'MAKING A DIFFERENCE' AND 'DOING SOMETHING WORTHWHILE': AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

'Making a Difference' and 'Doing Something Worthwhile': An Ethnography of Employee Engagement

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Employee engagement (EE) is an emerging field of academic research focussed on the positive experience of work and its relationship with improved organizational performance. Much of this research relies on surveys and statistical analyses to assess EE's consequences and levels. This quantitative approach neglects the subjective perspective; in particular how individuals understand and experience EE within a specific organizational context (Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; Shuck *et al.* 2011).

The current study addresses this deficiency through an interpretive ethnography of a UK civil service department; a sector also under-represented in the literature (Gatenby *et al.* 2009). Interviews, observations and documentary evidence from twelve months' fieldwork were analysed narratively and thematically to provide insights into both the content and process of individual EE.

The analysis revealed that participants understood and experienced EE as a combination of positive thoughts, active emotions and changes in work behaviour which were applied simultaneously to meaningful work. That work connected participants with aspects of individual identity, people and/or values which were personally important.

Cultural and other contextual factors influenced participants towards and away from EE. When these factors pulled in opposite directions at the same time, participants acted in accordance with the most salient perception (Ashforth 2001; Ashforth *et al.* 2008), even when this led to increased personal risk. This showed participants demonstrating agency within their EE experiences; making choices about when to apply all of their energies to work (Kahn 1990).

Overall, this study provides an alternative and under-represented perspective on the experience of EE. In particular, the centrality of meaningful work, the influence of specific cultural elements and the mediating role of perception all contribute new insights to ongoing debates within the extant literature.

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Finally, this weighty tome is dedicated to my Mum and Dad who led me to believe in myself and persevere.

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List of Abbreviations

BM	Board Member
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CIQs	Central Issues Questions
CoR	Conservation of Resources
CP12	Corporate Plan 2012
CSPS	Civil Service People Survey
EE	Employee Engagement
GWA	Gallup Workplace Audit
HR	Human Resources
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources
MBI	Maslach Burnout Inventory
MBI-GS	Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey
NHS	National Health Service
NSG	National School of Government
OB	Organizational Behaviour
OC	Organizational Climate
OD	Organizational Development
PC	Psychological Climate
P-E Fit	Person-Environment Fit
PI	Personal Initiative
PM	Performance Management
POB	Positive Organizational Behaviour
POS	Perceived Organizational Support
POS	Positive Organizational Scholarship
PRQs	Preliminary Research Questions
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
RN	Royal Navy
RQs	Research Questions
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SET	Social Exchange Theory
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
UWES	Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
WLH	Working Longer Hours

CHAPTER 1
SETTING THE SCENE

'...what sociologists most need to know is what goes on behind the faces of men (sic.), what it is that makes life for each of us either dull or thrilling. [...] Otherwise we do not know the world in which we actually live.'
(Park 1950: viii in Bulmer 1984: 93)

'I could hardly contain my excitement...And it was just...it was just fantastic. To do work that I found really, really interesting...it was just wonderful.'
(James 8/11/11)

Introduction

This thesis contributes to debates about work as a positive experience. The focus is employee engagement (EE); a subject which has received more attention from practitioners (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010) due to its association with improved organizational performance (Harter *et al.* 2002; Harter *et al.* 2009). For academics, EE is an emerging concept (Shuck *et al.* 2013) involving individuals applying all of their energies: thoughts, feelings and actions, simultaneously to their work (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002). Although said to arise from the interaction between individuals and their organizational context (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Kahn 1990; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Saks 2006), EE is more often studied using surveys (Schaufeli and Salanova 2011; Reissner and Pagan 2013). Consequently, the individual perspective and the interaction with the organizational environment have received comparatively little attention (Shuck *et al.* 2011; Reissner and Pagan 2013). This qualitative ethnography addresses this deficit by exploring the subjective understanding and experience of EE within a small department of the United Kingdom (UK) civil service. In doing so it contributes new insights into the role of perception, agency and meaningful work in EE.

The remainder of this chapter sets the scene for the current study. It clarifies the background to the research, the aim, questions and methodology before describing the research setting and thesis structure.

Background to the Research

Since 2000, EE has become an increasingly popular subject for both practitioners and academics (Macey and Schneider 2008; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b). For practitioners, this popularity is associated with the suggested connections between EE and improved organizational performance (Harter *et al.* 2002; Harter *et al.* 2009). EE is credited with a wide range of positive organizational effects including greater productivity, increased profitability, greater customer satisfaction, reduced health and safety incidents, lower sick absence and reduced employee turnover (Harter *et al.* 2009; MacLeod and Clarke 2009; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010).

While there is relatively little evidence of a *causal* link between EE and improved performance (Robinson *et al.* 2007; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010), there is plenty of evidence of a *belief* in this link (Cabinet Office 2007; MacLeod and Clarke 2009; Robinson *et al.* 2004; Rees *et al.* 2013; Truss *et al.* 2006). Many organizations invest significant sums in their attempts to improve and monitor levels of EE (CIPD 2008; CIPD 2010; Gatenby *et al.* 2009; Rees *et al.* 2013).

This investment is not limited to the private sector. For example, the UK and Canadian governments have both devoted public money to investigating and promoting the concept (MacLeod and Clarke 2009; Schmidt 2004; Schmidt 2009, Scottish Executive 2007). In 2008, the UK Government initiated a survey of engagement levels (MacLeod and Clarke 2009) for all of its 525,000 employees (Office for National Statistics 2009). The Civil Service People Survey (CSPS) has run every year since with the primary purpose of improving '...productivity and delivery...' (Civil Service 2014). In March 2011, the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, provided governmental support for EE by announcing the establishment of a cross-sector Employee Engagement Taskforce (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) aimed at helping employers share best practice.

Regardless of sector, efforts to increase EE concentrate on organizational influence; on creating a context in which employees are prepared to 'go the extra mile' (Rees *et al.* 2013: 2781) to improve productivity and efficiency (CIPD 2006b; Ellis and Sorensen 2009; Harter *et al.* 2009; Wellins *et al.* 2005). The underlying assumption is that organizational stimuli, e.g. feedback, rewards and clear goals (Harter *et al.* 2002), will elicit the same response from all employees (Kahn 1990; 1992). For practitioners, EE thus becomes a '...workplace approach...' (MacLeod and Clark 2009: 9); something *done to* employees for the good of the organization. Robertson and Cooper characterise this corporate and instrumental perspective as 'Narrow Engagement' (2010: 326); a view they also identify within some of the academic literature (e.g. Harter *et al.* 2002).

Apart from two seminal articles by Kahn (1990; 1992), scholarly interest in EE has lagged behind that of practitioners (Little and Little 2006; Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010). According to Macey and Schneider, this has resulted in a '…sparse and diverse theoretical and empirically demonstrated nomological net…' (2008:3) and EE has been described and measured as a psychological or emotional state, an attitude, particular behaviours and/or organizational outcomes (Harter *et al.* 2002; 2009; Kahn 1990; Macey and Schneider 2008; Robinson *et al.* 2004). Debates continue about EE's distinctiveness (Macey and Schneider 2008; Newman and Harrison 2008; Saks 2008; Shuck *et al.* 2013) and how it should be measured (Bakker *et al.* 2008; Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Demerouti *et al.* 2010; González-Romá *et al.* 2006; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011; Sonnentag 2011).

In spite of these debates, there is agreement that EE is a multi-faceted concept influenced by organizational context (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Christian *et al.* 2011; Bakker and Leiter 2010; Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Saks 2006; Shuck *et al. 2*011). Given the importance placed on this process, it is curious that only a very limited number of articles have studied EE as a whole concept within context (i.e. Kahn 1990; Shuck *et al.* 2011). Otherwise the field is dominated by the use of surveys and statistical analyses (Schaufeli and Salanova 2011; Shuck *et al.* 2011).

These provide useful information about the prevalence of EE and its outcomes yet struggle to reflect either the subjective, lived experience of engagement (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Rees *et al.* 2013; Reissner and Pagan 2013; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Shuck *et al.* 2011) or the dynamic complexity of organizational life (Demerouti *et al.* 2010; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1990; Kreiner *et al.* 2006; Yin 1994).

In summary, although scholars accept the role of organizational context, few studies are designed to take account of it (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Shuck *et al.* 2011). Meanwhile, practitioners assume context to be the dominant influence on EE and neglect the role of the individual. For different reasons, it seems practitioners and scholars have paid little attention to the possibility that individuals may behave differently in similar circumstances and/or to the potential influence of more subtle contextual factors such as cultural norms or values (Kahn 1992; Shuck *et al.* 2011; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013). Both omissions undermine the academic understanding of EE and any practitioner attempts to influence it. Both also featured within the 'foreshadowed problems' (Malinowski 1922: 8 in Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) which eventually became the research aim and preliminary questions for the current study.

Research Aim and Questions

The aim of the study was to describe and explain the individual experience of EE. Three preliminary research questions (PRQs) were developed based on an early review of literature:

PRQ1: How do individuals understand and experience EE?
PRQ2: How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?
PRQ3: What is the role of organizational context in the creation and maintenance of individual EE?

These questions were revised following the full literature review to include additional aspects of EE requiring further research. The resulting RQ Framework (below) is used throughout the thesis to provide a logical structure and maintain a connection with the EE literature (Brewer 2000):

RQ Framework

Research Questions (RQs)	Central Issues Questions (CIQs)
1. How do individuals understand and experience EE?	a) With what do individuals engage? b) What is the scope and focus of engaged behaviour? c) What are the potential disadvantages of EE?
2. How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?	a) What is the role of trust? b) What is the role of perception and individual agency compared with the role of contextual factors (e.g. managers, cultural norms and values)?

RQ1 and its associated CIQs concern the content of EE; individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviour during the experience. RQ2 concerns the process; the influences and interactions between the individual and their environment (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Bakker and Leiter 2010; Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Saks 2006; Shuck *et al.* 2010). Taken together, the study aim and RQ framework required a research approach which would enable an in-depth exploration of the subjective experience of EE within a naturalistic setting (Cohen *et al.* 2008; Kahn 1992).

Approach to the Research

The research was conducted as a qualitative ethnography. According to Brewer, ethnography's objectives are '...to understand social **meanings** and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting...' (2000:11, original emphasis). Rather than testing hypotheses, this study was concerned with providing the best explanation for events, within a particular context and from the perspective of those who live it (Agar 2010; Douven 2011). A qualitative ethnography seemed the most appropriate approach to meet the requirements outlined above.

Qualitative ethnography also had other advantages. These are briefly mentioned here with a fuller explanation provided in Chapter 4. Firstly, this approach was used by Kahn (1990) in his seminal study of engagement.

Adopting a similar approach would enable comparisons to be made between the current study and that research (Brewer 2000; Mason 2002; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Secondly, subtle realism, proposed by Hammersley (1990; 1992) as a philosophical basis for ethnography, reflects the ontological and epistemological assumptions within the RQ framework. Finally, ethnography is distinguished by the need for the researcher to participate within the research setting in order to become familiar with how and why social processes occur as they do (Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Taber 2010). As the study was being funded by the civil service, this factor meant an additional contribution could be made during the research period.

Subtle realism also accepts that the researcher is part of the social world and more than simply a means of collecting the data (Brewer 2000; Finlay 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The whole research process, from identification of questions to analysis and presentation of the findings (Altheide and Johnson 1998 in Brewer 2000) is influenced by '...their personal characteristics and biographies...' (Heyl 2001: 378). There is an expectation that the researcher will acknowledge these factors (Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and provide '...a reflexive account of themselves and the process of their research' (Altheide and Johnson 1998: 292 in Brewer 2000: 130). This weaving of the personal with the scholarly is, of course, not solely the preserve of ethnography. For example, in *The Sociological Imagination,* C. Wright Mills advises all sociologists to keep a journal in recognition that '...one's life experiences feed one's intellectual work...' (1959: 196). The following section provides some insight into how my own 'life experiences' fed into the 'intellectual work' of this thesis.

Reflexivity: a brief autoethnography

I grew up in a public sector family. My mother was a secretary in the Houses of Parliament until she got married in 1955 and was obliged to leave according to the rules then governing women's employment in the civil service. My father worked almost all his life for British Rail and retired while it was still a nationalised industry. My grandfathers also worked in the public sector; one as a train driver and the other as a caretaker in a school. Last but not least, my

only uncle spent the majority of his working life as a civil servant in the Department of Transport. Given this background it is hardly surprising that I joined the civil service soon after leaving school in 1978.

My 'academic' life began in 1997 when I became a training officer and was sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) to undertake my first degree. Traces of that first study can be found within this thesis; both in its conduct and through an unintended discovery.

For my dissertation, I studied the role of performance appraisal within an NHS hospital while also working in the hospital's training department. Incidental to that focus, I discovered that some nurses struggled to balance their chosen 'professional' identity with their required 'corporate' identity as hospital employees. This struggle became more acute whenever the requirements of their professional body, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), contrasted with hospital policy. The nurses then faced a dilemma. As NHS *employees* they were required to follow hospital policy yet, if that policy breached the RCN code, they risked losing their licence to practise. On the other hand, if they adhered to the RCN *professional* code and breached hospital policy they risked disciplinary action. Put differently, which identity should they prioritise? For some reason that dilemma and the notion of different 'selves' within one job remained with me as my career continued.

