooper (1990, p. 293) contend that “the person-environment (PE) fit approach to stress has gained widespread acceptance in the literature.” They further stated that “a lack of correspondence between characteristics of the person (for example, abilities, values) and the environment (for example, demands, supplies) could generate deleterious psychological, physiological and behavioural outcomes, which

eventually result in increased morbidity and mortality” (Edwards & Cooper, 1990, p. 293).

Le Fevre *et al.* (2003) asserted that a mismatch between a person and the environment causes an increase in stress. Likewise, Siegall and McDonald (2004) showed that the larger the incongruence between a person’s values and the organisation’s, the more burnout the person will experience. Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2005, p. 93) demonstrated that a “misfit between individual and aggregate work group hurriedness impact satisfaction, psychological strain and helping behaviour.” Lovelace and Rosen’s (1996, p. 703) study on a diverse group of managers found that “poor organisational fit was associated with job dissatisfaction, intentions to leave and greater levels of stress.”

Shaw and Gupta (2004, p. 847) showed that “supplies-values misfit is related to lower well-being levels when job performance is low but that this effect is attenuated when job performance is high.” They add that “there is consistent and compelling evidence that fit (or misfit) between individual preferences for various task characteristics and the characteristics actually present in the job is related to a variety of health and well-being outcomes” (Shaw & Gupta, 2004, p. 847).

The results of this study also revealed a link between misfit and deviant behaviour. A fair number of respondents (18 out of 40) indicated that employee misfits often take unauthorised sick leave, extended lunch breaks and other forms of subversive behaviour that may be directed at other individuals or the organisation. This finding supports the results of a study conducted by Liao *et al.* (2004) who found that employee demographic- and personality-based dissimilarities were significantly related to deviant behaviour.

A small number of participants (2 out 40) alluded to the fact that being a misfit may be an opportunity for self-advancement. The participants indicated that the state of misfit may turn out to be a “wake up call” or a “blessing in disguise” to look at

oneself and identify areas that need improvement either in terms of education or skills so that one can become more marketable. Simmering *et al.* (2003, p. 954) argued that “conscientious individuals should be more likely to engage in development, particularly when they are experiencing person-environment misfit.” They add that “such individuals can use development to proactively improve their fit, leading to better fit at a later point in time” (Simmering *et al.*, 2003, p. 954).

The findings of this research study also revealed that misfit could have an impact on the organisation. Previous research investigating the consequences of misfit has mainly focused on its individual impact and organisational effects have rarely been alluded to. Thus, the results of this study represent a major advance in terms of demonstrating that the effects of misfit are pervasive at both the individual and organisational level. The overwhelming majority of participants (36 out of 40) stated that misfit causes a decline in customer service levels.

Some respondents believed strongly that many employee misfits lose interest in their jobs which spills over into the way they interact with their customers either through email, telephone or face-to-face. Although the researcher is not aware of any research that has linked misfit to a decline in customer service levels, a possible source for justification of this association could lie in the area of PE fit research. For example, a study conducted by Fritzsche, Powell, and Hoffman (1999) on a sample of 90 customer service representatives demonstrated that PE congruence has a positive impact on customer service performance. Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume that low PE fit or misfit might cause a decline in customer service performance.

A substantial number of respondents (35 out of 40) also indicated that misfit leads to a decline in the overall productivity of an organisation. One respondent remarked that organisational productivity drops as a result of many misfits “doing the bare minimum to get by” while others could be “a destructive force within an organisation.” This respondent claimed that “this has a chain reaction from

negatively affecting the morale of co-workers to reducing the effectiveness of work teams.”

A large number of participants (27 out of 40) stated that employee misfits often become “toxic employees” and that this may result in a toxic organisational environment. Bitting (2006, p. 1) provides a clear synopsis of how harmful a “toxic employee” can be in the paragraph below:

A ‘toxic employee’ can sap the energy right out of your company. This toxic employee – true to the name – can poison the business atmosphere where you work, and can make it difficult, if not impossible, to manage effectively. The toxicity is insidious, and can drag you, your staff and co-workers into an abyss of low morale and decreased productivity (Bitting, 2006, p. 1).

Bitting (2006, pp. 1 – 2) lists five characteristics of the toxic employee:

- The toxic employee “is overly negative, and always blames other people for his problems,”
- The toxic employee “is a master of illusion. Instead of spending his energies working, he spends his energies pretending to work,”
- The toxic employee “is creative that is, creative in finding ways to draw unsuspecting co-workers into games like ‘one-up-man-ship’, ‘petty bickering’ and ‘I-can-make-myself-look-good-while-doing-absolutely-nothing’ (also known as ‘grab-the-glory’),”
- The toxic employee “sabotages others’ efforts by backstabbing or by withholding information,”

- The toxic employee “can be difficult to terminate, because he has aligned himself with a key decision-maker (a ‘protector’) in the organisation who seems blind to the negative effects of the toxic behaviour (often he does this by cultivating the protector’s friendship outside of the workplace – a.k.a. the buddy system).”

Gilbert, Carr-Ruffino, Ivancevich and Konopaske (2012, p. 30) noted that “toxic workplaces can be detrimental to both employee health and emotional well-being.” They list three factors that contribute to toxic workplaces: “(a) colleagues who do not feel the need to self-censor their behaviour, (b) overly demanding bosses, and (c) an over focus on self-advancement” (Gilbert *et al.*, 2012, p. 30). Identifying misfit as a factor that may cause toxic workplaces is a novel finding that is worthy of further exploration.

A fair number of participants (20 out of 40) also revealed that misfit could lead to a decline in a company’s reputation. Many of these participants substantiated this view by stating that, because misfit causes a drop in client service levels, this will impact negatively on the reputation of the company in the eyes of various stakeholders. Fombrun (1996) as cited in Burke (2011, p. 3) defines company reputation as “the overall estimation in which a particular company is held by its various constituents.” Zyglidopoulos (2001) defines it as “the set of knowledge and emotions held by various stakeholder groups concerning aspects of a firm and its activities” (Burke, 2011, p. 3). Love and Kraatz (2009, p. 314) stated that “audiences bestow such reputation when they perceive that firms have delivered on their commitments, are trustworthy and credible, exhibit high performance, and acted in normatively or culturally valued ways, among other things.”

An increase in employee turnover was also cited by a number respondents (14 out of 40), as an organisational-specific consequence of misfit. This lends credence to the findings of previous studies examining the link between misfit and intent to

leave or staff turnover. For example, Schneider (1987a) proposed that people are attracted and selected into organisations on the basis of fit and when an individual discovers that he or she does not fit in, he or she will eventually leave.

Sacco and Schmitt (2005) examined employees' demographic misfit in relation to co-workers' demographics as a predictor of staff turnover risk over time. The findings supported the association between demographic misfit and staff turnover. Wheeler *et al.* (2007, pp. 212 – 213) found that “an individual who feels misfit with an organisation will only leave the organisation if he or she believes that alternative job opportunities exist.” Kym and Park (1992) examined the effects of cultural fit/misfit on the productivity and turnover of information systems personnel. The findings indicate that fit/misfit is associated with staff turnover. In an earlier study, Chan (1996, p. 194) found that “cognitive misfit was uncorrelated with job performance, but provided significant and substantial incremental validity in predicting actual turnover over the predictability provided by performance.”

The findings of this study have also demonstrated a link between misfit and team dynamics. A few participants (seven out of 40) indicated that employee misfits have a negative impact on team dynamics. The literature review showed that there is a paucity of research that has explored misfit in the context of work teams. In a rare study, Hobman and Bordia (2006) investigated the role of team identification in the dissimilarity and conflict relationship. The results reflected that value dissimilarity was positively associated with relationship conflict within a sample of 27 MBA student teams.

Werbel and Johnson (2001, p. 227) proposed that “effective use of person-group fit will create both more cohesive work units and more effectively functioning work units.” Conversely, it is not presumptuous to assume that a lack of person-group fit will result in divided and dysfunctional work groups. Vogel and Feldman (2009, p. 71) stated that “in general, achieving fit with team members has been linked positively to the quality of work relationships” and “it can enhance compliance with

important group norms and help group performance.” In contrast, misfit with team members could be associated with a breakdown in work relationships that may result in group disunity and low morale and performance.

Many of the misfit consequences cited by the participants in this study were of a deleterious nature. This is generally in line with the results of previous studies reported in the extant literature. A few respondents (10 out of 40) however, mentioned that misfit could indeed result in an increase in the innovative and creative potential in an organisation. In this regard, one respondent remarked that: “misfits can be a creative spark that an organisation may need when introducing new strategies and products.”

Schneider (1987a) cautions against the practice of recruiting new employees solely on the basis of fit as this could result in a situation where organisations become “ingrown” and thus, “incapable of adapting to new situations” (Talbot *et al.*, 2007, p. 5). Instead, Schneider (1987a) as cited in Talbot *et al.* (2007, p. 5) “stresses the importance of organisations recruiting people who do not fit to improve the chances of its long term survival.” This view contradicts certain studies that demonstrated a positive association between high levels of fit and creative behaviour. For example, Choi (2004) explored the link between PE fit and creative behaviour and the differential impacts of supplies-values and demand-abilities versions of fit in a sample of 344 undergraduate management students attending classes at a business school in the US. The findings suggest a positive association between fit and creative behaviour. Puccio, Talbot and Joniak (2000) examined the concept of creative performance in the workplace through a PE fit model. The results showed that the “style match between the individual and the environment was associated with higher levels of product novelty and resolution” (Puccio *et al.*, 2000, p. 227).

5.5 Discussion of South African Employees' Misfit Coping Behaviours

One of the critical questions challenging PE fit scholars is the question of how individuals respond to misfit. The general consensus is that, on discovering that they do not fit in, people will begin looking for another job and eventually leave their organisation (Schneider, 1987a). In reality however, this is not the case as there are many factors, such as the lack of available jobs that prevent people from automatically resorting to this option. Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010, p. 39) highlight the intriguing question of how employees respond to misfit in the following excerpt:

Although the ASA model proposes that people who are misfits will leave an organisation, the process by which this occurs is ill-defined. Anyone who has work experience knows that there are a few 'oddballs' who do not fit in with others in the workplace. One study reported that they may not leave, but rather stay and act 'as centres of rebellion, disaffection and malcontent.' Some of them may stay for reasons of embeddedness or lack of other alternatives, but we know little about how they behave or cope with feelings of misfit. Do these individuals recognise themselves as misfits? Do they see value in misfitting? How do others around them react to their organisational membership? Many questions remain to be answered.

Wheeler *et al.* (2005, pp. 288 – 289) suggested that individuals adopt the following decision-making process in response to misfit:

First, individuals will assess whether they are willing to adapt to realign their fit with the organisation. If adaptation is acceptable, they will adapt. If adaptation is not acceptable, the

individuals will begin to assess the available outside alternatives. If the outside alternatives are desirable, they will exit the organisation. However, if the outside alternatives are not desirable, the individuals will deal with the misfit in one of three ways: (1) in-action, (2) voice, or (3) impression management.

The findings of this study support many of the alternatives outlined by Wheeler *et al.* (2005) above and Lee and Mitchell (1994). A number of participants (26 out of 40) indicated that leaving the organisation is a likely option should they develop feelings of misfit. However, the timing of this exit was not clear; the participants were divided as to when it is likely to occur. Some felt that individuals who develop misfit perceptions resign from their organisations as soon as possible, while others believe that leaving is the last resort after all other options have been exhausted and when there are potential job opportunities in the labour market.