In 2001, I joined the National School of Government (NSG) as an organizational development (OD) consultant; a role with considerable similarities to that of an ethnographer. I spent time in civil service departments, in the UK and abroad, attempting to understand the experiences of others. I was both an outsider and an insider (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007); outside of the host department yet inside as a fellow civil servant. I interviewed people, had countless informal conversations, observed processes and reviewed documentation in my attempts to learn about their working lives. All of this had to be transformed from the particularities of individual experiences to a written explanation appropriate to an alternative audience (*ibid.* 2007)

In 2006, I completed an MSc in occupational psychology. Again, insights which were incidental to that research resonate with this thesis. Participants in that study referred to differences between self and organizational role, e.g. 'It really isn't me', implying a dislocation between how they viewed themselves and how they must 'be' for work. Once again there was the notion of different selves within one employment.

Two years later, I worked with a Cabinet Office team designing and implementing CSPS, the national survey of staff EE. Rather than my previous encounters with people separating themselves into different identities, EE involved connecting with work (Kahn 1990; 1992) and my interest was roused.

The quantitative results of CSPS were published for every department and agency yet the qualitative responses were omitted. It seemed to me that without that narrative, there was nothing to explain the experience and understanding of individual employees. My previous research and OD experiences had stirred an initial interest in engagement but it was this failure to publish the qualitative results which acted as the catalyst for my choice of EE as the subject for this study. To paraphrase Mills (1959), my personal history led to the identification of a sociological problem worthy of study and to the choice of an ethnographic methodology. That methodology is said to require the use of reflexivity (Altheide and Johnson 1998 in Brewer 2000; Davies 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Consequently, I appear in the first person throughout the thesis to explain the rationale for decisions and demonstrate '...good practice' (Brewer 2000: 130).

 Research Setting
The detail behind the choice of research setting is provided within Chapter 4. This section, instead, describes the host organization which provided the contextual backdrop for participants' experiences of EE and the setting for the fieldwork. Throughout the thesis, context is taken to mean '...phenomena that surround and thus exist in the environment external to the individual...' (Mowday and Sutton 1993:198). This broad interpretation allows for context to be seen

as providing individuals with both opportunities and constraints (Huber 1990 in Mowday and Sutton 1993).

Describing the host organization presents something of an ethical dilemma (Nespor 2000; Tilley and Woodthorpe 2011). In part, I chose to conduct a qualitative ethnography to address the absence of context within EE research (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rees *et al.* 2013; Shuck 2011). The findings in Chapter 5 show that the organization's history, current constitution, products and services were all important influencing factors on participants' EE. Omitting those details would weaken or undermine the study conclusions yet including them makes identification extremely likely (Tilley and Woodthorpe 2011). The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants would then also be at risk (Nespor 2000).

Exercising '...ethical situationism...' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:219), I have anonymised the organization and describe only those aspects essential to understanding participants' EE. To reduce the risk to confidentiality I use a pseudonym for each participant and have blurred their occupational roles. Additionally, the passage of time should weaken the risk. I finalised the thesis two years *after* leaving the field and it will be embargoed for the maximum period of time.

GovDep is a UK civil service department which dates back over two hundred years (GovDep 2011a). Its primary purpose is maintaining the safety of life at sea by producing accurate navigational charts of the world's oceans. These charts are used by the Royal Navy (RN) for UK defence, by international commercial shipping and by part-time sailors. The historical origins are best described by Gareth, one of the study's participants:

> '*It exists because we were losing more ships to accidents than enemy fire. It is entirely entwined with the British Empire and our need to be able to get around the globe. That's why we're in this successful position of having a mandate of charting the world!*' (16/5/12)

In 1996, GovDep became a 'Trading Fund', a commercial company and civil service hybrid (Cabinet Office 2012a). In its commercial capacity, it competes in the global market and supplies over 70% of the world's shipping with navigational products (GovDep Annual Report 2013a). The profits from these sales fund GovDep's *'public task'* responsibilities for mariner safety and UK defence (GovDep 2013b). Although the commercial activities are essential to GovDep's continued existence, it is the history and connection with the Navy which feature as major factors within participants' EE.

Located in a number of separate buildings on one site, GovDep employs approximately 1100 people across seven functional 'Divisions'. Within those Divisions, staff are organised in teams according to their roles and responsibilities. Most are technicians using complex digital technology or other specialist equipment to deliver GovDep's products and services. The site works 24/7 due to the need to alert worldwide shipping to hazards at sea and the responsibility for defence means that employees often work closely with a small number of naval officers based on the site. The technicians and Navy personnel are supported by corporate services including human resources, finance, information technology, sales and marketing.

In relation to EE, GovDep is subject to the annual survey (CSPS) and also carries out its own monthly questionnaire. During the fieldwork, EE was a strategic priority and featured in the corporate plan (People Strategy 2011b) and in the goals of the OD team who were my hosts and team colleagues for the year's fieldwork.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is presented in six chapters. This introduction is followed by two literature review chapters. Contrary to the more usual structure (Saunders *et al.* 2003), these move from a narrower focus on EE literature to an examination of the relationship with other concepts and broader sociological debates.

Chapter 2 is a systematic review of EE literature (Boote and Beile 2005; Rocco and Plakhotnik 2009) which informed both the theoretical and methodological aspects of the study. Based around five seminal articles the chapter traces the evolution of academic interest in EE. Three broad perspectives are revealed: EE as self-in-role, as the antithesis to burnout and as behaviour instrumental to organizational performance (Harter *et al.* 2002; Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck 2011; Shuck and Wollard 2010). Additional literature from each perspective led to themes and questions which required further investigation. These 'central issues' (Cooper 1988 in Randolph 2009: 3) were used to create the revised RQ Framework which, in turn, provided a theoretical basis for the fieldwork and analysis (Brewer 2000).

Chapter 3 broadens the focus of the review. EE's distinctiveness is established by comparing and contrasting it with three work-related concepts with which it is most often associated (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). For the current study EE is conceptualised as 'self- in- role' (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006) and defined as: *a positive fluctuating experience combining cognition, affect and behaviour which arises from the interaction between the individual and their organizational context.* The chapter concludes by discussing the apparent absence of a sociological perspective on EE; a perspective which considers how the individual experience connects and is influenced by the broader social context (Henslin 2013) or what Mills (1959) refers to as the intersection of biography and history.

Chapter 4 provides a reflexive justification and explanation of the ethnographic research methodology including the underlying philosophical assumptions, data gathering methods, analysis and presentation of the findings. Structured around the stages of the fieldwork, the chapter also clarifies the approach to ethical and quality issues and provides examples of how both were applied to the current study.

Chapter 5 uses the RQ framework to present the research findings. To reflect the immediacy and energy of the EE experience much of the chapter is written in the present tense. One participant's experience is threaded throughout the chapter as an illustrative example of the themes from the analysis (Brewer 2000). Theoretical insights from the literature are used to inform the interpretation of the data (Wilson and Chaddha 2009) and the incremental presentation of the findings means that a number of early conclusions are drawn (Emerson *et al.* 1995).

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis. The main themes from the findings are reviewed and discussed in relation to the extant literature. Contributions and limitations are identified along with implications for future research and practice.

Summary

This chapter has set the scene for what follows. The background to the research, the aim, questions and settings have all been described along with an outline of the thesis structure. The next chapter provides the theoretical basis for the study through a systematic review of the EE literature.

CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT (EE)

Introduction

The aim of the current study is to describe and explain the experience of individual EE within a UK civil service department (GovDep). The two review chapters provide a theoretical background for that aim by refining the PRQs and identifying how the current study contributes to the field of EE research. The review moves from this chapter's narrower focus on EE literature to the next chapter's consideration of EE's distinctiveness and relationship with broader sociological debates. Although contrary to the more usual structure (Sanders *et al.* 2003) this more accurately reflects the 'bottom up' development of EE research (Macey and Schneider 2008) and the process of the literature review.

This chapter is presented in three sections. Section 1 provides a reflexive account of the use of a systematic literature review (Boote and Beile 2005; Bowman 2007; Cooper 1984 in Randolph 2009; Cooper 1988 in Bowman 2007; Torraco 2005; Webster and Watson 2002) including a description of the review process. Section 2 traces the evolution of EE, comparing and contrasting three different conceptualisations to identify issues central to the aim of the study. Common attributes are incorporated into a model which illustrates how EE is portrayed as a linear process within much of the literature.

Section 3 summarises the central issues, mapping the similarities and disparities between them and confirming the need for further research from the individual or emic perspective (Shuck *et al.* 2011) which takes account of organizational context (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013). The PRQs are revised and it is argued that combining these two perspectives with the central issues provides a more holistic view of individual EE.

Section 1:   A Systematic Review

A combination of three factors led me to use a systematic literature review. First, the need to provide a clear theoretical framework and identify the study's contribution; second, the desire to do so in a way which adheres to ideas of

good practice (Boote and Beile 2005; Rocco and Plakhotnik 2009) and, finally, the ethnographic research strategy (Altheide and Johnson 1998 in Brewer 2000).

Referencing the research strategy prior to the methodology chapter creates a dilemma as it is yet to be fully explained or justified. I chose a pragmatic solution: providing explanations as the need arises and limited to the immediate focus of the discussion. For example, the connections between a systematic review and ethnography are included whereas underlying ontological and epistemological issues are postponed until the Chapter 4.

Recent approaches to ethnography emphasise the use of reflexivity to acknowledge the influence of the researcher on all aspects of research (Brewer 2000; Bryman 2000; Davies 1999; Finlay 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Van Maanen 2011). Brewer provides a detailed checklist of the items requiring reflexivity (1994 in Brewer 2000). This includes explaining and justifying key decisions throughout the research report (Brewer 2000; Davies 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Consequently, rather than being taken on trust, my decisions are made explicit and become part of the research 'story'.

Reflexivity also fits with guidance on systematic reviews which require a clear description and justification of key decisions at all stages of the process, including preparation (Boote and Beile 2005; Bowman 2007; Moustaghfir 2008; Randolph 2009; Torraco 2005). Although more usually associated with quantitative meta-analyses (Bowman 2007; Randolph 2009), systematic reviews can also be employed in narrative form for qualitative research (Bowman 2007; Randolph 2009; Shuck 2011).

I used Cooper's Taxonomy of Literature Reviews (1988 in Randolph 2009) as the basis for the review decisions. Six characteristics of quality reviews are shown in Table 1 (below). The categories applied to the current study are underlined and an explanation for my choices is provided in the following paragraphs.

Table 1: Taxonomy of literature reviews (Cooper 1988 in Randolph 2009: 3)

Characteristic	Categories
1. Focus	<u>Research outcomes</u> <u>Research methods</u> <u>Theories</u> Practices or applications
2. Goal	Integration: a) generalization b) conflict resolution c) linguistic bridge-building Criticism <u>Identification of central issues</u>
3. Perspective	Neutral <u>Espousal of position</u>
4. Coverage	Exhaustive Exhaustive with selection citation Representative <u>Central or pivotal</u>
5. Organization	<u>Historical</u> Conceptual Methodological
6. Audience	<u>Specialised scholars</u> <u>General scholars</u> Practitioners or policymakers General public

'Focus' refers to aspects of literature included within the review (Randolph 2009). Given the nascent academic interest in EE (Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Shuck 2011) there was likely to be limited availability of articles so I applied an inclusive approach; all four aspects were considered but with an emphasis on the first three as they relate more to the academic requirements of a thesis (Randolph 2009).

The 'Goal' of the review (Cooper 2003 in Bowman 2007) refers to its purpose. These range from the integration of previous research through to criticism of research methods and the identification of central issues (Cooper 1988 in

Randolph 2009). The latter includes themes or questions which give rise to directions for future research, i.e. using the past to *inform* the research journey rather than dictate its destination. As the goal of the study was to seek understanding rather than test hypotheses (Mason 2002) I chose to focus on identifying central issues.

The third characteristic is 'perspective'. This refers to the degree of neutrality adopted by the researcher towards the literature. Randolph suggests that this often reflects the use of quantitative or qualitative research methods. A greater attempt at neutrality is associated with the former while the latter brings an expectation that the researcher will reveal their '…pre-existing biases…' (2009:3). My bias was against the use of surveys to measure EE. Three years of completing online questionnaires led me to doubt their adequacy in capturing the complexity of my or my colleagues' relationship with work. Additionally, as already mentioned, the qualitative data from those surveys was never published. Combined with an existing inclination towards interpretive research, this bias almost certainly influenced the way articles employing surveys are discussed. Nevertheless, I have attempted a degree of balance; firstly, by making this bias clear, and secondly, by also critically reviewing qualitative studies (Brewer 2000; Cooper 2003 in Bowman 2007).

The fourth characteristic is 'coverage' (Cooper 2003 in Bowman 2007). This ranges from an exhaustive review requiring a team of researchers through to a '…central review…,' (Bowman 2007: 173) involving a critique of seminal articles important to the research topic. The articles' significance may include initiating a research interest, applying new methods to an existing topic or reframing the research topic towards a new direction (Cooper 2003 in Bowman 2007). As a lone researcher investigating a topic of relatively recent academic interest (Bakker *et al.* 2011; Little and Little 2006; Macey and Schneider 2008; Rafferty *et al.* 2005; Robinson *et al.* 2004; Saks 2006; Shuck 2011; Shuck and Wollard 2010), I used a purposive sample of seminal literature but with variations to Cooper's (1988 in Randolph 2009) approach. Although I used the seminal articles for the overall structure, subsequent articles which reference these are also reviewed. This provides a greater breadth and depth of literature against

which to position the current study. Secondly, in an attempt to provide a theoretical basis for EE, much of the literature refers to more established theories from other fields (Macey and Schneider 2008). These threads are followed but only to the extent of clarifying their relevance to EE and the PRQs. Finally, as referred to earlier, I have included some practitioner literature. This decision reflects the connections between practitioner literature, the research setting and the study aim.