Based on Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model, Lee and Maurer (1997) as cited in Chang, Chi and Chuang (2010, pp. 571 – 573) suggest four decision paths that could be used to justify the responses from some of misfits in this study with regard to leaving their organisations:

In *path 1*, a shock triggers the enactment of a pre-existing action plan. If the shock matches the action plan, employees leave without making fit judgments and without considering job alternatives. *Path 2* describes how a shock causes employees to reassess their fit with the organisation in terms of evaluating the compatibility between the shock and their image; if a shock leads to a judgment of misfit, employees leave without searching for job alternatives. In *path 3*, a shock prompts the reassessment of employee fit with the organisation. The difference between path 3 and path 2 is that

employees in path 3 may possess one or more job alternatives (that is, high perceived marketability or job mobility), while employees in path 2 may not have any job alternatives at hand. In such circumstances, employees choose to stay only if the current organisation meets their preferences better (that is, low perceived PO fit). However, when employees perceive a misfit with the organisation or competing organisations fit their image or preferences better (that is, low perceived PO fit), then they are highly likely to choose to leave. Finally, for *path 4*, no shock occurs. Gradually, some employees come to feel that they no longer fit their job or organisation (that is, low levels of perceived demand-abilities fit and PO fit), which can lead to individuals quitting without suitable job alternatives. These employees are said to follow *path 4a*. Other employees who perceive misfit with their jobs may engage in the turnover process that follows traditional theories. These employees are said to follow *path 4b*.

The findings of this research study also revealed several other coping behaviours that are deemed worthy of mention. A number of participants (18 out of 40) indicated that they perceive being vocal about the issues causing misfit with the hope of alleviating or eliminating its effects as a significant coping mechanism. In this regard, one participant remarked that “speaking out and confronting one’s manager can help one cope with one’s misfit.” This individual added that “very often, one’s manager can try and improve one’s working conditions or try and take steps to alleviate the causes of one’s misfit.”

The option of being vocal about issues causing misfit has received support in extant literature (Wheeler *et al.*, 2005). Voice has been defined as “an organisation’s members expression of their dissatisfaction directly to management or to some other authority to which management is subordinate or through general protest

addressed to anyone who cares to listen” (Hirschman, 1970 as cited in Wheeler *et al.*, 2005, p. 292). Wheeler *et al.* (2005, p. 292) stated that “in a situation of misfit, employees could voice concerns about their misfit and attempt changes in their job or the company to allow for the misfit.”

A group of respondents (16 out of 40) mentioned that employees often become oblivious to the issues causing their misfit as a way of coping with the condition. This particular coping mechanism has been alluded to by Wheeler *et al.* (2005, p. 292) as “in-action”; in this context, “the employee just ignores the misfit altogether.” One respondent elaborated on in-action as follows:

You can grin and bear it and continue to be unhappy in your job because you have no alternative. Consider the issues in South Africa; high unemployment rates, job reservation favouring Blacks, high taxation, and so forth. All these factors mentioned force someone like myself, who is a misfit to stay in my job and become oblivious to issues.

Engaging in proactive behaviour is a useful strategy to cope with misfit that was cited by a number of study participants (13 out of 40). This finding gives credence to Simmering *et al.* (2003, p. 954), who argued that “conscientious individuals should be more likely to engage in development, particularly when they are experiencing misfit.” In a more recent study, Devloo *et al.* (2011) found support for a link between demand-abilities misfit and feedback seeking behaviour in a sample of Spanish and Belgian managers.

This study also unearthed several other coping strategies that South African employee misfits engage in, such as “requesting for a transfer to another department” in the hope that conditions might be different there (13 out of 40 respondents), “doing the bare minimum” as prescribed by one’s job description (seven out of 40 respondents), “seeking psychological counselling” to help deal

with one's misfit condition (four out of 40 respondents) and excluding oneself from the mainstream by "working independently."

5.6 Discussion of Approaches that South African Organisations could use to Effectively Manage their Misfitting Employees

There is a paucity of literature on how organisations can effectively manage their misfitting employees in order to creatively harness their potential. Indeed, the researcher is not aware of any studies that have investigated this issue. The reality is that at any given point in time, many organisations will be populated by a number of employee misfits who are either selected into these organisations or evolve into this state over time. Many of these organisations are faced with the dilemma of either frustrating these misfits so that they leave voluntarily or retaining them by finding ways to creatively harness their potential, resulting in a win-win situation for both parties. While it is not unreasonable to assume that terminating the services of negative outliers (destructive misfits) is a logical decision, positive outliers represent an entirely different category of misfits. Positive outliers are usually very creative and innovative people who 'think outside the box'; such qualities may be desired by the organisation concerned. Consequently, it may be myopic for the organisation to paint all misfits with one brush by incorrectly assuming that they are destructive and should be encouraged to exit.

A wide range of strategies to effectively manage misfitting employees were recommended by participants in this study. These included: "training and development" to up-skill misfits so that they could eventually fit in (21 out of 40 respondents), "a change in company mind-set" to embrace positive outliers (or misfits) and diversity (19 out of 40 respondents), "psychological counselling" to help raise the self-esteem and confidence of misfits (13 out of 40 respondents), "relocating" misfits to other areas in the organisation where they fit in and perhaps make a positive difference (12 out of 40 respondents) and other systemic and structural changes enacted with the objective of creating an environment in which

misfits can realise their potential and contribute meaningfully to organisations' vision and mission.

5.7 Discussion of other Study Related Factors Surrounding Employees' Experiences of Misfit in the South African Workplace

There are many other factors surrounding the misfit experience that have yet to be explored by PE fit scholars. Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010, p. 39) raised awareness of these factors in the following excerpt:

We know little about how they behave or cope with feelings of misfit. Do these individuals recognise themselves as misfits? Do they see value in misfitting? How do others around them react to their organisational membership? Many questions remain to be answered.

The current research study aims to shed some light on four critical areas that are deemed significant to the misfit experience: misfit identification, co-worker reactions to misfits, manager/supervisor reactions to misfits and misfit dynamics

5.7.1 Misfit Identification

A critical question that has yet to be addressed is the question of whether misfits are keen to “come out into the open” and identify themselves as misfits. The overwhelming majority of participants (38 out of 40) indicated that they were not keen on identifying themselves as misfits to their managers, supervisors and co-workers. The most cited reason for taking this stand is fear of victimisation. This mentality may have its roots in the apartheid era in South Africa when there was a high level of distrust between black employees and their white colleagues who largely occupied managerial jobs (Bendix, 2010).

Although it has been almost 20 years since the demise of apartheid and the advent of democracy, many organisations in South Africa have yet to undergo radical transformation and embrace democratic principles and more progressive management philosophies and styles. Despite the enactment of many new progressive labour laws such the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and amendments, many employees in South Africa still feel marginalised. Consequently, it was not surprising that many of the participants in this study felt inhibited from disclosing their misfit condition for fear of reprisals.

The study participants mentioned several other reasons why they were not willing to reveal themselves as misfits, such as “being in denial” (nine out of 40 participants), “fear of rejection” (five out of 40 participants), “lack of confidence” (five out of 40 participants) and a “preference for covert behaviour” (four out of 40 participants). A number of respondents (14 out of 40) also indicated that an individual’s personality could determine whether they are prepared to identify themselves as misfits or not. For example, one respondent stated that “a misfit with a ‘strong’ personality will not be afraid of what people would think and would freely and openly discuss their misfit whereas an individual with a ‘weak’ personality will tend to hide their misfit for fear of being exposed and being embarrassed.”

A small number of participants (two out of 40) mentioned that they had no issues with identifying themselves as misfits. These individuals indicated that they were proud of being different and that society should value their uniqueness. For example, one participant boldly stated that: “I would wear a t-shirt with misfit written on it, because I would say to myself, I am a unique individual and that’s part of my personality.”

5.7.2 Co-Worker Reactions to Misfits

The study participants also noted that co-worker reactions to their misfitting colleagues were mainly negative. A large number of participants (38 out of 40) mentioned that they were ostracised by their co-workers once it was discovered that they were misfits. These participants felt that their co-workers were reluctant to associate with them even in a team environment. As a result, they felt alienated, shunned or isolated and this had a negative impact on their self-confidence. One participant stated that “misfits are isolated and in some instances, co-workers are really critical of misfits especially in the case of homosexuality.”

Gossiping is another undesirable reaction by co-workers to misfitting employees. This was cited by a number of study participants (23 out of 40). Gossip in the workplace pertains to spreading false information from one employee to another with malicious intent. A participant put gossiping by co-workers into perspective as follows:

My co-workers would gossip behind my back and spread rumours about me. They started up stories which were not actually true and spread it to all and sundry. Eventually, the entire office had a misplaced negative opinion about me. If you are not thick-skinned, you will crack under this type of pressure.

A number of respondents (16 out of 40) also noted that co-workers often engaged in antagonistic behaviour towards misfits. They cited various examples such as hostile, threatening, intimidating or verbally abusive behaviour. Such behaviour impacts negatively on the misfitting individual. For example, a participant stated that:

Misfits are always in the minority; obviously, your co-workers will always react negatively toward you. They will have something to say about you which will affect you psychologically.

The findings also reveal that co-workers may feel threatened by positive misfits. This insecurity triggers an antagonistic reaction. A respondent expressed his feelings in the excerpt below:

Co-workers are threatened by positive outliers. These good misfits tend to be creative and often expose the shortcomings of co-workers. Co-workers thus, become very vindictive and in some cases very aggressive towards these positive misfits. I am aware of a case where a good misfit was physically threatened by a co-worker.

The study also unearthed several other negative reactions from co-workers towards misfitting employees. These include: “setting you up” for failure (cited by 16 out of 40 participants), “being unsupportive” (12 out of 40 participants) and “engaging in pretentious behaviour” (cited by one out of 40 participants).

Although the dominant co-worker reactions appear to be of a negative nature, the findings also revealed that co-workers may engage in supportive behaviour towards misfits. A number of participants (18 out of 40) indicated that co-workers often showed sympathy towards misfits by offering assistance in the form of guidance, encouragement and standing up for them in cases of adversity. In this regard, a participant stated the following:

There are some good co-workers who will support you and then become friends with you and develop a working relationship ... make you feel welcome. In certain instances,

some co-workers will empower you to overcome your situation.

5.7.3 Manager/Supervisor Reactions to Misfits

A large number of participants (31 out of 40) in this study indicated that managers or supervisors frustrated the misfits in their organisations and in so doing encouraged their exit. A participant described their experience in the excerpt below:

In my case, my manager told me that she doesn't like me. She would discourage me and verbally abuse around others and sometimes even in front of customers. They try to scare you because you are a misfit ... it has an impact on your life.

The results also revealed that many managers or supervisors showed a high level of inaction when dealing with misfits. Twenty three out of 40 respondents said that, in their experience, many managers or supervisors did not have a concrete plan to deal with their misfitting employees. Their behaviour was described as reactionary rather than proactive. One particular respondent was caustic in his response when asked how his manager reacted to his misfit:

This is a very, very huge problem in the workplace because managers don't look for solutions. They don't have a plan. It is likely that they are looking to squeeze you out.

The findings of the research study also demonstrated that some managers or supervisors intervene in the lives of misfits to help alleviate or eliminate their condition, using various approaches such as “engaging in dialogue” (cited by 12 out of 40 respondents), “engaging in proactive behaviour” (12 out of 40 respondents), “training interventions” (six out of 40 respondents), “counselling” (four out of 40 respondents), “setting up employee wellness programs” (three out of

40 respondents) and “early identification of misfits” (cited by two out of 40 respondents) so that appropriate action can be taken before these individuals develop into full-blown misfits.

5.7.4 Misfit Dynamics

The process of becoming a misfit remains a relatively under-investigated area in organisational fit research (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010; Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). Billsberry *et al.* (2006, p. 12) asserted that “at present we know very little about the process of becoming a misfit.” Wheeler *et al.* (2005, p. 288) suggested that “an unplanned shock in the environment triggers the re-assessment of an individual’s fit with the environment.” These authors further contend that “misfit can be thought of as an incongruence occurring on any or all of the five dimensions of MDF” (Wheeler *et al.*, 2005, p. 288). More recently, there has been debate in the literature on whether individuals assess their misfit across multiple dimensions (for example, PO misfit, PJ misfit, PG misfit, and so forth.) or whether people form an overall sense of misfit (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010). This study set out to shed light on the process of how people form misfit perceptions. The findings show that the misfit process is understood to be occurring as a result of cognitive dissonance or instantaneously.