The aim of the current study is to describe and explain the individual experience of EE within a department of the UK civil service. The underlying assumption, supported by the academic literature (Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Saks 2006), is of a connection between organizational context and the individual experience of EE. One aspect of that context may be the way EE is portrayed and interpreted within GovDep which is, in turn, influenced by practitioner literature (e.g. Cabinet Office 2007; Harter *et al.* 2009; Macleod and Clarke 2009; Scottish Executive 2007). Excluding practitioner sources would risk omitting the basis on which GovDep makes corporate decisions about EE which may, in turn, affect individuals (Maslach *et al.* 2001).

While scholarly literature was limited by the newness of academic interest in EE (Little and Little 2006; Macey and Schneider 2008; Rafferty *et al.* 2005; Robinson *et al.* 2004; Saks 2006; Shuck 2011; Shuck and Wollard 2010), there was an overwhelming amount of practitioner literature. For example, Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) report that a simple Google search for 'employee engagement' in June 2010 resulted in 640,000 'hits' compared with only 96 refereed articles on the EBSCO PsycINFO database. In October 2012, a similar Google search generated over 20,3000,00 results. Identifying seminal practitioner articles from such abundance was impractical for a single researcher. I therefore limited the practitioner articles to those referenced within either civil service texts or the seminal articles. The next issue was differentiating between the two types.

A number of academic articles separate EE literature into 'practitioner' and 'academic' (e.g. Attridge 2009; Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Scottish Executive 2007; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Shuck 2011; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009), yet none make their criteria explicit. As practitioner literature is often referred to in less favourable terms (Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck and Wollard 2010) it seemed important to ensure appropriate categorization. Table 2 (below) shows the criteria I used to differentiate the two sources. It combines items associated with evaluating the reliability of literature with characteristics identified as synonymous with either 'practitioner' or 'academic' literature (Saunders *et al.* 2003). I applied the criteria on a 'balance of probabilities' basis.

Table 2: Differentiating academic and practitioner literature

Criteria	Literature Type
• Peer reviewed • Academic journals • Empirical research • Analytic/conceptual • Comprehensive references/bibliography • Primarily addressing an academic audience, e.g. recommendations for future research	Academic
• Non peer reviewed • Professional journals, self-published or popular press • Commercial focus, e.g. openly promoting own products, tools or services, within the article • Opinion based • No or limited references/bibliography • Primarily addressing a practitioner audience, e.g. recommendations for practice • Categorised as 'practitioner' by peer reviewed article	Practitioner

The fifth characteristic is the organization of the literature (Cooper 1988 in Randolph 2009; Cooper 1998 in Bowman 2007). Options include an historical, conceptual or methodological structure (Cooper 1998 in Bowman 2007).

Torraco (2005) suggests that an historical review of seminal work is particularly appropriate for newer topics. It provides the opportunity to identify the main themes across the literature and contributes to the creation of an integrated perspective. As this is also consistent with the goal and coverage decisions described earlier I chose this approach. Section 2 therefore traces the evolution of academic interest in EE including comparisons between academic and practitioner themes. Section 3 identifies and summarises the themes which are central to the current study and describes the refinement of the PRQs to reflect the review findings.

The final characteristic of Cooper's taxonomy (1988 in Randolph 2009) concerns the intended audience for the review. As part of a PhD thesis, the audience for this review is pre-determined as scholars.

In summary, this review provides a theoretical foundation for the proposed study through the identification of central issues within a purposive sample of practitioner and academic EE literature. Having established the review strategy the next consideration is the process of the review (Randolph 2009).

Finding and Selecting the Literature

As outlined in Chapter 1, I had identified three PRQs. I used these as the starting point for the EE literature search:

PRQ1: How do individuals understand and experience EE?

PRQ2: How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?

PRQ3: What is the role of organizational context in the creation and
maintenance of individual EE?

A number of assumptions are implied within these PRQs. The most obvious is the assumption that EE exists as a separate and unique concept. I accepted this for the purposes of searching and selecting the literature. Secondly, the use of the term 'employee engagement' assumes that it is familiar to individuals and can be articulated and/or observed. The current popularity of EE with practitioners (Avery *et al.* 2007; Little and Little 2006; Jeung 2011; Macey and

Schneider 2008; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009) combined with GovDep's use of quarterly and annual 'employee engagement' surveys made it extremely likely that it would be familiar to participants. Whether it could be observed was left open but the decision to use a term more frequently associated with the practitioner literature (Little and Little 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010) was a deliberate one.

EE articles are published in a wide range of journals (Shuck 2011) including management, occupational health, work psychology and organizational behaviour (OB). Consequently, I did the initial electronic search across a number of different electronic databases: EBSCO: Business Source Premier and PsycINFO, Emerald, JSTOR, Sage and SSCI. The search parameters were for scholarly articles, books and/or theses (referred to hereafter simply as 'articles') published in English between January 1990 and August 2011. The first date reflects the earliest publication referenced within civil service literature and was identified during the development of the PRQs. The second date is when the initial search took place. Alerts were placed for future articles and the later date was subsequently extended to August 2013 when the review chapters were finalised. Key words and phrases included *employee engagement*, *work engagement* or *job engagement* within the article title; reflecting the three most frequent terms.

The initial search yielded a total of 263 articles. I reduced that number by removing duplicates and then by limiting the country of origin to the UK, US and the EU states. I reviewed the remaining articles in two stages. Stage one involved the reading of abstracts and assessing for relevance against the PRQs. For example, the PRQs concern *individual* EE, so articles focussed on *organizational* EE were excluded, e.g. Pugh and Dietz (2008). Stage two involved a full reading of the remaining articles with two purposes in mind: to identify issues central to the PRQs and select seminal articles for the historical review. The selection criteria for these articles are shown in Table 3 (below).

Table 3: Seminal articles selection criteria (adapted from Cooper 2003 in Bowman 2007)

1. Addresses one or more of the issues within the PRQs **and**
2. Referred to as seminal by other authors **and/or** frequently cited **and**
3. Initiates a line of enquiry into EE **and/or**
4. Provides a new conceptualisation of EE **and/or**
5. Introduces new research method(s).

I recorded all relevant articles within the developing bibliography and also filed them electronically according to their association with themes from the seminal articles. Additional articles were later identified through a combination of references within previous articles and journal alerts for the seminal articles.

Connections between EE and older, more academically established, concepts such as commitment and job satisfaction became clearer during the historical review. Articles referenced in discussions about the distinctiveness of EE formed the basis of the literature reviewed within the second literature chapter. I decided to include or exclude each of those articles on the basis of its relevance to a combination of the PRQs and the central issues identified during the historical review in this chapter. The total number of academic articles referenced within both review chapters is 223 of which 93 are focussed on EE.

Section 2:   Evolution of EE

I selected five seminal articles for the historical review. Table 4 (below) contains the key aspects of each article (Webster and Watson 2002). The outcomes, methods and theories of each article are then discussed in relation to the PRQs. Later articles which draw on these seminal pieces are also discussed.

Table 4: Seminal academic literature

Author(s) (cit. Aug 2013)	Conceptualisation of EE	Contribution	Type of Article/Research	Defining EE
Kahn (1990) (1523)	An identity related motivational concept: 'self-in-role'. Fluctuating and multifaceted: physical, cognitive and emotional Emphasises individual agency within an org context (Rich *et al.* 2010)	Initiation of engagement as a topic for academic research. Identifies 3 psychological conditions for engagement: meaningfulness, safety and availability.	Empirical: ethnography, grounded theory	'...simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances' (1990:700).
Maslach *et al.* (2001) (5088)	As the antithesis to 'burnout'	Alternative theoretical perspective on EE and its relationship with the concept of burnout. Led to the operationalization of engagement and the development of multiple measurement instruments.	Conceptual: literature review (of burnout)	'...engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy - the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions', (2001:416)
Harter *et al.* (2002) (1389)	Instrumental to increased individual performance leading to improved organizational outcomes.	First to identify correlation between business unit level EE/satisfaction surveys and positive org outcomes.	Meta-analysis: survey	'...the individual's involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for work' (2002: 269).

Author(s) (cit. Aug 2013)	Conceptualisation of EE	Contribution	Type of Article/Research	Defining EE
Saks (2006) (571)	A distinct concept with different foci which impacts on individual performance. Individuals may react differently to the same antecedents.	First to identify a distinction between 'job engagement' and 'organizational engagement'. Identified 'Social Exchange Theory' (SET) as a theoretical underpinning for EE process.	Empirical: survey	'...a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performance' (2006:602).
Macey and Schneider (2008) (526)	Three inter-related aspects: 1. Trait = stable attribute of personality 2. State = short-term emotional experience 3. Behavioural = extra-role, pro-active behaviour focussed on strategic goals/objectives	First in-depth review of academic and practitioner interpretations and applications of EE. First to associate EE with personality traits and emotional states and attempt to bridge the academic/practitioner divide	Conceptual: literature review	'...engagement comprises a complex nomological network encompassing trait, state, and behavioral constructs', (2008:24)

Kahn (1990; 1992): 'self-in-role' (1990: 692)

Kahn's (1990) ethnographic study is frequently cited as the earliest empirical research associated with EE (Avery *et al.* 2007; Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Fairlie 2011; Harter *et al.* 2002; Jeung 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Saks 2006; Saks 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck 2011; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). The study is unusual within the EE literature for the inductive and interpretive research strategy (Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck 2011) and for the comprehensive description of the nature and influences of engagement (Macey and Schneider 2008; Rich *et al.* 2010). Both aspects are particularly relevant to the aim of the current study and, consequently, Kahn's (1990) work is discussed in depth.

Beginning in a summer camp for American adolescents, Kahn (1990) focused on the experiences of camp counsellors who led the youth activities. Using a combination of interviews, observations and textual analysis, the research explored the counsellors' psychological experiences of work, the objective work context and the interactions between the two. From this evidence Kahn identified psychological conditions and contextual factors which led the counsellors to engage or disengage with their work role (May *et al.* 2004). These results were then tested within a firm of architects using in-depth interviewing. Kahn's (*ibid.*) conceptualisation of engagement is the result of a comparative statistical analysis of the results from the two organizations.

In spite of the consistent association with '*employee* engagement' there is no mention of the term within either of Kahn's early papers (1990; 1992). Instead, the terms '...*personal engagement and personal disengagement*...,' (1990:694, original italics) are used to describe the extent to which an individual is '...psychologically present...' (1990:692) during their work. Kahn cites the work of the sociologist Erving Goffman (1959; 1961a in Kahn 1990) as the conceptual starting point for the engagement research.

Using the analogy of acting, Goffman (*ibid)* studied the non-verbal aspects of brief interpersonal encounters and identifies that people fluctuate between embracing and distancing themselves from their role 'performances'. Kahn (1990; 1992) connects Goffman's findings (1959; 1961a in Kahn 1990) with identity theories from the fields of psychology, sociology and group dynamics (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Bion 1961; Brewer 1991; Dutton *et al.* 1994; Edwards 2005; Kreiner *et al.* 2006). Although their perspective and emphasis vary, these theories share the view that individuals maintain a personal identity which is separate and distinguishable from social or work identities.

There is a tension between these different identities. Individuals desire a sense of uniqueness through their personal identity while simultaneously experiencing a desire to be, '…part of something greater…' (Ashforth *et al.* 2008:334). Kahn identifies this tension as responsible for the fluctuations of self-in-role and argues that the emotional complexity and on-going nature of organizational life require a different concept to that of Goffman (1959; 1961a in Kahn 1990). The terms 'personal engagement' and 'personal disengagement' (Kahn1990: 694) refer to the on-going integrations and separations of self and role. When someone is engaged their behaviour is consistent with personal values and beliefs and they display empathy with others. When disengaged there is a:

> '...simultaneous withdrawal and defense of a person's preferred self in behaviors that promote a lack of connections, physical, cognitive, and emotional absence, and passive, incomplete role performances' (*ibid*: 701).

Kahn (1990; 1992) portrays engagement as encompassing the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of an individual's identity (May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010). As a 'whole person' concept, these aspects of identity are interconnected and applied or withdrawn simultaneously. So, someone who is emotionally disengaged may still carry out the physical activities of a work task but will do so mechanically or robotically, as if following a script.

They are inclined to hide personal thoughts or feelings from others and may appear distracted or distant (Kahn 1990; 1992) as if there is '…no-one at home…' (Havens 1989: 62 in Kahn 1992). In contrast, during engagement, individuals are psychologically present and display interest through non- verbal behaviour e.g. eye contact, nodding or hand gestures, and are more likely to share thoughts and ideas and/or ask questions (Kahn 1992; 2010).

For Kahn (1990; 1992), identity is clearly fundamental to engagement. Without an assumption about the existence and separation of personal identity from social identity the reference to a 'preferred self' (*ibid*: 700) is untenable. While an in-depth consideration of the '...diverse and large...' (Ashforth *et al.* 2008: 325) field of identity research is beyond the remit of this review it is briefly considered below to further establish its relevance to Kahn's (1990; 1992) conceptualisation of engagement.

Engagement and identity
The separation of personal and social identity is most frequently associated with Tajfel's (1978; 1981) Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Stryker and Burke 2000) and the related concept of Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Kreiner *et al.* 2006; Tajfel and Turner 1985). SIT and SCT propose that individuals label themselves and others according to social categories, e.g. gender, age, race, religion. This categorisation is argued to enable people to distinguish themselves from others and identify how they personally fit within the social world (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Brewer 1991; Turner 1982).

Personal identity has been described as '...a person's unique sense of self...' (Postmes and Jetten 2006b: 260 in Ashforth *et al.* 2008) and as a '...self-referential description that provides contextually appropriate answers to the question "Who am I?"' (Ashforth *et al.* 2008*:* 327). It can combine a number of characteristics including physical attributes, attitudes, traits and interests which distinguish between individuals (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Brewer 1991). *Social* identity is the combination of perceived membership of a social group (or

groups) and the emotional attachment to that group (Tajfel 1981). It is fluid and flexible over both time and context. Individuals may simultaneously place themselves within multiple categories (Ashforth and Mael 1989). For example: 'I am a girl, I am British and a Girl Guide' may change over time to become, 'I am a woman, I am British, a mother and teacher'. Each category is associated with a degree of emotion which may also change over time and circumstance (Ashforth *et al.* 2008*).* Within a work context, categories may include organizational status (e.g. grade, length of service, age), an organizational function (e.g. finance, welfare, catering), a profession or work role (e.g. accountant, nurse, waiter) (Ashforth 2001 in Kreiner *et al.* 2006; Augoustinos and Walker 1995).

Kreiner *et al.* argue that social identity requires an individual to '...submit, surrender, and succumb to the needs, values, or identities of the collective' (2006: 1031). The implication is that individuals have differing degrees of choice about the integration of personal and social identities; from conscious acts of submitting or surrendering to the more overwhelming 'succumbing'. Kahn (1990) also concludes that individuals make choices about engagement. Referring to '…different levels of awareness…' he suggests those choices are affected by '...multiple levels of influences—individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and organizational…' (Kahn 1990: 719).

In research with Episcopal priests, Kreiner *et al.* (2006) found that participants were cognitively aware of the identity requirements of the priesthood. They made deliberate choices about the extent to which they integrated their personal and occupational (social) identities. For example, in some circumstances priests chose to behave according to parishioners' expectations while on other occasions they created opportunities when it was 'safe' to be themselves, i.e. to display their personal identities. This description accords with the idea of a tension between wishing to remain an autonomous individual while simultaneously wishing to belong to something social (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Bion 1961; Brewer 1991; Dutton *et al.* 1994).

Kreiner *et al.* also identify individuals who experience times when self and role are in '...optimal balance...' (2006:1031); where personal and work identities are so aligned that neither takes precedence. This appears similar to Kahn's description of '…authenticity…' (1992: 322) where personal beliefs and values are so in line with those of a work role that the individual feels able to freely express otherwise private thoughts and feelings.

In addition to associating engagement with identity, Kahn also discusses the circumstances in which engagement is likely to occur and the social and contextual factors which influence it. It is these aspects which are discussed in the next section.

Conditions for engagement

Drawing on Hackman and Oldham's (1980) research into work re-design, Kahn (1990; 1992) proposes that a combination of personal characteristics, social interactions and organizational contextual factors influence the psychological experience of work. It is this psychological experience which subsequently affects whether someone is engaged or disengaged (Christian *et al.* 2011). Kahn identified three '...psychological conditions...' (1990: 695) for engagement: meaningfulness, safety and availability. If these conditions are fulfilled individuals become and remain personally engaged; if any one of these conditions remains unfulfilled, disengagement is likely to occur.

'Meaningfulness' is an individual's sense of doing something worthwhile and feeling valued for their work contribution. This is influenced by contextual factors such as job characteristics, e.g. the degree of challenge, autonomy and task variety (Hackman and Oldham 1980); the perceived quality of interactions with colleagues or clients (Shuck *et al.* 2011) and role characteristics such as influence and status (Stryker and Burke 2000). Additionally, Kahn (1990, 1992) identifies the importance of congruence between the behaviours required by the organization and those valued by the individual. Where a role requires behaviours which conflict with how an individual likes to see themselves, i.e. their self- image, they are less likely to engage and vice versa (Brown and Leigh 1996; Chatman 1989; May *et al.* 2004).

'Psychological safety' is the sense of being able to reveal aspects of personal identity without '…fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career…,' (Kahn 1990: 705). Influencing this condition is the individual's perception of the stability and predictability of social situations including relationships with colleagues, line managers and organizational social norms (Hackman 1986 in Kahn 1990; 1992). Kahn (1990) identifies openness, trust and organizational support as key factors contributing to perceptions of safety.

Finally, 'psychological availability' refers to the extent to which an individual perceives that they have the necessary '…physical, psychological and emotional resources…' (*ibid*: 705) to be able to apply themselves to their role. These resources include such things as energy, skills, knowledge and the necessary level of self-confidence to undertake work tasks (May *et al.* 2004).

Kahn (1990) maintains that becoming and remaining engaged requires the simultaneous satisfaction of all three psychological conditions. What he failed to establish was any order of priority between the three conditions or the relative strength of their connection with engagement (*ibid.*). These issues were addressed fourteen years later by May *et al.* (2004). The psychological conditions were operationalized and tested for the relative relationship with engagement. *Meaningfulness* was found to be the most significant influence on engagement, followed by *safety* and, finally, *availability* as the least influential condition. All three conditions were found to mediate between contextual factors and engagement, implying that an individual's perception plays a critical role in the experience of engagement.

Once the conditions are met, engagement is the simultaneous investment of an individual's cognitive, affective *and* physical self in their work role (Christian *et al.* 2011; Rich *et al.* 2010). By combining head, heart and hands (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995) engagement contrasts with other concepts which concentrate on only one aspect of these three, e.g. satisfaction (Locke 1976), involvement (Brown and Leigh 1996), commitment (Meyer and Allen 1991). It is this integration which also leads Rich *et al.* to suggest that Kahn's conceptualization

of engagement provides a more '…holistic and connected '… (2010: 618) approach to individual motivation.

From Kahn's (1990; 1992) comprehensive conceptualisation of engagement (Macey and Schneider 2008; Rich *et al.* 2010) three aspects have particular relevance to the PRQs and the aim of the current study: the perspective of individuals; the interaction between context and individual, and finally, the potential for negative consequences from engagement. Each is considered in turn within the following section.

Kahn (1990; 1992) and the current study
Kahn (*ibid.*) is critical of OB research which implies that an individual's energy can simply be turned on or off by making adjustments to organizational factors (e.g. Hackman and Oldham 1980; Steers and Porter 1979 in Kahn 1992; Locke 1968 in Kahn 1992). Instead, he argues that people are active in the process of engagement, making decisions at different levels of awareness about how much of their personal identity to bring to their work role. This view is supported by Zigarmi *et al.* who draw on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura 1986 in Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Rather than being externally driven, EE results from continuous '…cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations…' (Zigarmi *et al:* 320).

Approaching EE from the emic perspective (Fetterman 1998: 20 in Brewer 2000: 39) and acknowledging the role of perception and agency is rare within the EE literature (Christian *et al.* 2011) yet it is highly relevant for the current study. PRQs1 and 2 focus on the individual's understanding and experience of EE and seek to explore the degree to which individuals make conscious choices about their engagement.

The second aspect of Kahn's (1990) research with particular relevance is the influence of organizational context on engagement. Although stressing that individuals make choices about their engagement, Kahn (*ibid;* 1992) also acknowledges that these choices are influenced by interaction with the work context. These are said to occur on a number of different levels: from the micro

level of one to one social exchanges through to the macro level of organizational norms and values. They encompass '…conscious and unconscious phenomena and the objective properties of jobs, roles and work contexts…' (1990: 717). Consequently, the psychological experience of work arises from a combination of subjective and immediate factors along with objective and more distant contextual factors (Christian *et al.* 2011; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009).

Apart from Kahn (1990), only one other article was identified which took account of the individual within context. A case study by Shuck *et al.* (2011) used Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation of EE and interviewed three employees in a large multi-national organization in the United States (U.S.). Though the number of participants was clearly limited the research found that the work environment was an influence on engagement. Positive workplace interactions and support from managers/colleagues were particularly important.

The PRQs are designed to explore the influences of EE on a number of levels but it is Kahn's (1990) reference to organizational norms and values which were particularly influential in the choice of GovDep as the host organization for the current study. In brief, norms are shared behavioural expectations; ways of behaving that are expected and considered appropriate by organizational members (Katz and Kahn 1966 in James *et al.* 2008). Values are basic assumptions and beliefs which underpin and justify the norms (James *et al.* 2008). Both norms and values have been identified as elements of organizational culture (Cooke and Szumal1993; Ortner 1973; Schein 1992), a phenomenon accepted as fluctuating between and within organizations (James *et al.* 2008; Johns 2006).

Kahn (1990) chose two organizations which contrasted on a number of contextual dimensions. He reasoned that identifying '…conceptual commonalities…' (1990: 696) from these differing contexts provided a greater degree of generalizability for the factors which influence engagement. In spite of differences in structure, organizational longevity and employee work patterns, the two organizations share a number of similarities. Firstly, both are part of the

private sector, and secondly, both are situated within the U.S. This was also the location of the case study by Shuck *et al.* (2011).

It has been argued in the U.K. (Hebson *et al.* 2002; Rayner *et al.* 2010) and U.S. (Boardman *et al.* 2010) that the culture of private and public sector organizations differ. Additionally, there is research suggesting that national culture affects organizational values and norms (Giauque *et al.* 2011*;* Hofstede 1980; Trompenaars 1993). If EE is influenced by organizational culture which, in turn, is influenced by sectorial and national differences there is a possibility that individual understanding and experience of EE may also differ between sectors and national cultures. Consequently, and in contrast to Kahn (1990; 1992) and Shuck *et al.* (2011), the organizational context for the current study is a civil service department within the U.K.

The final relevant aspect is the identification of two potential disadvantages of engagement (Kahn 1990). Firstly, EE requires a greater level of physical and emotional energy to sustain the associated heightened awareness and attention. Maintaining engagement for a long time may ultimately lead to stress or burnout (Maslach and Leiter 1997 in Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Rothbard and Patil 2012). Secondly, Kahn (1990; 1992) suggests that engaged individuals are more likely to offer ideas and opinions, to question or challenge organizational processes. This behaviour may be perceived as threatening by managers whose role has been argued to include maintenance of the organizational status quo (Argyris 1999; Kahn 1992; Shorris 1981 in Kahn 1992; Kahn 2010). Additionally, recent research by Kassing *et al.* (2012) shows managers associating engagement with an absence of dissent. This raises the prospect of engaged employees being at greater risk of disadvantage for enacting their engagement (Kahn 1992).

The identification of downsides to engagement is, again, unusual. EE is more often portrayed as a 'win-win' concept; a positive experience for both the individual and their employing organization (Bakker *et al.* 2008*;* Harter *et al.* 2002; Jeung 2011; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010*;* Saks 2006; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Shuck 2011). More recently, however, a

number of conceptual articles have also begun to question this overwhelmingly positive perspective (George 2011; Halbesleben 2011; Purcell 2012; Welbourne 2011). While the PRQs focus on individual experiences of employee *engagement* (rather than the more negatively conceived *disengagement*), Kahn's (1990; 1992) early identification of potential negatives means that the possibility of such experience is included within the current study. This issue is discussed further within the next chapter.

In summary, Kahn (1990; 1992) conceptualises engagement as 'self-in-role'; a multifaceted and fluctuating psychological state related to identity. Influenced by a range of personal and contextual factors, Kahn (1990; 1992) suggests that individuals choose whether to simultaneously invest their physical, emotional and cognitive selves in their work (Christian *et al.* 2011; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Rothbard 2001; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Shuck *et al.* 2011).

Although this conceptualisation has become one of the main theoretical approaches to engagement (Christian *et al.* 2011; Rich *et al.* 2010; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck 2011), it was fourteen years before it was tested empirically (May *et al.* 2004). In the meantime an alternative and more frequently cited approach to engagement was developed from within the field of burnout research.

Maslach et al. (2001): Antithesis to burnout
In this review of the burnout literature, Maslach *et al.* (2001) refer to a growing interest in researching positive rather than negative psychological states (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). Accordingly, they discuss engagement as the '...positive antithesis'...' (2001:416) of burnout and '...characterized by high energy and pleasure' (*ibid*: 417).

This theoretical conceptualisation of engagement precipitated a great deal of interest and debate within the field of occupational health (Jeung 2011; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b). Much of the debate concerns the relationship between EE and burnout and, more especially, how EE should be measured (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Shuck 2011). Making sense of this antithetical

approach requires clarification of the basis and characteristics of burnout (as the comparator) before examining the perspective on engagement.

Research into burnout began within caring occupations, e.g. social services, health and education (Freudenberger 1975 in Maslach *et al.* 2001). These occupations are connected by the frequency and intensity of the emotional interactions between individual employees and the clients they support (Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Goldberg 1998; Maslach *et al.* 2001). Individuals who become overloaded by such work experience emotional exhaustion followed by depersonalization (Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Demerouti *et al.* 2010; Leiter and Maslach 1988; Maslach *et al.* 2001).

Exhaustion involves, '… feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources' (Maslach *et al.* 2001: 399). Exhausted individuals attempt to further reduce the potentially draining effects of caring for others by depersonalisation; distancing themselves emotionally and cognitively from their clients (Demerouti *et al.* 2001). As burnout research was extended to other occupational roles, this reaction to exhaustion was found to be consistent across organizations and occupations although it resulted in different behavioural outcomes (Bakker *et al.* 2002 in Demerouti *et al.* 2010; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 1997 in Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Maslach *et al.* 2001).

In caring roles, depersonalisation appears in the form of negative or callous treatment of clients. In non-caring roles, it appears more as indifference or cynicism (Maslach and Goldberg 1998). Ultimately, exhaustion and depersonalisation are said to lead to what some regard as a third burnout dimension: a sense of inefficacy where individuals experience feelings of inadequacy and incompetence (González-Romá *et al.* 2006; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007a).