5.7.4.1 Cognitive Dissonance

A large number of participants (36 out of 40) indicated that, following a trigger event or stimulus, individuals undertake a cognitive appraisal of themselves and various aspects of their environment. Should dissonance occur as a result of this comparative exercise, an individual will develop feelings of not fitting in. Misfit with various facets of the environment may be combined to form an overarching sense of misfit. However, it is possible that individuals could misfit with one aspect of their environment (for example, job) and fit in with other facets (for example,

organisation or group). The salience of each dimension will determine their overall sense of misfit.

5.7.4.2 Instantaneous Process

A minority of participants (four out of 40) asserted that developing into a misfit is an instantaneous process. They indicated that it is unlikely that individuals will have the cognitive ability and time to engage in such a spurious exercise. Instead, an individual will develop an overarching sense of misfit in the presence or absence of a signal from the environment. Precisely how this occurs was not satisfactorily explained by this group of participants.

A single participant indicated that people who are misfits believe that they are misfits because of their negative state of mind. This individual stated that “whatever jobs or organisations these people find them in, they will always feel and behave like misfits because of their negative state of mind.”

5.7.5 Misfit Stages

The literature suggests that there may be more than one type of employee misfit residing in organisations (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010). These different types of individual misfits may reflect the different stages of evolution of the misfit condition. The results of this study confirm this previously held view that individuals often go through various stages of misfit before reaching their “tipping point.” This study has also unearthed a view that there exists only one type of misfit residing in South African organisations.

5.7.5.1 Multi-stage Misfit

The overwhelming majority of participants (35 out of 40) indicated that there is no one single type of misfit; instead, people may evolve into early misfits (Stage 1),

moderate misfits (Stage 2) and full-blown misfits (Stage 3). Depending on the severity of the dissonance, people may become full-blown misfits without proceeding through Stages 1 and 2.

5.7.5.2 Single-type Misfit

A few participants (five out of 40) stated that there is only one kind of misfit. They indicated that individuals cannot distinguish whether they are early or full-blown misfits. A particular individual summed this up by stating that: “a misfit is a misfit regardless of the degree of incongruence.”

5.8 The New Theory – A Conceptual Model

Although voluminous amounts of data characterise many grounded theory studies, this data is meaningless if it is not directed towards the development of a conceptual model which could have utility beyond the confines of this doctoral thesis. Indeed, Anderson (2008) as cited in Daniel (2009, p. 179) asserted that “data without a model is just noise.” Jones and Alony (2011, p. 15) succinctly capture the significance of conceptual model development in grounded theory research in the following excerpt:

The final result of research using grounded theory as a method of qualitative analysis is a model depicting the basic social processes of the phenomenon under study. It is through the articulation and explanation of these basic social processes that explanatory theory emerges.

Concerns have been raised by researchers about the lack of indigenous theory underpinning many PE fit and misfit studies (Edwards, 2008; Wheeler *et al.*, 2013). This research study attempts to address this issue by constructing an employee’s misfit conceptual model from the data obtained through face-to-face, in-depth

interviews using grounded theory techniques. The new model of employee misfit was illustrated in Chapter Four, Figure 4.7.

A detailed discussion of the model was presented in Chapter Four, Section 4.7. According to Figure 4.7 a wide range of causal factors may impact either individually or collectively on an individual employee. These factors are perceived to trigger an assessment of aspects of the environment or the environment as a whole through a cognitive appraisal process. This could result in cognitive dissonance and thus misfit. According to the overwhelming majority of participants, employees go through a series of stages of misfit or they can enter at any stage, depending on the severity of the dissonance or after a period of time has lapsed without any positive intervention by the organisation.

Once an individual employee develops perceptions of misfit, they may resort to a variety of coping behaviours before actually leaving the organisation. Employee misfits also experience a variety of consequences either at the individual or organisational level. Guided by the data emanating from the study participants, it was suggested that an individual's personality may act as a moderating variable at various points in the model.

5.9 Additional Literature Review

5.9.1 Schneider's (1987a) ASA Framework

Hollyoak (2010, p. 1) stated that "in the field of PO fit, Schneider's (1987a) ASA (attraction, selection, attrition) framework is one of the most cited theories." Billsberry (2007, p. 132) contends that "ASA theory was developed by Schneider (1983a, 1983b) and Schneider *et al.* (1995, 1998, 2000) as an explanation of why organisations attract, select, and retain similar types of people." The ASA theory proposes that people are attracted to, selected by and retained in organisations when

they are similar to other people employed in those organisations (Schneider, 1987a, 1987b; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995).

According to Schneider (1987a) as cited in Hollyoak (2010, 1), “present day practitioners and HR recruiters alike seek such a situation because the resulting state of homogeneity that occurs as a result of having ‘same’ people as theorised by Schneider allows and facilitates coordination, communication and team working amongst the people there because they share many personal attributes.” Schneider (1987a) as cited in Billsberry (2007, p. 132) argues that this homogeneity or similarity “limits the actions of the organisation owing to the fact that it occupies a constrained niche of like-minded employees sharing similar values, personalities, and attitudes.” This effect was labelled the “homogeneity hypothesis” and it was predicted that “it will cause organisational dysfunctionality, as they become increasingly ingrown and resistant to change” (Schneider *et al.*, 1995 as cited in Billsberry, 2007, p. 132).

Based on the underlying logic of Schneider’s (1987a) ASA framework, it was asserted that “one of the key processes in the ASA cycle is the idea that when people find that they do not ‘fit’, they leave the organisation (attrition), and its state of homogeneity” (Hollyoak, 2010, p. 1). Do all those who discover that they do not fit in, exit the organisation? This is a key question that has been asked in relation to the theoretical and practical soundness of the ASA framework. In this regard, Hollyoak (2010, p. 1) stated the following:

However, for people who do not fit, there is little evidence to demonstrate, one way or the other, that they always leave (attrition), even when the organisation for which they work goes through (major) changes or ‘shocks’, causing value sets to change (Wheeler *et al.*, 2005); or organisational and personal values to drift apart (Chatman, 1989).

Notwithstanding the fact that the ASA framework failed to satisfactorily address the issue that not all misfits leave their organisations, it nevertheless proved a useful theory in explaining various OB and I/O psychology and HRM phenomena. For example, Billsberry (2007, p. 133) undertook research “by focusing on the attraction phase of the cycle and, in particular, on whether the actual fit of applicants to the values of the recruiting organisation predicts their application.” The findings suggested that “applicants choose which organisation to apply to based on their desire for a particular type of work rather than their attraction for particular companies, which is contrary to Schneider’s attraction proposition” (Billsberry, 2007, p. 132).

5.9.2 Chatman, Wong, and Joyce’s (2008) Framework of Person and Situation Mismatches

Chatman *et al.* (2008, p. 67) “considered the value of viewing the ASA model through its roots in person-situation interaction rather than through a congruence lens.” They argued that “the ASA model is underutilised if only considered with respect to person-organisation congruence, and that an interactionist lens provides greater insight into the fundamental, often reciprocal relationship between people and situations, and how the complexities of this relationship influence behaviour” (Chatman *et al.*, 2008, p. 67). It was highlighted that “through the application of an interactionist approach to the ASA model, we can better understand how and when people make the place” (Chatman *et al.*, 2008, p. 67). Of particular importance in Chatman *et al.*’s (2008) approach is the extension of the ASA framework to focus on employee misfits.

Chatman *et al.* (2008, p. 68) presented a cogent argument as to why focusing on congruence is not enough and that misfit may be a path to discovery. By viewing the ASA model through an interactional lens, a more plausible explanation could be generated as to why all misfits do not automatically leave their organisations. Chatman *et al.* (2008, p. 68) present the following insightful observation:

People and organisations can be compared based on their values, and a well-substantiated body of research has shown that the fit (congruence or match) between people and their organisations is more influential than either individuals' or organisational values alone (for example, Chatman, 1989; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991). Fit is developed through selection (for example, Cable & Judge, 1996) and socialisation (for example, Morrison, 1993). Beyond negatively influencing a person's commitment, performance, and satisfaction, having low fit or being a misfit can lead a person to leave. Alternatively, individuals with low fit can also try to change their organisation's values, which is still somewhat consistent with the ASA model. Despite these occurrences, yet another solution to low fit or misfit is for the individual to adapt his or her behaviour to fit that of the situation. We seek to extend the ASA model by focusing on misfits.

It is widely accepted that situations can significantly influence individual behaviour (Milgram, 1963; Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). However, Chatman *et al.* (2008, p. 69) pointed out that "it is important to remember that sometimes people make the place, in terms of influencing organisational values, but many other times people adapt their behaviour and even their fundamental values to match the setting (for example, Greenwald, 1992)." In order to address the question of "when do people make the place?" Chatman *et al.* (2008, p. 70) developed a matrix (see Figure 5.9.2. on the next page) and, using integrity as an example, showed various combinations of person and situation mismatches.

Figure 5.9.2. Person and Situation Mismatches

		Organisational Culture (S)	
		Low Integrity	High Integrity
Personality (P)	Dishonest	1. MATCH dishonest behaviour	2. MISMATCH ??
	Honest	3. MISMATCH ??	4. MATCH honest behaviour

- Option 1 (cross-situational consistency): person > situation → 1 = 2 < 3 = 4
- Option 2 (situational imperialism): person < situation → 1 = 3 < 2 = 4
- Option 3 (additive interaction): person + situation → 1 < 3 = 3 < 4
- Option 4 (complex interaction): P & S varies by person → 1 = 2 = 3 < 4
- Option 4A: (really complex interaction): P & S varies by person and multiple levels of situation (for example, in Sweden 1 < 2

Source: Chatman *et al.* (2008, p.70)

With reference to Figure 5.9.2 above, quadrants 1 and 4 represent matching quadrants with congruence models focusing on these areas. On the other hand, quadrants 2 and 3 represent the mismatch quadrants. According to Chatman *et al.* (2008, p. 69), a congruence approach to these quadrants “would presume that they are equivalent – an additive interaction.” A somewhat different perspective would be provided when applying the interactive approach to these mismatched quadrants.

According to Chatman *et al.* (2008, pp. 69), “an interactive approach would consider a number of possible patterns for the mismatch quadrants.”

Chatman *et al.* (2008) further expound on their framework by suggesting that each particular option may signify distinctive behavioural patterns. Option 1 represents a cross-situational consistency perspective. In this perspective, the individual characteristic of integrity as cited in this case surpasses the context. It was suggested that individuals act in relation to their individual disposition irrespective of their company’s culture. For example, an honest person will consistently act in an authentic manner regardless of whether the organisation is truthful or deceitful. In contrast, highly insincere individuals are insincere regardless of their company’s cultural profile.

In the second option, Chatman *et al.* (2008) describe a picture in which the context or situation reigns supreme. It is suggested that irrespective of their personal disposition, individuals are obligated to acclimatise their behaviour to match their company’s cultural positioning. For example, when a company’s culture highlights integrity as a core value, both corrupt and authentic individuals will display integrity as in cases of submitting to rules and whistleblowing. In circumstances where a company accentuates corrupt behaviour both categories of individuals are predicted to display deceitful behaviour. This can occur in situations where a person wilfully undertakes to distort a company’s financial position by overstating its profits. According to Chatman *et al.* (2008), option 1 and 2 symbolise the extreme interpretations of the person-situation debate. Erstwhile research (for example, Funder & Ozer, 1983 as cited in Chatman *et al.* 2008) has revealed that these radical perspectives are unlikely to endure a rigorous theoretical and empirical assessment.

Chatman *et al.* (2008) assert that option 3 can be equated to a classic congruence framework, grounded on an additive interaction. In this option, behaviour is a result of the additive effect of individual and situational characteristics. It is noted that an

incongruence between a person's values and company culture surfaces equivalently in a sense that truthful or deceitful people in mismatched cultures (for example, high or low in integrity) are equivalently reasonably honest. People who are characterised as equivalently reasonably honest are understood to be not as honest as when people are in companies that have high-integrity cultures and not as deceitful as deceitful individuals in companies that have low-integrity cultures. For example, individuals may submit to rules prohibiting them from lying or stealing with regard to their company's matters, but these same individuals are reluctant to report those other individuals who do not comply (Chatman *et al.*, 2008).