Due to the antithetical association with burnout, early attempts to measure engagement relied on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach *et al.* 1996 in Maslach and Leiter 2001). MBI was originally designed for caring

occupations to measure the extent of their burnout (Maslach *et al.* 2001). Once burnout research expanded beyond the caring occupations, MBI was adjusted to become the MBI – General Survey (MBI-GS) and questions related to respondents' clients were excluded (Maslach *et al.* 1996; Schaufeli *et al.* 1996 in Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Respondents to either instrument who score an opposite pattern of results are judged to be engaged.

Research by Maslach and Leiter (1997) provides support for this antithetical view and led to the suggestion that burnout follows the deterioration of engagement. Job roles which were meaningful, challenging and pleasant become meaningless, unfulfilling and unpleasant. Individuals move from engagement to burnout; from energy to exhaustion, involvement to cynicism and efficacy to inefficacy (Maslach and Leiter 1997 in Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach *et al.* 2001). This early description suggests that both engagement and burnout are relatively stable; with individuals experiencing a progression from the positive state of engagement towards the negative state of burnout. Schaufeli *et al.* expressed early support for this view, describing engagement as '…a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state…' (2002b: 74).

More recent research indicates that while individuals may experience an average level of engagement (Christian *et al.* 2011), it may also fluctuate: weekly, day by day or hour by hour (Bakker and Bal 2010; Sonnentag *et al.* 2010; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2009). Consequently, someone who is generally engaged may yet experience frequent '…ebbs and flows…,' (Christian *et al.* 2011: 94) in their levels of energy and involvement (Sonnentag 2011). This more recent depiction of fluctuating levels of engagement appears to match the fluidity of engagement described earlier by Kahn (1990; 1992).

Schaufeli *et al.* also provided the most frequently cited definition of engagement (Bakker 2011) as, '…a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption' (Schaufeli *et al.* 2002: 74). *Vigour* equates to high energy and mental resilience combined with a willingness to put effort into work (Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002*; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b). *Dedication* equates to a strong involvement in

work combined with a sense of pride and significance (Schaufeli *et al.* 2002). Finally, *absorption* relates to '…being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work…' (Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b: 141). In this positive psychological state, individuals are said to be totally immersed in their work to the extent that '…time passes quickly…' (Bakker 2011: 265). Schaufeli *et al.* (2002b) used this definition to operationalize engagement within the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), an alternative instrument to the earlier MBI surveys (Maslach *et al.* 2001). UWES measures only engagement (rather than engagement and burnout). It is cited as the most frequently applied instrument in academic engagement research (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Viljevac *et al.*2012) and has been validated in a number of different countries (Bakker 2009 in Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010) .

Later research by González-Romá *et al.* (2006) clarified the relationship between engagement and burnout (Maslach *et al.* 2001). *Absorption* was identified as unique to engagement with no corresponding opposite within the concept of burnout (Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Bakker *et al.* 2011a). In contrast, *vigour* and *dedication* (Schaufeli *et al.* 2002) are said to correspond with two elements of burnout along dimensions labelled *energy* and *identification* as illustrated in Figure 1 (below).

Figure 1:   Relationship between burnout and engagement
(Based on Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b: 141)

Burnout	Dimension	Engagement
Exhaustion ⟷	Energy ⟷	Vigour
Cynicism ⟷	Identification ⟷	Dedication

The clarification provided by González-Romá *et al.* (2006) led to some agreement about the relationship between burnout and engagement (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Demerouti *et al.* 2010; González-Romá *et al.* 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2001 in Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b). For example, Bakker *et al.* (2008) claim that energy and identification are now common to all measures of

engagement developed from within the burnout approach (Demerouti and Bakker 2008 in Bakker *et al.* 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002).

Supporters of this approach also share an acceptance of EE as a distinct concept (Bakker *et al.* 2011a*;* 2011b; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010) and an acknowledgement of the influence of organizational context (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001). The issue which continues to generate debate is how it should be measured.

Disagreements continue about the content and focus of the different instruments (Bakker *et al.* 2008; Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Demerouti *et al.* 2010; González-Romá *et al.* 2006; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011; Sonnentag 2011). More recently, Parker and Griffin (2011) have criticised these debates arguing that too much attention is being paid to the subtleties of the survey instruments and not enough to furthering the EE research agenda.

The use of surveys is also criticised for other reasons; firstly, for being unable to capture either the complexity of organizational life (Demerouti *et al.* 2010; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1990; Yin 1994) or the '...dynamic interaction...' between individuals and the organization (Kreiner *et al.* 2006: 1053). Secondly, when results are aggregated they provide little insight into either the individual experience (Shuck and Wollard 2010; Shuck *et al.* 2011) or the reasons\meanings behind the responses (Mills 1951). Additionally, Bakker *et al.* (2011a) identify that existing surveys e.g. MBI, MBI-GS, UWES, treat EE as a relatively stable and durable state. With more recent research indicating that EE fluctuates over time (Bakker and Bal 2010; Sonnentag *et al.* 2010; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2009) they suggest that alternative approaches to researching EE are required (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Macey and Schneider 2008; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011). Finally, surveys are criticised for the underlying assumption that individuals all react in the same way to their work context (Kahn 1992; Shuck and Wollard 2010) and for placing too much emphasis on cognition at the expense of the emotional and behavioural elements of EE (Kahn 1990; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009).

Even though the connection with burnout and use of surveys differ from Kahn (1990; 1992), there are some similarities between the two approaches. For example, *absorption* (Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Bakker *et al.* 2008; González-Romá *et al.* 2006; Maslach *et al.* 2001) appears similar to Kahn's (1990) description of engaged individuals losing themselves within their work; *identity* is at the core of Kahn's (*ibid.*) 'self-in-role' view of engagement (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011) and physical and emotional *energy* are part of the psychological condition of *availability* (Kahn 1990). The final similarity to Kahn (1990; 1992) lies in the importance placed on the interaction between the individual and the organizational context. As this is also the focus of PRQ3, this aspect is discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Maslach et al. (2001) and the current study

Two approaches are most often used by burnout/engagement researchers to explore the relationship between context and the individual: the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Bakker and Demerouti 2007) and the theory of person-environment fit (P-E fit) (Maslach and Leiter 1997 in Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 2008). Each approach is considered in more detail below.

JD-R Model

The JD-R model separates job characteristics into two broad categories: job demands and job resources. These categories are said to be flexible enough for use with any work role in any occupation (Bakker *et al.* 2007; Nahrgang *et al.* 2011; Schaufeli *et al.* 2009).

Job demands refers to physical and psychological elements of a work role which require effort (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004), i.e. the work which needs to be done. Completing the work involves a physiological and/or psychological cost. Job demands are not necessarily stressful but high or unfavourable demands have been shown to correlate with exhaustion; one of the core dimensions of burnout (Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Maslach *et al.* 2001).

Examples of high demands include a heavy workload within tight timescales, emotionally draining interactions with clients and physically dangerous work environments (Bakker *et al.* 2007; Demerouti *et al.* 2001).

Job resources are working conditions which mitigate job demands (Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b) and have been found to correlate with engagement (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Halbesleben 2010; Maslach *et al.* 2001). Resources have two potential effects. They can provide extrinsic motivation through supporting the achievement of work goals and they can provide intrinsic motivation by supporting personal growth or learning (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Examples of job resources include autonomy, social support, feedback, skill variety, learning opportunities and involvement in decision making (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti *et al.* 2001*;* Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b). There appear to be some similarities between these resources and items within both Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model (Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b) and Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions for engagement.

Job demands are most frequently associated with burnout, while job resources are associated with engagement (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Maslach *et al.* 2001). A combination of high job demands with low resources is argued to predict burnout (Bakker *et al.* 2011b; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2007) while high job demands combined with high job resources correlates with and predicts engagement (Bakker *et al.* 2011b; Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Demerouti *et al.* 2001). Under pressure, the salience of job resources is said to increase (Hakenan *et al.* 2006) and they are drawn on to mitigate the pressure of high work demands. For example, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) report that Finnish teachers dealing with disruptive pupils drew on management appreciation and support to help them cope with classroom misconduct (Bakker *et al.* 2007 in Bakker and Demerouti 2007). Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007) report similar findings from research within home care organizations. Carers drew on the resources of autonomy, support and

professional development to cushion the demands made by patients and were, consequently, less likely to experience burnout. Both studies support the view that it is the level and nature of job resources which are critical to engagement (Bakker 2011).

In spite of some agreement, the JD-R model is also criticised. Crawford *et al.* (2010) argue that using two all-encompassing categories for working conditions is too simplistic. In particular, they question the dominant view that job demands relate only to burnout and *not* to engagement. Citing research which unexpectedly finds positive correlations between job demands and engagement (Schaufeli *et al.* 2008; Sonnentag 2003), they argue that individuals differentiate demands according to the perceived impact on personal wellbeing (Lazarus and Folkman 1984 in Crawford *et al.* 2010). While personal characteristics and experiences may affect these judgments, Crawford *et al.* (2010) cite research indicating a degree of consistency between demands assessed as positive and those assessed as negative (Cavanaugh *et al.* 2000 in Crawford *et al.* 2010; LePine *et al.* 2005).

Demands perceived as providing the potential for personal growth, learning and achieving work goals, e.g. high responsibility or time pressures, are assessed as positive or as 'challenges' (Cavanaugh *et al.* 2000 in Crawford *et al.* 2010:836; Gorgievski and Hobfall 2008). In contrast, demands perceived as preventing goal achievement and personal growth, e.g. role ambiguity, organizational politics or bureaucracy, are judged as negative or 'hindrances' (Cavanaugh *et al.* 2000 in Crawford *et al.* 2010: 836). The individual's categorisation of demands as either positive or negative elicits corresponding emotional, cognitive and behavioural reactions (Crawford *et al.* 2010; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004). So, if a demand is seen as a challenge, the emotional response will be positive, perhaps excitement or eagerness (Schaufeli 2012) leading to '…greater levels of motivation and engagement…' (Crawford *et al.* 2010: 837).

Like Kahn (1990; 1992; 2010), Crawford *et al.* (2010) emphasise the role of agency in engagement. Instead of being '…driven by inner forces or automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli…' (Zigarmi *et al.* 2009: 313), individuals play an active role in determining their response to work situations. Zigarmi *et al.* (2009) identify social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura 1986 in Zigarmi *et al.* 2009) as a framework for EE. SCT is based on a similar premise to that suggested by Crawford *et al.* 2010, namely, that individuals have the capacity for choosing how to behave, albeit in response to external factors. Rather than demands or resources *per se,* it is the individual's appraisal and categorisation of them which influences the likelihood of engagement (Crawford *et al.* 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Crawford *et al.* (2010) identify this intervening appraisal process as an under-researched aspect of EE and suggest that it merits further investigation. As already identified, PRQ1 and PRQ2 both focus on the understanding and process of EE from the individual perspective. The second approach to organizational context referred to by Maslach *et al.* (2001) is that burnout and engagement relate to the degree of 'fit' between the individual and their job environment (Maslach and Leiter 1997 in Maslach *et al.* 2001) and this is considered next.

P-E fit

Theories of P-E fit are common within OB research and date back to the early twentieth century (Edwards 2008). Though the emphasis varies, all such theories examine the degree of similarity between the individual and their environment; usually within a work context (e.g. Chatman 1989; Edwards *et al.* 1998 in Edwards 2008; Kulik *et al.* 1987).

Maslach *et al.* (2001) describe P-E fit as an attempt to better reflect the interaction between the individual and their broader work environment. Six areas of work life are said to correlate with and predict burnout (Maslach and Leiter 1997 in Maslach *et al.* 2001). Where there is an imbalance between the individual and their work environment burnout is more likely to occur. Conversely, the closer the fit between the individual and their work environment, the more likely they are to be engaged (Maslach and Leiter 2008; Saks and

Gruman 2011). The six work-life areas and examples of the factors relating to burnout/engagement are shown in Table 5 (below).

Table 5: P- E Fit - Six Areas of work-life (Maslach and Leiter 2008)

Area	Burnout	Engagement
Workload	Work overload – demands exceed ability, skills or inclination to deliver.	Sustainable workload; opportunities to use and develop skills.
Control	Responsibility exceeds authority, insufficient control over resources, role conflict.	Autonomy, participation in decision making.
Reward	Financial - insufficient for effort, social - work ignored or not valued by others.	Appropriate reward and recognition (financial and social), satisfaction and pride.
Community	Isolation, lack of social support, conflict with others.	Support from colleagues, manager, positive environment, connection with organization/role.
Fairness	Inequity in reward or promotion, absence of voice, lack of respect.	Equity of opportunity and reward, trust in org. processes to deliver fairness.
Values	Espoused organizational values contradict practice or personal ethics.	Organizational values congruent with practice/personal ethics.

Some items are common to both the JD-R model and P-E fit, e.g. overload and autonomy, yet Maslach *et al.* (2001) differentiate between the two approaches. P-E fit incorporates more enduring aspects of an individual's relationship with their employment rather than the more transient elements of JD-R. Additionally, P-E fit extends the sphere of influencing factors beyond the immediate day to day experience to include broader organizational issues such as values.

Maslach *et al.* (*ibid.*) liken P-E Fit to the psychological contract whereby individuals have a sense of expectation about the reciprocal obligations between themselves and their employer (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002; Rousseau 1995). As with P-E Fit, the extent to which the psychological contract

is fulfilled depends upon perception (Wolfe Morrison and Robinson 1997). When a breach is perceived individuals are shown to adjust their behaviour and may withdraw their commitment, trust and/or discretionary behaviour (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002; Robinson and Morrison 1995). According to Maslach *et al.* (2001) continued breaches, like mismatches in P-E Fit, may lead to burnout.

In a recent variation on P-E fit, Bakker *et al.* propose that the six work-life areas can be used to represent a '…climate for engagement…' (2011a:12) defined as, '…employees' shared perceptions regarding their work environment …' (2011b: 79). The idea of an organizational climate (OC) has previously been associated with work psychology (James and James 1989; James *et al.* 2008) and the study of psychological climate (PC) (Brown and Leigh 1996; James *et al.* 2008).

The connection between PC and OC lies in the unit of analysis. The former refers to '...the meanings that *individual's* impute to their jobs, co-workers, leaders, pay, performance expectations, opportunities for promotion, equity of treatment, and the like' (James *et al.* 2008:6 emphasis added). It is not the environmental factors themselves but the individual's perception and interpretation of them which leads to attitudes and behaviours (Brown and Leigh 1996; James and James 1989; James *et al.* 2008). Environmental factors are judged according to the individual's values and what is considered important for personal well-being. Locke (1976 in James *et al.* 2008) identifies four factors underlying the most important work-related values. These include:

> '(1) desires for clarity, harmony, and justice; (2) desires for challenge, independence, and responsibility; (3) desires for work facilitation, support, and recognition; and (4) desires for warm and friendly social relations.' (James *et al.* 2008:9).

There is a clear overlap between these factors and the items within P-E Fit. The main difference lies in values being the means by which contextual factors are interpreted. Rather than simply another aspect of context they are used to interpret and judge other factors.

OC refers to the aggregate of these individual perceptions (James *et al.* 2008; Jones and James 1979 in James *et al.* 2008). James *et al.* (*ibid.*) argue that although analysis at the organizational level may be useful, the concept is based on individual perceptions of the work environment. PC is, consequently, an individual rather than an organizational attribute (James *et al.*1978 in Brown and Leigh 1996).

What Bakker *et al.* (2011a; 2011b) contribute is the idea of a connection between OC, P-E Fit and the JD-R model. Accepting James *et al.*'s (2008) argument of the essential individuality of climate, this connection is made through what can be described as a perceptual/influential spiral with each level feeding into the next. So, individual perceptions of the six areas of work-life influence the perception and appraisal of job demands and resources. That appraisal influences engagement which, in turn, affects individual performance (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b). In this explanation, Bakker *et al.* (*ibid.*) appear to portray EE as dependent on two cognitive processes: the perception of distal and proximal aspects of the work environment (Bakker *et al.* 2011b; Lazarus and Folkman 1984 in Maslach and Leiter 2008) followed by an appraisal of that perception. In keeping with a limited number of other writers (e.g. Christian *et al.* 2010; Kahn 1990; 1992; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009), this climate approach emphasises the role of the individual in perceiving and assessing the fluctuating interactions between self and the organizational context (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b). Without reference to either Kahn (1990), who describes a similar process, or to the psychological climate literature, Bakker *et al.* (2011a; 2011b) identify this process as speculative and requiring further exploration.

While Bakker *et al.* (*ibid.*) confine themselves to factors *within* organizations, Maslach *et al.* (2001) expand the level of influencing factors beyond those boundaries to include, '…larger social, cultural, and economic forces…' (2001: 409). For example, organizations alter their structures, rules and procedures in response to such external factors, which, in turn, may affect individuals' engagement/burnout (Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Goldberg 1998; Dollard and Bakker 2010).

This expansion of influencing factors is also of interest to the current study. As a department within the UK civil service, GovDep is subject to the political and economic requirements of the serving government. Since 2010 the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition have applied a range of fiscal constraints to the civil service. These include an ongoing pay freeze, recruitment restrictions, increased pension contributions plus a continuing programme of outsourcing services and employees to the private sector (Cabinet Office 2012b; Smith 2012). At the same time, there is a requirement to increase the levels of engagement as measured via CSPS (Civil Service 2013). Whether such macro factors have any influence on EE appears under-researched (Maslach *et al.* 2001). All three PRQs aim to explore the individual experience of EE without placing organizational boundaries or other limitations on the potential sources of influence.

In summary, Maslach *et al.* (2001) initiated the second major approach to engagement as the antithesis of burnout. Although starting from an alternative perspective and employing different research methods, a number of similarities can be identified between this approach and that of Kahn (1990; 1992). These include the recent identification of EE as a fluctuating psychological state (Bakker and Leiter 2010; Christian *et al.* 2011; Sonnentag *et al.* 2010; Sonnentag 2011), the acknowledgement of the influence of organizational factors (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001), the mediating role of individual perception in the assessment of those factors (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b) and lastly, the speculation that factors beyond organizational boundaries may also play a part (Maslach *et al* 2001). The next seminal article also accepts the importance of contextual factors but places far greater emphasis on EE's ability to improve organizational performance.

Harter et al. (2002): EE instrumental to performance
This article reports the findings from a meta-analysis of the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) surveys from 36 companies across five industry groups within the U.S. The results show correlations between EE and improved organizational

performance. The most significant correlations are with staff turnover, customer satisfaction and safety behaviour (Harter *et al.* 2002).

Although other academic literature makes connections between EE and performance (e.g. Bakker and Bal 2010; Balain and Sparrow 2009; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Rich *et al.* 2010), what differentiates this article is its emphasis on the instrumentality of EE.

EE is portrayed as a means of *driving* improvements. Consequently, GWA uses items described as, '…processes and issues that are actionable…' (Harter *et al.* 2002: 269). These include feedback, rewards and clarity of organizational goals. These practical actions reflect GWA's commercial origins as a tool for initiating and implementing change (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). Harter *et al.* (2002) argue that GWA items are of more use to managers and employers than the esoteric concepts found in other academic literature, e.g. commitment, involvement and intrinsic motivation.   To positively influence levels of EE managers need to adjust the processes used as items within the survey. The consequent increase in EE then results in improved individual and organizational performance.

The emphasis on practicality and EE's correlation with improved performance mean that the article is credited with fuelling the burgeoning practitioner and consultant interest in EE (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010). There are, however, also a number of criticisms from other academic authors (Bakker and Leiter 2010; Balain and Sparrow 2009; Christian *et al.* 2011; Little and Little 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009).

Firstly, the article is criticised for failing to adequately define EE (Little and Little 2006). Instead, EE is associated with job satisfaction, involvement and enthusiasm without discussion or reference to distinctions which other authors draw between these concepts (Christian *et al.* 2011; Robinson *et al.* 2004; Shuck and Wollard 2010). As a consequence, GWA appears to conflate EE with job satisfaction which then also raises questions about the validity of the meta-analysis results (Christian *et al.* 2011). Secondly, there are criticisms of

the use of 'actionable' items. Items such as 'feedback' and 'resources' are identified elsewhere as *antecedents* of engagement rather than engagement *per se* (Bakker and Leiter 2010; Balain and Sparrow 2009; Macey and Schneider 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Although Harter *et al.* (2002) acknowledge these items as antecedents of EE, the GWA appears to confuse measures of practical working conditions with what should be a measure of the experience of work (Bakker and Leiter 2010; Christian *et al.* 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008). The result is that GWA is said to measure EE by inference and at one remove from the individual's experience (Macey and Schneider 2008).

A final criticism relates to the ability of line managers to influence levels of EE through the adjustment of '…human resource issues…' (Harter *et al.* 2002: 269). Although the article does not discuss causal relationships, three assumptions appear to underpin this view. The first two relate to the individual perspective; namely, that an individual's EE can be driven or manipulated by a manager's adjustment of these factors and that reactions to these adjustments will be the same for all individuals. These assumptions appear similar to those within OB theories (e.g. Hackman and Oldham 1980; Steers and Porter 1979; Locke 1968) which Kahn (1992) criticises for portraying individuals as machines.

Recent EE research provides support for Kahn's (*ibid.*) criticisms. For example, Bakker and Bal's (2010) diary study of EE and new teachers' performance shows feedback from supervisors influencing levels of engagement only within the same week; a relatively short term effect. Additionally, there is evidence elsewhere that EE requires an individual's active involvement (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Crawford *et al.* 2010; May *et al.* 2004; Parker and Griffin 2011; Robinson *et al.* 2004; Saks 2006; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009) and fluctuates between and within individuals (Bakker and Bal 2010; Saks 2006; Sonnentag *et al.* 2010; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2009). Rather than passive homogeneity, individual EE is increasingly discussed as a dynamic and individual process.

The final assumption concerns line managers' ability to make changes while remaining unaffected by other environmental factors such as:

> '...the wider economy and particular industry sector, specific market conditions, ownership and governance arrangements as well as organizational size and internal structures'
> (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013: 2671).

Harter *et al*. (2002) make no reference to any potential limitation on managers' ability to alter organizational processes. On the one hand, individual employees are portrayed as open to the influence of managers and contextual factors yet, on the other, line managers are portrayed as unaffected by such issues.

While disparities clearly exist between Harter *et al*.'s (2002) perspective on EE and other more recent academic work there are similarities between the article's approach and themes within practitioner literature. It is these areas of similarity which are particularly relevant to the current study.

Harter et al. (2002) and the current study
EE's links with improved performance and the influence of line managers are regular themes within practitioner literature (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). There is some acknowledgement of the role of the individual in EE, e.g. Scottish Executive 2007, but far greater prominence is given to the benefits for employers and strategies for increasing its levels (e.g. Buchanan 2004; Cabinet Office 2007; CIPD 2006a; CIPD 2010; MacLeod and Clarke 2009; Melcrum 2005; Towers Perrin 2003). EE is more often presented as a top down initiative with comparatively little attention given to the individual's perspective. For example, MacLeod and Clarke describe EE as:

> '...a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values...' [and] '...motivated to contribute to organisational success...' (2009:9).

These themes are also found within GovDep. As already described, GovDep is part of a centrally driven civil service programme which aims to increase EE precisely because it will '…maximise performance of their workforce against their own objectives' (Cabinet Office 2007:12). For the current study, the links between EE and performance are of interest only insofar as they are used to justify management actions which attempt to increase EE levels. More central to the aim of this study are the effects of those actions on the organizational context and how they are experienced by individuals. The extent to which individuals are active in EE is relevant to both PRQs 1 and 2, while the role of organizational context, including the role of line managers, is considered within both PRQs 2 and 3.

In summary, Harter *et al.* (2002) view EE as instrumental to improved organizational performance with underlying assumptions that individuals respond in the same way to adjustments made by managers. While this perspective accords with themes within practitioner literature, it contrasts with more recent academic articles, including the work of Saks (2006) which is considered next.

Saks (2006): Focus of EE and Social Exchange Theory (SET)

While Saks (*ibid.*) acknowledges a connection between EE and performance, the research is based on the assumption that individuals may respond differently to the same organizational conditions. Drawing on both Kahn (1990) and identity research, Saks (2006) accepts that individuals occupy multiple roles within an organization (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; May *et al.* 2004; Rothbard 2001) and may, consequently, engage differently with each one. EE is separated into *job* and *organizational* engagement as Saks (2006) argues that these two are the most significant roles for individuals within the organizational context. The former relates to the day to day aspects of a job, while the latter relates to the '… role as a member of an organization' (*ibid*: 604). Saks' found that engagement with these separate roles is related yet distinct as each is associated with different antecedents and consequences.   As PRQ1 concerns the individual experience of EE, the question of its focus is an issue relevant to the current study and is discussed in more detail in the following section.

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Focus of EE

The question, 'Engaged with what?' (Purcell 2012: 7) is rarely discussed in detail (Shuck 2011) within the academic literature (for an exception see Schaufeli and Salanova 2011). Schaufeli *et al.* even suggest that EE '...is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behavior...' (2002b:74) but then fail to explain further. More often, EE's focus is left implicit within the term used to refer to it, e.g. *work* engagement (Bakker and Leiter 2010; Halbesleben 2010; Harter *et al.* 2002; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Schaufeli *et al.* 2009; Sonnentag 2003) or *job* engagement (Maslach *et al.* 2001; Wefald and Downey 2009).

When it is mentioned, the focus is often used to differentiate between approaches to EE. For example, Bakker *et al.* (2008) distinguish the burnout approach to engagement from Kahn's (1990; 1992) by suggesting that the latter concentrates on the *work role* whereas burnout concentrates on the *task.* Somewhat confusingly, Christian *et al. (*2011) describe Kahn's (1990) object of engagement as work *tasks* rather than the job or organization and use this, in turn, to differentiate Kahn's conceptualisation from others. Neither Bakker *et al.* (2008) nor Christian *et al.* (2011) explain the terms they use.

Examination of Kahn's article reveals the use of a range of expressions including tasks, processes and roles, '…in the service of the work they are doing…' (1990: 700). As others, Kahn (*ibid.*) provides no definitions of these terms though references to identity theory suggest that the focus lies within the multiple roles that individuals inhabit at work (Ashforth *et al.* 2008). Common to all of these examples is the focus of EE being located within the work environment, rather than external to that experience.

The possibility of *multiple* and/or simultaneous foci for engagement is also rarely the subject of detailed discussion or research (Shuck 2011). Bakker and Leiter question the likelihood of multiple foci, suggesting that individuals '…hold either negative or positive attitudes towards their work and it is unlikely that they can endorse both simultaneously…' (2010: 189). This contrasts with Saks' (2006) study which indicates that individuals may engage with different foci at

the same time. Earlier research into the interaction between engagement with family and work roles supports this view (Rothbard 2001). A more recent paper for the CIPD (Gourlay *et al.* 2011) also refers to the idea of multiple *loci* of engagement. In contrast to the usual practitioner assumption of engagement with the organization, the study suggests that individuals from three private sector organizations may engage with different aspects of their employment. Although rare within EE research, there is evidence from other fields of study that individuals are able to simultaneously maintain multiple perspectives on their employment.