The options 4 and 4A are understood to epitomize authentic interactional thinking. In these circumstances, the interaction between the individual and the situation is contingent upon the particular permutation of individual-situation characteristics. For example, the information depicted in option 4 triggers people into enquiring whether truthful or deceitful individuals show superior cross-situational uniformity in certain situations as opposed to others. It has been speculated that maybe honest individuals are probably more prone to accede to company pressure to act fraudulently than untruthful people are to act honestly as an affiliate of company that places high emphasis on integrity (Chatman *et al.*, 2008).

The last option 4A has been known to be much more composite variation of authentic interactional thinking. This option suggests that individual and situational characteristics fluctuate according to the person and various levels of the situation which may, in this specific case, embrace the culture of the company and society. The culture at the societal level plays a critical role in this option. In this regard, it has been suggested that in cases where deceitful people accede to company pressure to act trustfully or honest people capitulate to behave dishonestly, the standards for truthfulness and integrity at the societal level may be sway these people to act accordingly (Chatman *et al.*, 2008). Vitell, Nwachukwu and Barnes (1993) as cited in Chatman *et al.* (2008) quoted an example of Japanese businesses behaving at a far higher ethical level than businesses in the US and Canada to illustrate this point.

It has been posited that behaviourally explicit forecasts produced by an interactional as opposed to the congruence viewpoint, could result in fascinating, refined and occasionally contradictory results (Chatman *et al.*, 2008).

As highlighted above, the value of viewing the ASA model through a person-situation interaction rather than a congruence lens has been clearly articulated by Chatman *et al.* (2008). It was suggested that “such an approach provides an increased understanding of misfits, insight to sources and consequences of variation in specific person-situation behaviours, and greater understanding of underlying processes by which the ASA model operates” (Chatman *et al.*, 2008, p. 84).

5.9.3 Coldwell, Billsberry, Van Meurs, and Marsh’s (2008) Matrix of Individual/Organisational Ethical Mismatches

Coldwell *et al.*’s (2008) explored the effects of person-organisation ethical fit on employee attraction and retention in a theoretical paper. The paper used aspects of the corporate social responsibility, corporate social performance and corporate reputation literature to build a tentative theoretical model that suggests that “individual misfits that arise from ethical expectations that either exceed or fall short of perceived organizational ethical performance, lead to problematic acquisition and retention behavioural outcomes” (Coldwell *et al.*, 2008, p. 611). This model is represented in Table 5.9.3 on the next page.

Specifically, the model suggests that “mismatches can occur between individual perceptions and expectations of specific ethical corporate reputations and organizational ethical climates” (Coldwell *et al.*, 2008, p. 618). These incongruences could be minimal, thus producing ambivalent levels of misfit or they could be more distinct misfits (as indicated with an * in Table 5.9.3). It was noted that the model lends support to Billsberry *et al.*’s (2005a) findings in a sense that it “suggests that the propensity for misfit arising from organisational and individual value mismatches occurs when an individual has a strong, post-conventional,

orientation and the prevailing organisational ethical climate is perceived as acting in conflict with this. The prevailing ethical climate has a vulnerability that can be easily eroded by one significant malpractice and it has both intra and extra-organisational effects” (Coldwell *et al.*, 2008, p. 618).

Table 5.9.3. Organisational individual/company ethical fit matrix

		<i>Organisational Ethical Climate/Ethical Orientation (P = Perceptions)</i>		
		Principle (justice, fairness rights)	Social (societal laws and customs)	Ego (company interest)
<i>Individual Ethical Orientation (E = Expectations)</i>	Principle/Post-conventional	Fit (E = P)	Ambivalent misfit (E > P)	Misfit (E > P)*
	Social/Conventional	Ambivalent misfit (E < P)	Fit (E = P)	Ambivalent misfit (E > P)
	Ego/Pre-conventional	Misfit (E < P)*	Ambivalent misfit (E < P)	Fit (E = P)

Source: Coldwell *et al.* (2008, p. 618)

It was suggested that the matrix “provides a useful tool for analysing individual/organisational ethical mismatches that incorporates the effects of different levels of moral development on individual ethical perceptions, and a theoretical model for testing specific hypotheses” (Coldwell *et al.* 2008, p. 620).

5.9.4 Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) Unfolding Model of Voluntary Turnover

The process of deciding to leave an organisation is a complicated one. This is even more so when an employee is a misfit as he or she will have to weigh the various options available against the backdrop of factors external to the organisation such as the unemployment rate. Lee and Mitchell (1994) introduced a model that has

aided I/O psychology and organisational behaviour researchers in their understanding of how and why individuals make the decision to quit their jobs as a result of their misfit.

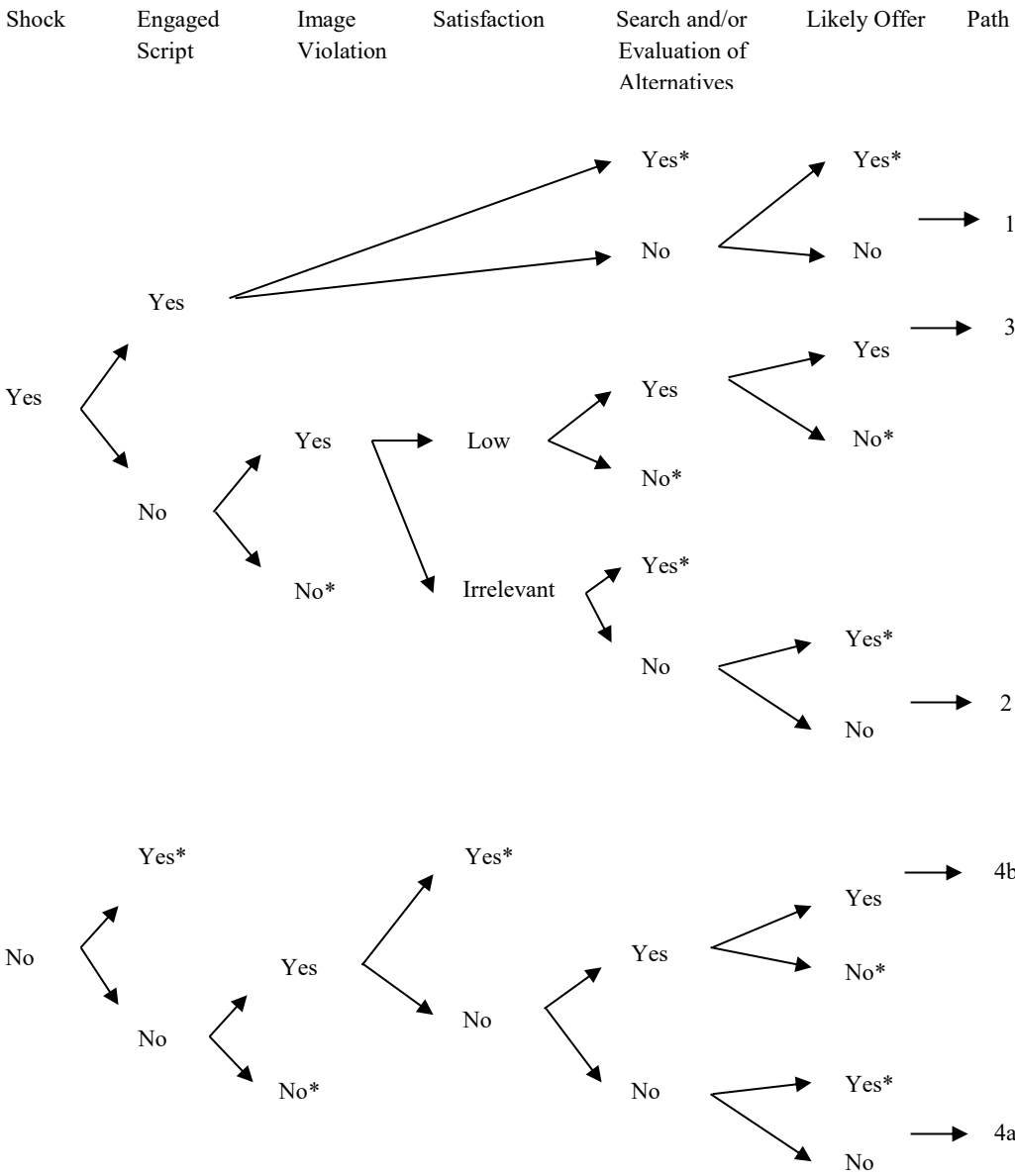
Donnelly and Quirin (2006, p. 61) stated that “Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) model of voluntary turnover extends our understanding of the decision processes used by employees when making a decision to stay or leave their employer.” It is noted that this model “is not a replacement of traditional approaches used in examining employee turnover, however, it provides a new and unique direction for research in this area” (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006, p. 61).

Lee and Mitchell (1994) used image theory (Beach, 1990) as a “conceptual underpinning to voluntary employee turnover” (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996, p. 6). Lee *et al.* (1996, p. 6) encapsulate the differences between traditional turnover theories and image theory in the following paragraph:

Traditional turnover theories hold that quitting involves three main components. First, job dissatisfaction initiates the process. Second, employees search for alternatives prior to leaving their organisations. Third, people evaluate these alternatives using a subjective expected utility (SEU) decision model. In contrast, image theory suggests that (1) factors other than affect can initiate the turnover process, (2) employees may or may not compare a current job with alternatives, and (3) a compatibility judgment, instead of the subjective expected utility decision model, may be used.

Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaniel and Hill (1999, p. 451) presented a framework, based on a revised version of Lee and Mitchell’s (1994) unfolding model of voluntary turnover that depicts the various components and four theorized decision paths. This framework is reproduced in Figure 5.9.3 on the next page.

Figure 5.9.3. The Unfolding Model of Voluntary Turnover^{a,b}



a. This figure includes the changes to the unfolding model
b. An asterisk (*) indicates that the route is not classifiable and that it represents a theory falsification – a way in which an individual could leave an organisation that would not be part of one of the model’s paths.

Source: Lee *et al.* (1999, p. 451)

With reference to Figure 5.9.3 on the previous page, the turnover decision-making process starts with a shock which refers to a “distinguishable event that causes an employee to evaluate the implications of the event on his or her job” (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006, p. 61). According to Lee *et al.* (1999, p. 451), “a shock is a particular, jarring event that initiates the psychological analyses involved in quitting a job” and “a shock can be positive, neutral, or negative; expected or unexpected; and internal or external to the person who experiences it.”

Beach (1997) as cited in Lee *et al.* (1999, p. 451) asserted that “people compare shocks and their surrounding circumstances to their own images (that is, their values, goals, and plans for goal attainment) and, if the two are incompatible, thoughts of leaving occur.” Donnelly and Quirin (2006, p. 62) state that “when a shock event occurs, the employees experiences a change in his/her environment that causes a reassessment of the individual’s plans.” Holtom and Inderrieden (2006, pp. 437 – 438) provide an incisive account of the decision-making processes involved in the unfolding model of voluntary turnover by stating that:

Quitting a job may be precipitated by a jarring event labelled a shock, which initiates the psychological analyses involved in quitting a job. Individuals may prepare a script that details a plan of action that can be taken if a shock occurs. If an individual’s values, goals, and strategies for goal attainment do not fit with those of the employing organisation or those implied by the shock, an image violation occurs. All activities involved with looking for alternatives to the current job are considered part of search (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006, pp. 437 – 438).

According to Figure 5.9.3, an individual “uses one of four decision-paths to interpret the shock and its relation to the work environment, identify his/her decision options, and enact a response” (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006, p. 62). Lee *et al.*

(1999, pp. 451 – 452) provide a flawless description of the four decision paths in the paragraph on below:

In path 1, a shock triggers the enactment of a pre-existing action plan or script and the person who has experienced the shock leaves without considering his or her current attachment to the organisation and without considering alternatives. Moreover, levels of job satisfaction are essentially irrelevant in this path. In path 2, a shock prompts the person to reconsider his or her organisational attachment because image violations have occurred. After completing these deliberations, the person leaves without a search for alternatives. In path 3, a shock produces image violations that, in turn, initiate the person's evaluation of both the current job and various alternatives; thus in path 3, leaving typically includes search and evaluation. With path 4, lower levels of job satisfaction are the precipitator, instead of a shock. In path 4a, lower levels of satisfaction become so salient that people leave without considering alternatives, but in path 4b, these lower levels explicitly lead to job search and subsequent evaluation of alternatives.