Purcell (2012) reports observations from a case study exploring work pressures experienced by NHS ward managers. Incidental to the main goal of the research, managers were found to consciously separate the work into distinct categories. These included clear social groupings, such as *patients*, alongside more complex aspects such as *profession* (Ashforth *et al.* 2008). Each category was also associated with either positive or negative affect. The positive aspects included patients, co-workers/team and the ward manager's profession while the negative aspects included senior managers and the employer in the form of the NHS Trust (Hutchinson and Purcell 2010). Purcell concludes that the managers were '…passionately engaged in their work…' (2012: 4) yet speculates that were they to complete an EE survey, this cognitive and affective segmentation would result in low overall engagement scores. Apart from identifying the managers' ability to simultaneously hold multiple and contradictory views of their work, Purcell (*ibid.*) also appears to question the ability of an EE survey to accurately measure these managers' engagement.

Gorgievski and Hobfall (2008) discuss a related issue in a paper concerning Conservation of Resources (CoR). CoR is a motivational theory premised on individuals striving to maintain and retain that which they value, e.g. possessions or energy. Gorgievski and Hobfall describe healthcare professionals having an, '…orientation towards improving other people's lives…' (*ibid*: 9) and an expectation of reward for achieving this purpose (Skovholt *et al.* 2001 in Gorgievski and Hobfall 2008). The orientation and purpose are part of

the professionals' identity and make the role meaningful; an attribute which has also been associated with engagement (Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; Fairlie 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004). If organizational demands are seen to interfere or contradict this purpose, the associated activities are unlikely to be engaging and may even be stressful (Sonnentag 2002a in Gorgievski and Hobfall 2008). As earlier, the suggestion is that the healthcare professionals engaged with activities judged to support their work identity while, at the same time, being disengaged with other aspects of their employment. Additional support for the ability to maintain multiple perspectives is found within identity research.

Already associated with EE (e.g. Bakker *et al.* 2008; Kahn1990; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006), identity theories accept that individuals simultaneously hold and maintain multiple, and sometimes conflicting, social identities (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Johnson *et al.* 2006; Stryker and Burke 2000; Tajfel and Turner 1985).

Ashforth *et al.* describe the relationship between these identities as:

> , '…embedded or nested within others in a means-ends chain, such as those associated with a job - workgroup – department - division - organization; other identities cross-cut this nesting, such as a crossfunctional team, union local, and friendship clique' (2008: 347).

Combining these examples with the findings from Saks (2006) and the earlier discussion about EE as a fluctuating state (Christian *et al.* 2011; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011), offers the potential for a more complex and nuanced view of EE. Rather than the dichotomy of 'yes - I'm engaged' or, 'no – I'm not' found within much of the academic literature (Bakker and Leiter 2010; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002) there is the possibility of multiple foci of engagement. These may include the immediate and proximal 'tasks' through to the more remote '…social entity…' of the organization (Purcell 2012:7). Individuals may also engage and disengage with different foci at the same time.

Saks (2006) also identifies two inter-related theoretical explanations for the process of EE and these are considered next.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
In a review of the literature, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) identify SET as the basis for a number of concepts including organizational justice (Konovsky 2000), leadership (Liden, Sparrowe and Wayne 1997) and the psychological contract (Rousseau 1995) referred to by Maslach *et al.* (2001). Detailed consideration of such a wide variety of theories is beyond the scope of this review. Instead, the focus is kept on aspects common to all exchange theories and those identified by Saks (2006; 2008) as pertinent to EE.

SET is founded on the idea that social interactions create a sense of obligation (Emerson 1976 in Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). As long as '...certain "rules" of exchange' (2005: 875) are observed the interactions lead towards a trusting relationship. One of these rules is *reciprocity* or repayment in kind. This involves a '...mutual and complementary...' two-way process (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005: 876). Appropriate actions are used to meet the perceived obligations without the need for explicit negotiation or bargaining (Molm 2003 in Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). Compared with economic exchanges, social exchanges are less time limited, more focused on the needs of the other party (Mills and Clark 1982 in Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005) and lead to '...feelings of personal obligations, gratitude, and trust...'(Blau 1964: 94 in Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005).

In applying SET to EE, Saks (2006) argues that individuals may provide engagement in exchange for the social support and emotional resources they receive from their employment. Cognitive, emotional and physical energies are applied to work to satisfy a sense of obligation towards the organization. This process appears particularly similar to that associated with the psychological contract (Rousseau 1995) yet Saks (2006) makes no direct mention of the concept. In spite of this apparent omission, the overall application of SET supports the role of cognitive appraisal within EE and adds a sense of obligation

as a mediating factor. As SET necessarily involves two parties, there is then a question about who (or what) is being repaid by the individual's engagement.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) report strong evidence that individuals maintain a variety of separate social exchange relationships. These relationships range from immediate colleagues through to supervisors, customers, suppliers and, in the case of the psychological contract, the employing organization (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002). Behaviour towards these other parties varies according to the individual's perception of the goodwill or degree of support they experience (Masterson *et al.* 2000 in Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). This diversity of exchange relationships accords with the earlier discussion about the complexity of individuals' relationships with their employment.   It also resonates with Saks' (2006) findings concerning the antecedents for the dual foci of job and organizational engagement.

Saks (2006) also identifies Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as a key antecedent to both job and organizational engagement. POS is also an exchange theory and refers to the individual's perception of the degree to which the organization '...values their contribution and cares about their well-being...' (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002: 698). When individuals feel valued and supported they reciprocate through caring about the *organization* and contributing effort towards corporate goals (Rhoades *et al.* 2001 in Saks 2006).

In addition to identifying links between POS and both job and organizational engagement, Saks (2006) found other antecedents were particular to each foci. Firstly, job characteristics (Hackman and Oldham 1980) correlate with job engagement. Secondly, procedural justice, i.e. '...the perceived fairness of the means and processes used to determine the amount and distribution of resources' (Saks 2006: 606) correlates with organizational engagement. In both cases, Saks (*ibid.*) argues that engagement follows the principles of SET and is a way in which individuals reciprocate for the positive resources they receive. Conversely, individuals may withdraw their engagement if they perceive a breach in reciprocity (Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002).

Although Saks (2006) is the first to identify dual foci of engagement and to offer a theoretical explanation for the process of EE, there are limitations which must be acknowledged. Similar to others (May *et al.* 2004; Rothbard 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Sonnentag 2003), the research uses cross-sectional, self-report data. This makes identifying causality difficult. Instead of the antecedents *causing* EE, it may be that EE leads to more positive perceptions. Secondly, Saks (2006) recruited respondents via the snowball technique leading him to acknowledge method bias and limitations to the generalizability of the results. In mitigation, Saks (*ibid.*) argues that the sample was similar to the broader population and that the survey scales had multiple items with high reliability. Regardless of these limitations, Saks' (*ibid.*) research raises issues which are central to the aim of the current study and the PRQs.

Saks (2006) and the current study

Saks' (2006) research raises issues which are relevant to all three PRQs. The identification of dual foci of engagement relates to PRQ1 - the individual understanding and experience of EE. When combined with evidence from other research fields, additional questions are raised about the relationship between different foci. Are different foci prioritised? If yes, how does this occur? What, if any, are the implications for individuals and the organization of maintaining dual or multiple foci of engagement? What happens when the focus of engagement interacts with an aspect of work perceived to be negative? For example, a teacher may have her professional role as an educator as the focus of her engagement. She may, however, be disengaged from the school as the employing organization or from educational policy. Conducting a lesson would then suggest some form of tension. Objectively linked through the teacher's employment contract the different foci are cognitively and affectively separated.

Secondly, Saks (*ibid.*) is the first to identify a theoretical basis for the interaction between the individual and their work context which is common to much of the EE literature (e.g. Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2006). Moreover, SET acknowledges the role of individual perception and agency. It is the individual's perception of resources and their sense of obligation which influences their likely engagement.

What Saks (2006) fails to discuss is any possibility of an imbalance in the exchange relationship; i.e. where one party has greater power or influence than the other (Blau 1964 in Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). The role of exchange theories relates to PRQ2 and the process of creating and maintaining EE.

Finally, while SET emphasises reciprocity, other EE literature emphasises *mutuality,* i.e. working together towards shared goals (Macey and Schneider 2008; Sullivan *et al.* 2009). Within organizational contexts these goals are most often the corporate or strategic goals identified by senior managers (George 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008; Macey *et al.* 2009; Sullivan *et al.* 2009). Being engaged is, consequently, also associated with contributing greater effort towards such goals (Harter *et al.* 2002); a perspective relevant to PRQ3 and also found within the next seminal article.

Macey and Schneider (2008): Trait, state and behavioural engagement
Macey and Schneider (*ibid.*) provided the first review of EE literature. The article discusses EE's distinctiveness and attempts to bridge the divide between academic and practitioner conceptualisations. In spite of continuing uncertainty about its definition, antecedents and consequences, Macey and Schneider (*ibid.*) conclude that EE is, nevertheless, a useful concept. They identify EE as a multi-dimensional concept comprising three inter-related and sequential aspects: *trait*, *state* and *behavioural* engagement. Additionally, and for the first time, trust is identified explicitly as an essential mediator between leaders and individual EE.

The terms *trait* and *state* are commonly associated with the field of psychology (Arnold *et al*. 1991). There is considerable debate about the extent to which an individual's personality is fixed (trait) or malleable (state) (Arnold *et al.* 1991; Mullins 2007). These debates will not be added to here. Instead, as with identity and culture, the discussion is limited to what is necessary to understand Macey and Schneider's (2008) conceptualisation of EE and its relationship to the current study.

Traits are usually presented as personal characteristics which pre-dispose individuals towards certain behaviours. They are treated as relatively stable across time and circumstance e.g. Eysenck (1991). Macey and Schneider identify four '...facets...' (2008:21) of trait engagement:

Table 6: Facets of trait engagement (Macey and Schneider 2008)

Facet	Explanation
1. **Conscientiousness**	A combination of industriousness and a sense of order.
2. **Autotelic personality**	Undertaking activities for their own sake rather than for external rewards.
3. **Pro-active personality**	Creating or influencing the work environment (Crant 1995 in Macey and Schneider 2008).
4. **Positive affectivity**	Being '...attentive, alert, enthusiastic, inspired, proud, determined, strong, and active...' (Watson *et al.* 1988:1064 in Macey and Schneider 2008:11).

These traits are said to be distal rather than proximal causes of EE, thereby reducing the significance of their influence. Nevertheless, one conclusion from a trait approach is that individuals with these facets are more likely to engage and, conversely, those without such facets are less likely to do so. These facets appear then to be pre-requisites for EE rather than engagement itself (Newman and Harrison 2008). This interpretation is supported by the positioning of trait engagement ahead of both state and behavioural EE (Zigarmi *et al.* 2009).

The idea of personal characteristics affecting EE is an enduring theme within the EE literature. It has been discussed in terms of personality (e.g. Langolaan *et al.* 2006, Maslach *et al.* 2001; Wefald *et al.* 2011), personal resources (e.g. Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2007), self-evaluations (e.g. Rich *et al.* 2010) and demographic differences, e.g. age (Avery *et al.* 2007; James *et al.* 2011). For the purposes of the current study, the premise that such differences influence an individual's engagement is accepted without being explored in any further depth.

State engagement is the second aspect of Macey and Schneider's (2008) conceptualisation of EE. Psychological *states* are differentiated from *traits* by being of shorter duration and more open to the influence of contextual factors (Macey and Schneider 2008; Mullins 2007).

As yet, there is no clarity about the duration or durability of state engagement but Macey and Schneider (2008) accept that it fluctuates over time and between individuals. State engagement has:

> '…a strong affective tone connoting, at a minimum, high levels of involvement (passion and absorption) in the work and the organization (pride and identity) as well as affective energy (enthusiasm and alertness) and a sense of self-presence in the work' (*ibid*:14).

This description contains a number of elements referred to elsewhere. For example, there is mention of both work *and* the organization (Purcell 2012; Saks 2006), although this is not explored in any greater depth. Additionally, EE is portrayed as involving positive emotions and as an active rather than passive state (Bakker *et al.* 2011b; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Parker and Griffin 2011; Rothbard 2001; Rothbard and Patil 2012). Rothbard and Patil (*ibid.*) are critical of the inclusion of only positive emotions arguing that Kahn's (1990; 1992) research shows engaged individuals demonstrating emotional empathy with colleagues. Hence, if those colleagues are experiencing negative emotions so too will the engaged individual.

Finally, there is reference to personal identity and being more psychologically present within work (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004). Macey and Schneider (2008) conclude that state engagement combines a number of older concepts with new elements; an issue returned to within Chapter 3.

The third aspect of Macey and Schneider's conceptualisation of EE is behavioural engagement. This is described as actions '...going beyond...,' (2008:16) those required by the work role and incorporates organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Organ 1988; Podsakoff *et al.* 2000) and personal

initiative (PI) (Frese and Fay 2001 in Macey and Schneider 2008). Both OCB and PI involve individuals choosing to act beyond the requirements specified within their job description. Although Podsakoff *et al.* (2000) identify over 30 OCBs they are all distinguished by being performed explicitly for the benefit of the organization or colleagues while remaining unrecognised by the formal compensation system (Organ 1988). PI behaviours include, '...self-starting, proactivity and persistence... (Macey and Schneider 2008:17) along with speaking up to challenge the way things are done (Frese *et al.* 1996).