Drawing on both the principles of traditional sequential models of turnover and Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model of voluntary turnover, "Wheeler *et al.* (2005) proposed a model of multidimensional fit that included possible explanations of how employees will behave in the event of misfit" (Wheeler *et al.*, 2007, p. 208). It has been stated that "Wheeler *et al.*'s model proposes that turnover is one of the many options available for employees experiencing PO misfit" (Wheeler *et al.*, 2007, p. 208).

The dynamics of Lee and Mitchell's (1994) model and its application to misfit have been illustrated in a study conducted by Wheeler *et al.* (2007) who examined the relationship between PO fit, job satisfaction, perceived job mobility, and intent to turnover. A field survey was conducted on a sample of 205 adult employees from two geographical regions of the US. Using mediated and moderated regression, the results demonstrated that PO misfit and job dissatisfaction do not necessarily lead to turnover.

5.9.5 Job Embeddedness

Organisational scholars have indicated that a person may have attachments to aspects of the environment both at work and external to the workplace (Mitchell & Lee, 2001; Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001b). Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, and Erez (2001a) labelled this form of attachment, job embeddedness. This construct entails "individuals' having (1) links to other people, teams, and groups, (2) perceptions of fit with job, organisation, and community, and (3) what they say they would have to sacrifice if they left their jobs" (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, p. 1102). These three dimensions of job embeddedness were termed (1) links, (2) fit, and (3) sacrifice, respectively (Mitchell & Lee, 2001; Mitchell *et al.*, 2001b).

Links have been described in the literature as "formal and informal connections between a person and institutions or other people" (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, p. 1104). Holtom and Inderrieden (2006, p. 438) stated that "a number of threads link an employee and his or her family in a social, psychological, and financial web that includes work and non-work friends, groups, the community, and physical environment where they are located." It has been suggested that "the greater the number of links between the person and the web, the more likely an employee will stay in a job" (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006, p. 439).

Mitchell *et al.* (2001a, p. 1104) defined fit as "an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with an organisation and with his or her environment." It

was further noted that “according to the theory of job embeddedness, an employee’s personal values, career goals and plans for the future must fit with the larger corporate culture and the demands of his or her immediate job (for example, job knowledge, skills and abilities)” (Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006, p. 438). Mitchell and Lee (2001, p. 218) contend that “one’s overall feeling of fit or compatibility will influence retention, or, more specifically, the better the fit, the less likely one is to leave.” Mitchell *et al.* (2001a, p. 1105) note that “a person’s fit with job and organisation relates to attachments to the organisation;” they are of the opinion that “there are similar community dimensions to fit as well.” They provide examples of factors that represent these community dimensions of fit such as “the weather, amenities, the general culture of the location in which one resides, outdoor activities (for example, fishing and skiing), political and religious climates, and entertainment activities” (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, p. 1105).

According to Mitchell and Lee (2001, p. 219), “the dimension of sacrifice is meant to capture the things that someone must relinquish or give up when leaving a job.” Sacrifice has been further described as “the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving a job” (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, p. 1105). Personal losses may occur such as “giving up colleagues, interesting projects, or perks” as a result of leaving a job (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001a, p. 1105). Shaw, Delery, Jenkins and Gupta (1998) as cited in Mitchell *et al.* (2001a, p. 1105) argued that “the more an employee would give up when leaving, the more difficult will be for him or her to sever employment with the organisation.”

More recently, job embeddedness has been demonstrated to be a significant factor in our understanding of fit and misfit. For example, Talbot and Billsberry (2010) undertook a study to compare and contrast organisational fit and misfit on a sample of 38 employees occupying a wide range of jobs in the UK. It was found that participants often talked about broader themes such as job embeddedness dimensions during their interviews. This feedback persuaded these authors to prepare a coding scheme that included various forms of fit, demographic factors

and job embeddedness measures. Talbot and Billsberry (2010, p. 3) reported that “a further difference between fit and misfit was found when analysing the number of times that job embeddedness codes had been used for the causal mapping concepts.” For example, it shown that “those who perceived that they fitted well with work more often cited job embeddedness dimensions, particularly links to their communities, than do people who considered themselves to be misfits” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 3). This finding appears to be in line with the literature on embeddedness which suggests that various facets of job embeddedness “combine to predict employee retention” (Talbot & Billsberry, 2010, p. 3).

5.9.6 Viewing Misfit through the Lens of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Conservation of resources (COR) theory was initially used as a theoretical framework to assist understanding of stress and burnout-related issues (Hobfoll, 1988; 1989). Grandey and Cropanzano (1999, p. 352) stated that “the COR model proposes that individuals seek to acquire and maintain resources” and that stress is a reaction to an environment in which there is a threat of a loss of resources, an actual loss in resources, or a lack of an expected gain in resources.” Hobfoll (2001, p. 337) asserted that “the COR theory predicts that resource loss is the principal ingredient in the stress process” and resource gain, in turn, is depicted as of increasing importance in the context of loss.” He further indicated that “psychological stress will occur in one of three instances: (1) when individuals’ resources are threatened with loss, (2) when individuals’ resources are actually lost, or (3) where individuals fail to gain sufficient resources following significant resource investment” (Hobfoll, 2001, pp. 341 – 342).

Gorgievski and Hobfoll (2008, p. 2) noted that “the basic tenet of COR theory (see Hobfoll, 1998; 2001) is that people have an innate as well as a learned drive to create, foster, conserve, and protect the quality and quantity of their resources.” They indicate that “many things could be conceived as resources, but COR theory

relates to those resources that are key to survival and well-being (for example, shelter, attachment to significant others, self-esteem), or that are linked to the process of creating and maintaining key resources (for example, money, credit)” (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008, p. 2).

According to Ito and Brotheridge (2003, p. 491), “the theory’s first principle that: ‘resource loss is disproportionately more salient than resource gain’ (Hobfoll, 1998, p. 62) has been used to explain phenomena such as the effect of role ambiguity on strain.” Thus, from the COR viewpoint, “task performance in ambiguous circumstances requires investing resources such as time and energy in tasks where success is uncertain” (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003, p. 491). According to Hobfoll and Freedy (1993) as cited in Ito and Brotheridge (2003, p. 491), “the ensuing imbalance causes strain.” It has been noted that “the principle that resource loss is more salient than resource gain implies that individuals with limited resources may choose not to invest in situations where gains are only problematic” (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003, p. 491).

Hobfoll (2001, p. 349) stated that “the second principle of COR theory is that people must invest resources in order to protect against resource loss, recover from losses, and gain resources.” Gorgievski and Hobfoll (2008, p. 8) provide a cogent explanation of what this second principle entails and its potential ramifications in the following paragraph:

Because of this principle, the strategies people employ to offset resource loss may lead to other, secondary losses. If the situation becomes chronic, the resources people employ may get depleted, and they need to shift their strategies towards other, usually less favourable ones at higher costs (for example, resources need to be invested that they are less easy to replenish) and with smaller chance of success. The attendant principle for the engagement side of the continuum

is that people must have the personal and environmental capacity to invest resources to ensure and enhance engaging resource gain processes (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008, p. 8).

Hobfoll (2001, p. 349) notes that “there is strong evidence that resources aggregate in resource caravans in both an immediate and a life-span sense.” It was further reported that “research by Cozzarelli (1993) and Rini, Dunkel-Schetter, Wadhwa, and Sandman (1999) support the idea suggested in COR theory that having one major resource is typically linked with having others, and likewise for their absence (Hobfoll, 1998)” (Hobfoll, 2001, pp. 349 – 350). King, King, Foy, Keane, & Fairbank (1999) as cited in Hobfoll (2001, p. 350) asserted that “over the life-span, there appears likewise to be continuity of resources such that being in a state of resource lack at one time tends to carry over to future periods.” It is noted that “change in resource levels can occur, but consistent with a caravan concept, the retinue of resources tends to travel together over time unless some inner or outside forces are specifically directed to alter the constellation of resources” (Baltes, 1997 as cited in Hobfoll, 2001, p. 350).

Wheeler *et al.* (2013, p. 31) propose that “a COR framework provides a suitable theoretical lens to consider the causes and outcomes of PE misfit.” They contend that “a COR framing would suggest that PE misfits might engage in some type of resource investment with the hopes of increasing fit” (Wheeler *et al.*, 2013, p. 31). Wheeler *et al.* (2013, pp. 33 – 34) list three potential benefits of adopting the COR view of PE fit and misfit:

- “First, COR satisfies the ‘good theory’ requirements. The theory specifically defines what resources are (Hobfoll, 2001), which we have applied to the construct of PE fit. PE fit reflects the extent to which individuals perceive or actually have the resources, whether in their possession or available in the environment, to meet the demands of their work environments. COR allows us to explain how and why constructs

within PE fit's nomological network relate to each other. Moreover, COR provides important boundary conditions to explain the timing of when PE fit assessment occurs,"

- "Second, while COR may not have previously been tied to the PE fit literature, it is believed that PE fit is central to COR theory. In essence, COR argues that people want to maintain their desired level of resources relative to what is available in their environment. The integrative advantage of COR is that it goes further in arguing what conditions would cause perceptions of lack of fit (or misfit) and the general motivational processes used to resolve lack of fit,"
- "Finally, COR theory can address all the various streams of research that have evolved from the PE fit literature. Moreover, it offers an integrated view of them, through its accommodation of multidimensional fit theories (for example, Wheeler *et al.*, 2005), that brings more structure to the literature than had existed before."

With reference to the aforementioned discussion, it can be concluded that "COR offers a suitable middle range theory to integrate PE fit literatures and offer insights into PE misfit behaviours" (Wheeler *et al.*, 2013, p. 34).

5.9.7 Social Identity Approach

People have perceptions and beliefs about themselves in terms of their personalities, appearance and other characteristics. These can be grouped together to form a self-concept (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer 2012). Social identity can be defined as "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 (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). According to Van Knippenberg (2000), the social identity approach provides a

cogent justification of how membership in a social group has an impact on a person's self-concept.

Individuals endeavour to uphold a positive self-concept as well as a positive social identity. It has been argued that people undertake social comparisons between in-group and out-group on valued dimensions to create, preserve, and guard positive in-group distinctiveness. Moreover, when a particular social comparison leads to an affirmative result for the in-group, the desire for a positive social identity is realised, however, the opposite may also occur (Apsychology, n.d.).

The literature suggests that the social identity approach seeks to address the fundamental and elusive question of "Who am I?" It comprises two related social psychological theories: social identity (SIT) theory and self-categorisation (SCT) theory.

5.9.7.1 Social Identity Theory

SIT emerged out of a response to the findings of the minimal group studies carried out by Henri Tajfel and colleagues in the early 1970s. In these studies, people were assigned into groups based on some pointless and random criteria and were asked to undertake several tasks including assigning points to members of various groups. The findings suggested that participants tended to favour members of their own group as opposed to members of the out-group. Why did the participants respond in the way that they did? This question could not be satisfactorily answered at the time using traditional theories of intergroup relations. Tajfel (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979) formalised SIT to answer the question of why individuals favour their own group relative to out-groups (Hornsey, 2008). Cameron (2004, p. 241) suggested that social identity can be characterised in terms of three dimensions:

- "Centrality – the amount of time spent thinking about being a group member,"

- “In-group affect – the positivity of feelings associated with membership in a group,” and
- “In-group ties – perceptions of similarity, bond and belongingness with other group members.”

Tajfel and Turner (1979) as cited in Hornsey (2008, p. 207) argued that “the motivating principle underlying competitive intergroup behaviour was a desire for a positive and secure self-concept.” As a consequence, in searching for a positive social identity, members of a group are encouraged to consider and act in a manner that will attain or uphold “a positive distinctiveness between one’s own group and relevant out-groups” (Hornsey, 2008, p. 207). Hogg and Terry (2000) as cited in Feitosa, Salas, and Salazar (2012, p. 529) asserted that “the motivation that drives individuals to join groups is due to their need for self-enhancement and reduction of uncertainty about peoples’ feelings, perceptions and behaviour.” Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Abrams and Hogg (2006) as cited in Powers (2013) argued that the fundamental drive for people to create a social identity is self-enhancement which could lead to an upsurge in individuals’ self-esteem. Powers (2013) posited that people search to form a positive self-esteem by building a positive social identity. This can be attained through the cognitive processes of “social categorisation (when the individual categorises individuals into groups), social comparison (when the individual evaluates group membership) and social identity (when an individual identifies themselves with a social group in society)” (Powers, 2013, p. 7).

5.9.2.2 Self-Categorisation Theory

As highlighted in previous discussions, SIT individuals define their sense of self in terms of their memberships to particular groups. The overriding focus of this theory is on self and the collective in terms group membership is downplayed. Moreover, SIT focuses on the role of social identity as a significant factor in influencing group members’ responses to the circumstances in which they are faced with. Self-

Categorisation Theory (SCT) (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) was advanced to address the inherent shortcomings of SIT. According to Reicher, Spears, and Haslam (2010), SCT attempts to shed light on the difference between the social identity and other components of the self-concept, to describe how the self system is arranged and what renders any single aspect of the system active in a given set of circumstances.

Hornsey (2008, p. 208) noted that the advocates of SCT considered identity as functioning at “different levels of inclusiveness” rather than “seeing interpersonal and intergroup dynamics as opposite ends of a bipolar spectrum.” Turner *et al.* (1987) as cited in Hornsey (2008, p. 208) propose three levels of self-categorisation that are central to the self-concept: “the superordinate category of self as human being (or human identity),” “the intermediate level of the self as a member of a social group as defined against other groups of humans (social identity)” and “the subordinate level of personal self-categorisations based on interpersonal comparisons (personal identity).”

5.9.2.3 The Link between Misfit and Social Identity

The link between misfit and a person’s social identity is yet to be fully explored in the literature. Previous research has suggested that fit may be positively associated with increases in people’s self-concept and self-esteem (Keon, Latack, & Wanous, 1982). Wheeler *et al.* (2005) have proposed that each type of fit (that is, PO, PJ, PV, PP and PT fit) can be considered as a possible domain of the self-concept. For example, PO fit epitomises the values, principles and norms that are related to the self-concept. It was further asserted that individuals desire a fit between their self-concept and the organisation as a way to increase their self-concept and resulting self-esteem and individuals who do not fit in (or misfit) will not experience increases in self-esteem (Wheeler *et al.*, 2005).

As highlighted earlier, SIT suggests that in countless social contexts individuals define their sense of self in terms of their group membership (Haslam *et al.*, 2009). Thus, if a person strongly identifies with members of the in-group, a positive social identity may then develop. A person's social identity can be compromised when a person is rejected by members of the in-group on the grounds of displaying different characteristics or behaviour (Haslam *et al.*, 2009).

5.10 Summary and Conclusions to Chapter Five

The findings of this study suggest that South African employees use a variety of terms and examples to describe the phenomenon of misfit, thus lending credence to the extant literature that contends that misfit is a highly complex, amorphous construct that requires further exploration across different country-contexts and cultures.

The discussion also focused on a range of potential antecedents and consequences of misfit emanating from the data. While these findings reaffirm many previous studies, this study also unearthed a number of potential new antecedents and consequences that are idiosyncratic to the South African context. These novel findings could stimulate further empirical research to improve its generalizability.

This study made a significant scholarly contribution by using the data obtained to develop a conceptual model of misfit grounded in the perceptions and actual experiences of South African employees, an exercise that has not been previously undertaken.

The current chapter also provided a discussion of the second phase of the literature review in line with the middle position taken by the researcher. This second phase delivered a review of the related theoretical concepts and new literature pertaining to organisational misfit.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter concludes this study which set out to explore the perceptions and experiences of organisational misfit among South African employees using a qualitative grounded theory approach.

The chapter commences with a summary of the key findings of the study that tie in with the objectives set out in Chapter 1. In order to express confidence in the results, this study was evaluated against the criteria governing grounded theory best practices. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of the limitations of the study. Following this, the theoretical and practical implications of the study are outlined. The chapter continues with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the study. A final concluding remark ends this chapter.

6.2 Summary of the Key Findings

This research study set out to achieve the following seven objectives:

Objective 1: To explore how South African employees define and understand misfit.

Key Findings: South African employees appear to have an eclectic view of what being a misfit means to them personally. They view the term 'misfit' as being synonymous with a label that one attaches to someone that does not conform with or fit in to some social norm or aspect of the environment. This echoes many of the

sentiments expressed by their Western counterparts who tended to conceptualise misfit from the outside in. Many of the South African employees that participated in this study could not at first hand come up with an accurate description of what being a misfit really means to them; instead they tended to refer to misfit as an amorphous, multidimensional concept. However, when probed further, these employees conceded that misfit could be accurately described as a condition, either negative or positive, that one finds himself or herself in. A novel way of looking at misfit was provided by one particular employee, who suggested that one should liken misfits to outliers (a term derived from statistics which means 'extreme' or 'on the outside'). This participant argued that misfits may be grouped into two categories: negative misfits or negative outliers and positive misfits or positive outliers.

Objective 2: To explore the factors that influence South African employees' sense of misfit.

Key Findings: A wide range of organisational, individual and external factors were perceived by South African employees to influence a person's sense of misfit. Race was the factor most often cited by the participants. This finding appears to reflect the reality that the South African workplace is still characterised by mistrust, primarily as a result of the apartheid legacy.

Objective 3: To explore the consequences of South African employees' sense of misfit.

Key Findings: Misfit had a pervasive impact on both the individual and the organisation. The vast majority of participants indicated that misfit had a deleterious effect on the individual and the organisation. A small minority of respondents pointed out that, in some circumstances, misfit can have a positive impact on the individual and the organisation.

Objective 4: To explore how South African employees cope with their misfit.

Key Findings: South African employees engaged in various coping behaviours when faced with misfit. These ranged from being vocal about issues causing misfit to becoming oblivious to workplace issues and soldiering on. Leaving the organisation was deemed to be the last resort after all other options were exhausted.

Objective 5: To explore how South African organisations could effectively manage their misfitting employees.

Key Findings: Employee misfits are an accepted reality in many workplaces in South Africa. Organisations can resort to one of two options. The first is to frustrate these misfits with the intention of getting rid of them. The participants indicated that this option is short sighted and expensive in terms of the extra costs incurred by organisations to recruit and train new staff. The second option is to work in a proactive and constructive manner to creatively harness the potential of misfitting employees. This may enable the realisation of a sustainable competitive advantage. Participants suggested a wide range of interventions that can be used by organisations to effectively manage their employee misfits. These ranged from having a strategic plan to changing the company mind-set to embrace misfits.

Objective 6: To explore other study-related factors surrounding employees' experiences of misfit in South African workplaces.

Key Findings: Four other study-related factors were explored in relation to misfit. The first was whether misfits are keen to come out in the open and identify themselves. The vast majority of participants indicated that they were not keen to identify themselves for fear of victimisation either from their managers or co-workers. The second factor pertains to co-worker reactions to their misfit colleagues. A large number of participants indicated that they were unfavourably treated by their co-workers. These co-workers often ostracised misfits and engaged

in various forms of antagonistic behaviour and gossiping. The third factor relates to manager/supervisor treatment of misfitting employees. Managers/supervisors in South African organisations appear to have no concrete plan to deal effectively with misfits. A large number of participants stated that many of their managers/supervisors frustrated them in the hope that they would leave their organisations. The last factor established the process that an employee undergoes when developing into a misfit. The overwhelming consensus was that a trigger event (for example, downsizing) prompts an individual to engage in a cognitive appraisal exercise with his/her environment. If this exercise results in a cognitive dissonance a person, then starts to develop feelings of not fitting in. The majority of the newly formed misfit then proceeds through a multi-stage evolution which eventually culminates into a full-blown misfit.

Objective 7: To develop a conceptual model of misfit based on the perceptions and experiences of South African employees.

Key Findings: The key outcome of this study was the development of a conceptual model of employee misfit (see Figure 4.7.1) underpinned by South African employees' perceptions and actual experiences. This model depicts the effects and dynamics of misfit as it pertains to the South African work context. The crucial issues established in the model include: attributed causal factors, moderators, process issues, coping behaviours and consequences.

6.3 Evaluation of the Study

This present grounded theory study was evaluated against Glaser's (1978, 1992) four criteria:

- "Fit – the categories within the theory must directly relate to the data,"

- “Work – the theory should have an explanatory power and be able to interpret what is taking place within the context of the theory,”
- “Relevance – the theory is relevant because the researcher allows the core problems and processes to emerge from the data rather than attempting to impose a preconceived theory on to the area of study,” and
- “Modifiability – given that the social world is constantly changing, the theory must be adaptable and modifiable” (McCann & Clark, 2004, p. 26).

The study satisfied all the requirements of the first criterion, namely, fit. The researcher took cognisance of Glaser’s (1978, 2001) suggestion, that:

In analysing data, it is important that categories are not to be forced or selected out of preconceived understandings of the phenomena studied. It is essential that they be generated systematically from data and constantly validated by the hard work of fitting and refitting the categories to the data. Later in the analysis, categories are fitted together to a dense and parsimonious theory that fits the substantive area (Glaser, 1978, 2001 as cited in Giske & Artinian, 2007, p. 69).

This research study also fulfilled Glaser’s (1978, 1992) second criterion of work. Giske and Artinian (2007, p. 69) note that the principle of work means that “a grounded theory must be able to explain what happens in the data, predict what will happen, and interpret what is happening in the area studied.” A major objective of the present research study was to develop a conceptual model of employee misfit that was based on employees’ perceptions and experiences of misfit. This new theory accurately depicted the responses arising from the interview data with respect to the causal factors, moderators and outcomes of misfit. Glaser (1998), as cited in Giske and Artinian (2007, p. 69) contends that “workability is related to

how well a theory accounts for the way in which participants solve their main concern.” In this regard, the present study sheds light on what misfit really means to individuals at work. By doing so, misfitting employees and their respective organisations could be in a better position to deal with this problem more effectively in the future.

The researcher was mindful of the fact that, in order to produce high quality findings in grounded theory research, it was mandatory to allow issues and categories to emerge without imposing a preconceived theory on the matters investigated. Thus, at no stage were any theoretical frameworks or hypotheses used to guide the study. Moreover, the timing and the role of the literature review ensured that it did not influence the theory that emerged from the respondent data. By carrying out these steps, the researcher was satisfied that Glaser’s (1978, 1992) third criterion of relevance was met.

Glaser’s (1978, 1992) fourth criterion of modifiability applied unequivocally to this research study. The researcher acknowledged the fact that the conceptual model of employee misfit was not cast in stone and that, future modifications and adaptations should be made to reflect new ideas and changes in the environment. Giske and Artinian (2007, p. 69) state that “a substantive grounded theory has only partial closure because new ideas and more data can modify the theory.” Glaser (1978) asserted that “modifiability is therefore an ever on-going process, and all grounded theories have potential for further development” (Giske & Artinian, 2007, p. 69).

The researcher echoed the sentiments of Daniel (2009, p. 199) who stated that “as a result, based upon the noted criteria and the application of judgment to determine whether they have been met, it appears that the grounded theory method was employed in this study with rigour. Further improvements may come with additional experience by this researcher.”

6.4 Limitations of the Study

Although this research study has achieved its aims, there were a number of possible limitations. These included the following:

- Limited validation was done on the coding of the transcripts. Only two people, the researcher and his assistant, corroborated the coded data. In order to produce high quality grounded theory research, it has been generally advised that the coding of the transcripts should be validated using three or more individuals, preferably with vast experience in these matters. While the researcher in this study had the necessary experience as a result of previous research and having taught a research methods course to both undergraduate and postgraduate students for many years, it is acknowledged that subjecting the transcript coding to further independent validation would have improved the rigour of the findings.
- The subject of misfit is an emotional one. Individuals who participated in the interview process may not have been forthcoming on certain misfit issues because of the sensitive nature of the topic and the fear of reprisals. Thus, it would be naïve to assume that all the responses obtained from the interview data accurately depicted these individuals' experiences. The concept of misfit has been perceived in a negative light. It is a challenge to get people to acknowledge that they do indeed, not fit in. Accepting that you are a misfit is akin to admitting that you have a weakness or personality disorder, thus making this an extremely difficult concept to explore in depth. During the interview process, the researcher used various probing techniques to elicit responses to the questions. This could have unconsciously infused some bias into the responses obtained.
- The sampling method used in qualitative studies has always been a contentious issue. The sampling method adopted in this research study is no

exception. A purposive non-random sampling technique was used to select the study participants in the initial stages of the research. Thereafter, theoretical sampling was adopted in accordance with the principles of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) classical grounded theory. These non-random sampling approaches might have restricted the generalizability of the study findings. However, it should be noted that the sampling procedures used in this research study were primarily directed towards the construction of theory as reflected in the conceptual model of employee misfit produced. The sampling approach taken in this study was not aimed at population representativeness.

- The size of the sample is another issue that has been the subject of considerable debate among qualitative researchers. While the goal of sampling in qualitative research is not to aim for generalizability of the findings, it is nevertheless difficult to state with extreme confidence that the sample selected is adequate for the purposes of a study. In this study, the researcher continued the sampling process until theoretical saturation was reached. A final sample size of 40 participants was obtained. Although the sampling process was carried out in accordance with generally accepted grounded theory principles, it is difficult to state with outright confidence that the sample size chosen was indeed the right size for this type of study as the field of misfit has very few precedents to draw on due to the fact that it has been uncharted territory.
- The researcher categorised the transcript data in the way he understood it to be. Having supervised many postgraduate students' dissertations, his previous experience assisted him in this regard. He applied his mind and categorised the transcript data to the best of his ability. Despite this, the researcher acknowledges that other researchers could have a different take on the data and could possibly categorise it somewhat differently. Daniel (2009, p. 201) notes that "as with all qualitative research, a different researcher might have derived different observations and conclusions" and

“while these limitations result in a restriction of the transferability of the study results (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), they are characteristic of all qualitative research seeking an interpretive understanding of a phenomenon as described by the individuals who have observed or experienced it (Maxwell, 1992).”

- The transcription of the interviews was carried out by four experienced individuals and validated by the researcher himself. At no stage were the participants requested to review and validate their interview transcripts. Moreover, the participants were not involved in the appraisal and authentication of the researcher’s elucidations of the study results.
- The conceptual model of employee misfit developed in this study has not been empirically tested on a large sample of employees. As a result, the validity of this new theoretical model may be a subject of conjecture.

Apart from these potential limitations, these shortcomings were considerably offset by numerous significant factors that were deemed germane to the research:

- To the researcher’s knowledge, this exploratory study represents the first of its kind to examine misfit in the South African work context. Previous studies examining misfit issues have been conducted in the UK, the US, Western Europe and to a limited extent in Australia and New Zealand. In order for the concept of misfit to be universally understood, it is imperative that it be investigated in different country-contexts and cultures. As highlighted in Chapter One of this thesis, South Africa, a country with its own unique history and multicultural workforce, represents fertile ground to investigate a phenomenon like misfit.
- This study developed a conceptual model based on employees’ actual experiences of misfit. Examining employees’ experiences of misfit allowed

for a far more real and deeper understanding of exactly what misfit is. This approach represents a departure from the way in which misfit was traditionally studied that is, based on the knowledge that misfit was the polar opposite of fit and examined it from the “outside-in,” using quantitative methodologies with large samples using self-administered questionnaires.

- To the researcher’s knowledge, this study is the first to use a constructivist grounded theory approach in the study of misfit. The interpretive nature of this theoretical viewpoint is consistent with present-day fit/misfit research that seeks to understand peoples’ in-depth feelings and experiences. Constructivist grounded theorists acknowledge that no research study can be entirely free of bias and thus, recognise that a researcher’s past experiences may influence the interpretation of the data. This research demonstrated that constructivist grounded theory as a research methodology is an apposite and consistent approach to use when exploring a phenomenon such as misfit.
- To the researcher’s knowledge, this study represents the first of its kind to examine the phenomenon of misfit in such a comprehensive manner in one single study. For example, attributed causal factors, moderators, coping behaviours and the consequences of misfit have all been investigated in this single study. This approach was somewhat different from other studies, where misfit was examined in a piecemeal fashion, often as an adjunct to fit investigations. It is noteworthy that this study explored ways in which misfitting employees could be effectively managed by their organisations. To the researcher’s knowledge, this aspect of misfit has not been heretofore researched.
- To the researcher’s knowledge, this exploratory grounded theory study represents the first of its kind to attempt to develop new theory showcased in the form of a conceptual model of employee misfit. The extant literature

has been critical of the fact that fit/misfit studies have not been grounded in sound theoretical bases, thus making it difficult for scholars to meaningfully interpret the findings.

- The newly developed conceptual model of employee misfit may assist other researchers in the field of misfit who wish to explore this concept further, perhaps, by empirically testing this model to ensure external validity.

6.5 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several implications for research, theory and practice in the fields of OB, I/O psychology and HRM. In terms of research, the constructivist grounded theory approach used may encourage other researchers to try out other novel techniques to explore misfit. In so doing, a far deeper understanding of the construct may be realised. The conceptual model of employee misfit developed in this study will make a substantial contribution to the extant misfit theory. From the perspective of practice, the findings of this study will inform managers how to creatively harness the potential of misfitting employees.

6.6 Suggestions for Future Research

As pointed out by Wheeler (2010) and Kristof-Brown and Guay (2010), misfit is an area of study that is wide open to researchers. This sentiment holds today. Notwithstanding the fact that the current research study has made considerable strides in demystifying the concept of misfit, several areas need further investigation.

Future research in the area of misfit should extend to other countries, particularly those outside of the US, the UK and Western Europe. This will provide a more universal understanding of misfit. A comparative study of how individuals perceive

and experience misfit in different countries may deepen our understanding of this elusive and amorphous construct.

Another possible direction for future research is to explore misfit using other qualitative techniques such as storytelling, observation, focus groups and causal mapping. These techniques could elicit information about misfit that was previously not forthcoming from empirical studies.

Further studies may also need to develop a scale to empirically measure misfit. Previous studies examining misfit have assumed that misfit is the polar opposite of fit. As a consequence, studies attempting to investigate misfit quantitatively have used instruments designed to measure fit, in the process, making the assumption that low scores achieved in these scales were equated to misfit. Many of the studies adopting this approach have been criticised for not clearly distinguishing between fit and misfit (Wheeler, 2010). As pointed out in Chapters One and Two of this thesis, misfit has also been considered to be a qualitatively different construct to that of fit (Billsberry *et al.*, 2005a). This is perhaps an opportune time to develop a scale unique to misfit, tapping into its own idiosyncrasies. In doing so, a more accurate understanding of misfit issues may be realised.

As highlighted in Chapters Four and Five, misfit has generally been perceived in a negative light. A minority of respondents however, indicated that misfit may indeed be a positive condition that employees and organisations can exploit to realise their potential and achieve a competitive advantage, respectively. Future research could explore misfit from this angle. The findings of such studies could change people's and organisations' mind-sets for the better.

Future research should also attempt to investigate misfit issues from the perspective of organisations. The present study only skimmed the surface of this issue by obtaining feedback on how managers/supervisors deal with their misfitting employees and how organisations can effectively deal with misfits from the

perspective of the misfitting employees. By focusing only on the employee perspective, and without eliciting the organisation's viewpoint, a one-sided view of these issues may have been obtained.

Future research should also be undertaken to examine the impact of misfit on social identity. As highlighted in section 5.9.2.3, the link between misfit and a person's social identity is yet to be fully explored in the literature. SIT posits that in numerous social contexts individuals define their sense of self in terms of their group membership (Haslam *et al.*, 2009). Thus, if a person strongly identifies with members of the in-group, a positive social identity may then develop. However, a person's social identity can be compromised when a person is rejected by members of the in-group on the grounds of displaying different characteristics or behaviour (Haslam *et al.*, 2009).

Finally, scholars exploring misfit in the future should empirically test the conceptual model developed in this study on large samples of misfitting employees. By doing so, external validity could be achieved which would further enhance the credibility of the findings produced in this study.

6.7 Concluding Remarks

The study has clearly indicated the central importance of misfit in understanding the more generalised concept of PE fit and the need to incorporate it in the construction of a theoretically valid model of substantive behavioural outcomes.

What is this thing called misfit? This question has intrigued organisational fit researchers in the past. It is hoped that the findings of this study have untangled some of the mysteries surrounding this elusive construct. Perhaps, it is time for misfit to emerge from the shadows of PE fit, assume its own identity and take its rightful place in the academic arena. In so doing, people will cease having "fits about misfit."

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Dear potential study participant:

I am currently engaged in research for my PhD degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My research area of interest is on exploring what it means misfit in the workplace. There is currently a serious deficiency in the field of misfit research in South Africa and globally. My study aims to make a significant contribution to our understanding of misfit and possibly shed some light into how organisations can effectively deal with their “misfitting” employees in future.

In order to satisfactorily accomplish the objectives set out in this study, it is imperative that the right type of subjects be recruited to participate in face-to-face interviews lasting between sixty and ninety minutes. The purpose of the interviews is to gain some insight into the experiences of individuals’ “misfitting” in their workplaces. Thus, if you are an employee that has been in an organisation for over a year, this letter is targeted at you. Should you be interested in participating in the interview, you will be required to answer the attached pre-screening question either, telephonically (031 2602172) or returned to me via email (williamsonm@ukzn.ac.za). You will then be contacted to confirm a convenient venue and time for the interview.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in participating in this study, feel free to forward this letter and the attached pre-screening question to them. You could also call me or email me with regard to their details so that I could make contact with them directly. It will be very much appreciated.

I end this letter my assuring that CONFIDENTAILITY and ANONYMITY will be guaranteed to all individuals participating in this study.

Many thanks for your time. I hope you give my request a favourable consideration.

Regards,

MERVYWN WILLIAMSON

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, MERVYWN KENNETH WILLIAMSON, am currently registered for studies leading to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree. The requirement to be met for the awarding of the degree is that I should undertake an approved research study leading to the submission of a thesis. The approved topic which I have chosen is:

“Perceptions and Experiences of Organisational Misfit: A Grounded Theory Study of South African Employees.”

Please note that this investigation is being conducted in my personal capacity. Should you need to contact me regarding any aspect of this research, you can do so either by e-mail on [williamsonm@ukzn.ac.za] or telephonically on [031 2602172].

My academic supervisor is [Professor David Coldwell], formerly from the School of Management on the Westville campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, now at the University of Witwatersrand. He can be contacted by e-mail at [David.Coldwell@wits.ac.za].

Information gathered in this study will include data retrieved from the interview that I request you to participate in. Please note that only summary data will be included in the thesis and that your name will not be included. Your anonymity and confidentiality is of utmost importance and will be maintained throughout the study.

Please note that I intend to collect information by means of an interview and that in order to facilitate the gathering of information in an accurate and efficient manner, I intend to make an audio recording of the interview. Should you not wish to consent to the making of such a recording, please make a note to this effect on the following page.

Your participation in an interview is completely voluntary. You also have the right to withdraw at any time during the study.

I appreciate the time and effort it will take you to participate in this study. I would highly appreciate your participation, as it would help me to complete this thesis.

This page can be retained by the respondent.

This page must be handed to the interviewer prior to the commencement of any interview.

Please complete the section below:

I (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research study, and I consent to participating in the research study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I consent or do not consent to the making of an audio recording of the interview to be conducted.

Signature of Participant.....

Date.....

APPENDIX C
PRE-INTERVIEW SCREENING

Mervyn Williamson’s PhD Thesis
College of Law & Management Studies
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Kindly respond to the following question (telephonically) or complete this form and email to Mervyn Williamson. My contact details are as follows:

Telephone: 031 2602172 (Office)
Email: williamsonm@ukzn.ac.za

QUESTION:

You have indicated that you are unhappy in your job. On a scale of 1 to 9, to what extent do you regard or have regarded yourself as a misfit, with 9 being an absolute misfit and 1 not a misfit at all.

Not a Misfit at All				Moderate Misfit				Absolute Misfit
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE
DIRECTED TO EMPLOYEE MISFITS

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I eagerly anticipate your responses to the various questions put to you regarding your perceptions and experiences of being a misfit in your workplace. This interview should take between 45 and 60 minutes of your time. I can assure you that your name and that of your current organisation will not be disclosed in any form of communication relating to matters and outcomes of this study. In addition, your responses to these interview questions will be treated in the strictest of confidence. If during this interview the questions put to you do not make any sense, please feel free to stop me to seek further clarity.

2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

2.1 PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To begin with, I kindly seek some background information about yourself and your workplace.

2.1.1 What is your current job title?

2.1.2 How long have you been employed in your organisation?

2.1.3 What sector best describes the business your organisation is in?

2.1.4 Age?

2.1.5 Gender?

2.1.6 Race?

2.2 MISFIT INFORMATION

I will now focus on trying to obtain your understanding of what being a misfit actually means to employees. You had earlier indicated that you regard yourself as a misfit to some degree. Could you please shed some on some of your experiences by providing me with some feedback to the questions that I would now present to you?

- 2.2.1 In your experience, what does the term 'misfit' mean to you?
- 2.2.2 What do you believe were the factors that caused you to 'misfit' at work?
- 2.2.3 What impact did 'misfit' have on you personally?
- 2.2.4 What do you believe was the impact of you 'not fitting in' on your organisation?
- 2.2.5 How did employees cope with being a 'misfit'?
- 2.2.6 How can your organisation effectively manage its 'misfitting' employees?
- 2.2.7 Were you keen to identify yourself as a 'misfit'? If yes or no, please indicate the reasons why.
- 2.2.8 How did your co-workers react to you "not fitting in"?
- 2.2.9 How did your supervisor or manager deal with you 'not fitting in'?
- 2.2.10 How did you become a misfit? Can you please describe the process?
- 2.2.11 Do you believe that people go through different stages of misfit? If yes or no, please elaborate.

2.3 CONCLUSION

We are now approaching the end of this interview. Is there anything that comes to mind that you would like to share regarding your experiences of “not fitting in” at your workplace/s that we have not touched on? Do you have any questions for me?

In closing, a special thank you for taking time out to participate in this interview. It is very much appreciated.

THE END

APPENDIX E

CODING SCHEMA: EVOLUTION OF CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

Preliminary Categories

Misfit Definitions (MD)

Attributed Causal Factors (ACF)

Misfit Individual Consequences (MIC)

Misfit Organisational Consequences (MOC)

Misfit Coping Behaviour (MCB)

Misfit Management (MM)

Misfit Concealment (MCN)

Misfit Conspicuousness (MCS)

Co-worker Reactions to Misfits (CRM)

Manager/Supervisor Reactions to Misfits (MRM)

Misfit Process (MP)

Misfit Stages (MS)

Categories with Sub-categories

Misfit Definitions (MD)

- A label
- Not conforming
- A multidimensional concept
- Both a positive and negative condition
- A negative psychological experience
- A negative condition
- A personality trait
- A positive condition
- A state of mind
- Not belonging
- A lack of expertise
- A mismatch
- Being incompetent

Attributed Causal Factors (ACF)

- Race
- Personality
- Gender
- Wrong career choice
- Educational background
- Organisational restructuring
- Individual culture
- Social status
- Homosexuality
- Religion
- Management styles
- Organisational culture

- Age
- Financial responsibilities
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of skills
- Lack of training
- Mismatch in placing of employees
- Corruption/Ethical decline
- Co-workers' perceptions and behaviour
- Language
- Misleading at pre-screening
- Working environment
- Family pressure
- High unemployment levels
- HIV status
- Low self-esteem
- Nepotism
- Personal appearance
- Upbringing
- Behavioural patterns
- Communication styles
- Debilitating Illnesses
- Incompetence
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of potential
- Lack of trust
- Schooling system
- Stress
- Work-life balance

Misfit Individual Consequences (MIC)

- Job performance declines
- An increase in stress
- A drop in self-confidence
- Depression
- Deviant behaviour
- A negative impact on emotions
- A decrease in motivational levels
- A negative physiological effect
- Isolation
- Lack of enthusiasm to work
- Resentment
- A need for belongingness
- Suicide
- Uneasiness
- Unhappiness
- Voluntary exit
- A decrease in concentration levels
- Confusion
- Dejection
- Frustration
- Inculcates fear
- Opportunity for self-advancement
- Personality dependent
- Withdrawal
- A loss of self-respect
- Boredom
- Deliberate attempts to get fired
- Give up hope

- Guilt
- Hindrance to success
- Invasion of private time
- Termination
- Unpleasant effects

Misfit Organisational Consequences (MOC)

- A decline in client service levels
- A decrease in productivity
- Creating a toxic environment
- A decline in company reputation
- An increase in employee turnover
- An increase in creativity/innovation
- A destruction of team dynamics
- Escalating training and development costs
- An increase in animosity levels
- A decline in organisational learning
- Creating a challenge for managers

Misfit Coping Behaviour (MCB)

- Organisational exit
- Being vocal about the issues causing misfit
- Become oblivious to workplace issues
- Engaging in proactive behaviour
- Requesting a transfer
- Doing the minimum
- Engaging in deviant behaviour
- Being personality dependent
- Seeking psychological counselling

- Working independently
- Accepting the misfit predicament
- Adapting to the conditions
- Changing the mind-set
- Staying below the radar
- Contemplating suicide

Misfit Management (MM)

- Training and development
- A change in company mind-set
- Interventions
- Early misfit identification
- Counselling
- Relocation
- Recruitment and selection
- Job rotation
- Creative management
- Providing incentives
- Consultation
- Creating an open working environment
- Teambuilding
- Implementing effective strategies
- Enhancing organisational culture
- Motivating to turn it around
- Removing negative misfits
- Career management
- Implementing exit interviews
- Leveraging the positive misfits

Misfit Concealment (MCN)

- A fear of victimisation
- Having an introverted personality
- Being in denial
- Pride
- A fear of rejection
- A lack of confidence
- A preference for covert behaviour

Misfit Conspicuousness (MCS)

- Valuing uniqueness

Co-worker Reactions to Misfits (CRM)

- Ostracise
- Gossip
- Being supportive
- Being antagonistic
- Setting you up
- Being unsupportive
- Engaging in pretentious behaviour

Manager/Supervisor Reactions to Misfits (MRM)

- Encouraging organisational exit
- The absence of a plan
- Interventions
- Engaging in dialogue
- Engaging in proactive behaviour
- Training interventions

- Counselling
- Setting up employee wellness programs
- Early identification of misfits

Misfit Process

- Cognitive dissonance
- Instantaneous process

Misfit Stages

- Multi-stage misfit
- Single-type misfit

Final Categories and Sub-categories

Misfit Definitions (MD)

- a label
- not conforming
- a multidimensional concept
- both a positive and negative condition
- a negative psychological experience
- a negative condition
- a personality trait
- a positive condition
- a state of mind
- not belonging
- a lack of expertise
- a mismatch
- being incompetent

Attributed Causal Factors (ACF)

Personal Factors (PF)

- race
- personality
- gender
- wrong career choice
- educational background
- individual culture
- social status
- homosexuality
- religion
- age
- lack of confidence
- lack of skills
- lack of training
- co-workers' perceptions and behaviour
- language
- HIV status
- low self-esteem
- personal appearance
- upbringing
- behavioural patterns
- debilitating illnesses
- incompetence
- lack of motivation
- lack of potential
- schooling system
- stress

Organisational Factors (OF)

- organisational restructuring
- management styles
- organisational culture
- mismatch in placing of employees
- corruption/ethical decline
- working environment
- misleading at pre-screening
- nepotism
- communication styles

External Factors (EF)

- financial responsibilities
- family pressure
- high unemployment levels
- work-life balance

Misfit Consequences (MC)

Negative Individual Consequences (NIC)

- job performance declines
- an increase in stress
- a drop in self-confidence
- depression
- deviant behaviour
- a negative impact on emotions
- a decrease in motivational levels
- a negative physiological effect
- isolation

- lack of enthusiasm to work
- resentment
- a need for belongingness
- suicide
- uneasiness
- unhappiness
- voluntary exit
- a decrease in concentration levels
- confusion
- dejection
- frustration
- inculcates fear
- a loss of self-respect
- deliberate attempts to get fired
- give up hope
- hindrance to success
- invasion of private time
- termination
- unpleasant effects

Positive Individual Consequences (PIC)

- opportunity for self-advancement

Positive Organisational Consequences (POO)

- an increase in creativity/innovation

Negative Organisational Consequences (NOC)

- a decline in client service levels
- a decrease in productivity

- creating a toxic environment
- a decline in company reputation
- an increase in employee turnover
- a destruction of team dynamics
- escalating training and
- development costs
- an increase in animosity levels
- a decline in organisational
- learning
- creating a challenge for managers

Misfit Coping Behaviour (MCB)

- becoming vocal about the issues causing misfit
- become oblivious to workplace issues
- engaging in proactive behaviour
- requesting a transfer
- doing the minimum
- engaging in deviant behaviour
- seeking psychological counselling
- working independently
- accepting the misfit predicament
- adapting to the conditions
- changing the mind-set
- staying below the radar
- contemplating suicide

Misfit Moderating Variable (MMV)

- personality

Misfit Management (MM)

- training and development
- a change in company mind-set
- interventions
- misfit identification
- counselling
- relocation
- recruitment and selection
- job rotation
- creative management
- providing incentives
- consultation
- creating an open working environment
- teambuilding
- implementing effective strategies
- enhancing organisational culture
- motivating to turn it around
- removing negative misfits
- career management
- implementing exit interviews
- leveraging the positive misfits

Other Misfit Study Related Factors (OMSRF)

Misfit Identification (MID)

Misfit Concealment (MCN)

- a fear of victimisation
- being in denial
- pride

- a fear of rejection
- a lack of confidence
- a preference for covert behaviour

Misfit Conspicuousness (MCS)

- valuing uniqueness

Co-worker Reactions to Misfits (CRM)

- ostracise
- gossip
- being supportive
- being antagonistic
- setting you up
- being unsupportive
- engaging in pretentious behaviour

Manager/Supervisor Reactions to Misfits (MRM)

- encouraging organisational exit
- the absence of a plan
- interventions
- engaging in dialogue
- engaging in proactive behaviour
- training interventions
- counselling
- setting up employee wellness programs
- early identification of misfits

Misfit Dynamics (MDM)

Misfit Process (MP)

- cognitive dissonance
- instantaneous process

Misfit Stages (MS)

- multi-stage misfit
- single-type misfit

APPENDIX F

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



12 September 2012

Mr Mervyn Kenneth Williamson 981210611
School of Management, IT & Governance
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Williamson

Protocol reference number: HSS/0221/07D
New project title: Perceptions and Experiences of Organisational Misfit: A Grounded Theory Study of South African Employees

Approval and change of dissertation title

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted full approval for the above mentioned project:

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully


.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

cc Supervisor Professional D Coldwell
cc Academic leader Professor KK Govender
cc School Admin. Ms Angela Pearce

Professor S Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



APPENDIX G**TURNITIN REPORT PART 1**

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APPENDIX I**EDITOR'S LETTER**

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Income tax number: 0526066204

11 September 2013

This is to confirm that I have edited the thesis, "Perceptions and experiences of organisational misfit: A grounded theory study of South African employees", by Mervywn Kenneth Williamson, student number 981210611.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms) Deanne Collins (MA)

Professional Editor