The emphasis on discretionary behaviour is criticised by those who argue that EE relates primarily to in-role activities (Newman and Harrison 2008; Saks 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010). To illustrate this, Saks (2008) cites the case of an air accident report. The report attributes a plane crash to the aircrew's failure to pay attention to various cues about the aircraft's position on the runway. Saks argues that the aircrew were not engaged in their day to day roles and rather than discretionary behaviour, engagement concerns *how* individuals '...do what they are supposed to be doing...' (2008: 41). 'Going beyond' work role requirements may be a *consequence* of engagement but is not actually engagement (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Saks 2008).

Macey and Schneider place a further limitation on behavioural engagement stating that it is, '...strategically focused in the service of organizational objectives...' (2008:19). So, in contrast to state engagement, behavioural engagement is associated *only* with organizational goals. No explanation is provided for this difference. Limiting the focus of behavioural engagement precludes the possibility of alternative foci of engagement (Saks 2006) and any purpose other than achieving organizational goals (Harter *et al.* 2002).

The separation of EE into three separate aspects is criticised as unhelpful for research (Dalal *et al.* 2008; Newman and Harrison 2008; Zigarmi *et al.* 2008). With EE said to comprise cognition, affect and behaviour (Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rich *et al.* 2010) and the '...simultaneous investment of personal energies in the experience of work...' (Christian *et al.* 2011: 95),

studying only one aspect risks ignoring the multi-dimensional nature which makes it distinctive (Bakker 2011; Rich *et al.* 2010).

In addition to the three part conceptualisation of EE, Macey and Schneider (*ibid.*) also consider its antecedents. They endorse the view found elsewhere about the importance of the interaction between the individual and contextual factors (Christian *et al.* 2011; Harter *et al.* 2002; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006) suggesting that context may moderate between each aspect of engagement. Where they differ from others is in identifying a specific role for leadership in state and behavioural engagement and in presenting *trust* as a mediating factor between leadership and behavioural engagement.

Although there is no agreed definition of trust (Chugtai and Buckley 2008), there is agreement that it involves anticipating the future actions of others (Luhmann 1979 in Sztompka 1999). With 'trust', the expectation is that others will behave benevolently towards us or, at the very least, will not deliberately harm our interests (Chugtai and Buckley 2008; Macey *et al.* 2009; Sztompka 1999). Put differently, trust necessitates taking a risk on the good intentions of others (Bijlsma and Koopman 2003). Kahn (1990) refers to risk in relation to personal engagement and the psychological condition of *safety.* Individuals assess the level of risk in bringing themselves into their role. If trust is missing, the risk is too high and the condition of safety is unmet; personal engagement will not then occur (*ibid.*; Kahn 2010).

Macey and Schneider (2008) suggest that leadership behaviour creates trust which then influences both state and behavioural engagement. Reychav and Sharkie (2010) found strong correlations between trust in management and extra-role behaviour in a process similar to that associated with SET (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005) and POS (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Individuals are prepared to undertake engaged behaviour in exchange for perceived resources or psychological support. Within SET this process is also said to lead to increasing levels of trust between parties (Blau 1964 in Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Saks 2006). The role of trust in behavioural

engagement is one of three aspects from Macey and Schneider's (2008) article which are particularly relevant to the PRQs and the aim of the current study.

Macey and Schneider (2008) and the current study
The boundaries placed on the scope and focus of behavioural engagement relate directly to PRQs1 and 3. As identified earlier, Macey and Schneider (2008) limit the scope of engaged behaviours to discretionary extra-role behaviours, e.g. OCB and PI. In contrast, others argue that these behaviours are a potential *consequence* of EE and that engagement relates only to the individual's *day to day* role (Newman and Harrison 2008, Purcell 2012; Saks 2008). Both sides of this debate imply that engagement is experienced and demonstrated only within the boundaries they identify.

Although the exact terms vary, EE is generally accepted as concerning the *way* individuals experience and undertake work related activities. For example, with vigour, dedication and absorption (Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002*;* Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b); a combination of cognition, affect and behaviour (Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002*;* Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b) or, more colloquially, head, heart and hands (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995; Christian *et al.* 2011; Rich *et al.* 2010). Although a detailed examination of OCB and PI remain beyond the focus of the current study the question of EE occurring only in relation to either in-role or extra-role activities is clearly relevant to PRQ1 and the study aim.

Macey and Schneider (2008) also limit the focus of behavioural engagement to corporate or strategic goals. Individuals are portrayed as consciously and deliberately directing their efforts only towards organizational objectives (Shuck and Wollard 2010). This discounts the possibility of alternative or multiple foci of engagement and raises questions about engaged individuals whose behaviour does not contribute towards such goals. For example, Halbesleben speculates that engaged individuals may actively work around perceived blockages, even '...at the expense of other organizationally important outcomes or processes' (2011:72). If behavioural engagement is defined by its contribution to corporate goals, how should behaviour such as that anticipated

by Halbesleben (*ibid.*) be characterised? While this is clearly another issue related to the individual experience of EE (PRQ1), the reference to strategic goals also makes a connection with PRQ3 and the role of organizational context.

Instead of the *quid pro quo* reciprocity of SET as proposed by Saks (2006), the process of Macey and Schneider's (2008) behavioural engagement appears to reflect *mutuality,* i.e. working together towards *shared* goals (Sullivan *et al.* 2009). As these goals are more often devised by senior managers (George 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008; Sullivan *et al.* 2009) this raises further questions: how do these goals become and remain the focus of an individual's engagement? Secondly, does failure to accept these goals preclude the experience of EE?

Macey and Schneider's (2008) view of behavioural engagement appears similar to that of Harter *et al.* (2002) and much of the practitioner literature (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009), including the civil service engagement programme. Engaged individuals are portrayed as 'going the extra mile' (Buchanan 2004; CIPD 2007; Robinson *et al.* 2004; 2007; Scottish Executive 2007) or demonstrating 'discretionary effort' (MacLeod and Clarke 2009:9; Towers Perrin 2003:1) in support of management and organizational goals (Cabinet Office 2011; Rees *et al.* 2013; Robertson-Smith and Markwick 2009). The implication is that the scope of engaged behaviour is over and above that required as part of the employment contract.

In a recent study, Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) identify two contrasting organizational approaches to increasing levels of individual EE. The 'hard' approach appears similar to Robertson and Cooper's description of 'narrow engagement' (2010: 326) where the need to increase EE concentrates on corporate gains. The 'soft' approach sees EE as a positive outcome in itself and emphasises employee involvement strategies. Jenkins and Delbridge (*ibid.*) conclude that further research is required to explore the connections between broader organizational contexts and the development of individual EE.

Trust is relevant to the current study as it is identified as a factor in the creation and maintenance of EE (PRQ2). There is also a connection with organizational context (PRQ3) through the annual civil service engagement survey (CSPS). Two survey items are used to assess trust as a 'driver' of engagement. Finally, Chugtai and Buckley (2008) identify a need for further research into trust's role in individual EE.

Apart from behavioural engagement, Macey and Schneider's (2008) review reflects the views of others: EE is a multi-dimensional concept (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006) influenced by contextual factors (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Bakker and Leiter 2010; Demerouti *et al.* 2001; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 2008). Where they differ is in the composition of the dimensions of EE and its portrayal as a cumulative and sequential process leading to engaged behaviour.

In summary, this historical review shows EE conceptualised in three main ways: as 'self-in-role' (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006); as the antithesis to burnout (Demerouti *et al.* 2001; González-Romá *et al.* 2006; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Maslach 2011) and, finally, as behaviour instrumental to organizational performance (Harter *et al.* 2002; Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck 2011; Shuck and Wollard 2010).

Within these differing conceptualisations common themes emerge. Individual characteristics/traits are said to play a role in EE (Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Crawford *et al.* 2010; Kahn 1990; Macey and Schneider 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001). EE arises from the interplay between the individual and their work context (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Saks 2006; Shuck *et al.* 2011) and fluctuates across time and within individuals (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Sonnentag 2003; Sonnentag *et al.* 2010). The experience of EE is said to be positive (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Jeung 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Schaufeli *et al*. 2010) involving the simultaneous application of an individual's

cognitive, emotional and physical energy (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008; Maslach 2011; Rich *et al.* 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Finally, EE is predominantly associated with improved work performance (Bakker 2011; Bakker and Leiter 2010; Christian *et al.* 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck 2011; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Sonnentag 2011) which is directed towards organizational goals (Harter *et al.* 2002; Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck and Wollard 2010).

These areas of agreement are brought together in Figure 2 (overleaf) to illustrate the linear process described within much of the reviewed literature (*c.f.* Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Macey and Schneider 2008; Bakker and Leiter 2010).

Figure 2: **Process model of EE**

Ind. Characteristics
Autotelic personality
Self esteem
Self-efficacy
Positive affectivity
Conscientiousness
Etc.

Contextual Influences
Positive Job/Role characteristics:
Autonomy   Social support
Influence   Feedback
Task variety   Learning
Opportunities
Etc.

Negative Job/Role characteristics
Role ambiguity
Heavy workload + tight timescales
Emotionally draining
Physical danger
Organizational politics
Etc.

Employee Engagement
Self-in-role:
          Cognition
          Emotion
          Behaviour

Vigour (Energy)
Dedication (Identification)
Absorption

Work Performance
In-role
Extra-role
Discretionary effort
Directed at org.
goals

In spite of these areas of agreement the review of seminal articles identifies that there is still much about EE which remains to be explored (Bakker and Leiter 2010; Bakker *et al.* 2011b). The final section summarises those issues which are central to the aim of the current study and describes the consequent refinement of the PRQs.

Section 3:   Central Issues and Revised Research Questions

The aim of the current study is to describe and explain the individual experience of EE within a UK civil service department. The goal of this review was to identify issues central to this overall aim and the contribution of the current study (Bowman 2007; Wilson and Chaddha 2009). These central issues were discussed in relation to each seminal article and are brought together within Table 7 (overleaf). The discussion which follows clarifies the changes made to the PRQs and identifies connections with the ethnographic research strategy described in Chapter 4.

Table 7: Central Issues from seminal articles

Seminal Article	Central Issues	Relevance to PRQs	Need for further research
Kahn (1990)	a) individual agency and the role of perception	PRQ1/PRQ2	Bakker *et al.* (2011a; 2011b); Crawford *et al.* (2010); Kahn (1992); Zigarmi *et al.* (2009)
	b) the role of organizational context e.g. culture, norms and values	PRQ3	Bakker *et al.* (2011a); Jenkins and Delbridge (2013); Kahn (1992); Maslach *et al.* (2001); Rees *et al.* (2013); Shuck (2011)
	c) potential disadvantages of EE	PRQ1	Bakker *et al.* (2011a; 2011b); Bakker and Leiter (2010); George (2011); Halbesleben (2011); Maslach (2011); Rees *et al.* (2013); Sonnentag (2011)
Maslach *et al.* (2001)	a) individual agency and the role of perception in assessing organizational context	PRQ1/PRQ2	Bakker *et al.* (2011a; 2011b); Crawford *et al.* (2010); Kahn (1992); Zigarmi *et al.* (2009)
	b) the influence of factors beyond organizational boundaries	PRQ2	Jenkins and Delbridge (2013); Maslach *et al.* (2001)
Harter *et al.* (2002)	a) the influence of managers and organizational factors in *creating* EE	PRQ2/PRQ3	Bakker *et al.* (2011a); Jenkins and Delbridge (2013); Shuck *et al.* (2010); Shuck and Wollard (2010)
Saks (2006)	a) Focus of engagement	PRQ1	Purcell (2012); Reissner and Pagan (2013); Saks (2006)
	b) EE as social exchange	PRQ2/PRQ3	
Macey and Schneider (2008)	a) The scope and focus of behaviour during EE	PRQ1	Purcell (2012)
	b) The role of trust	PRQ2/PRQ3	Chugtai and Buckley (2008); Macey and Schneider (2008)

Table 7 shows that some central issues were relevant to both PRQ2 and PRQ 3. Consequently, the research questions were reduced to two; PRQ2 subsumed PRQ3. The two remaining research questions (RQs) can be differentiated as addressing the content and process of EE (*cf.* Harquail and Brickson 2012). RQ1 concerns what it means to be engaged; the feelings, thoughts and behaviours associated with the experience. RQ2 addresses how EE occurs; the influences and interactions between the individual and their environment which are said to give rise to EE. The central issues from the seminal articles (see Table 7) became subsidiary questions. The resulting RQ Framework (Table 8 below) provided greater focus for the study while remaining flexible enough to generate further questions as the fieldwork progressed (Mason 2002). Answering these questions contributed a more holistic insight into the individual experience of EE and addressed gaps in the extant literature.

Table 8: RQ Framework

Research Questions (RQs)	Central Issues Questions (CIQs)
1. How do individuals understand and experience EE?	a) With what do individuals engage? b) What is the scope and focus of engaged behaviour? c) What are the potential disadvantages of EE?
2. How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?	a) What is the role of trust? b) What is the role of perception and individual agency compared with the role of contextual factors (e.g. managers, cultural norms and values)?

Less apparent within Table 7 are the connections between the central issues and the ethnographic research strategy. The first connection is found in the different emphasis placed on the role of individual perception (Christian *et al.* 2010*;* Crawford *et al.* 2010*;* Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009) versus the degree of influence exerted by organizational and/or extra-organizational factors (Harter *et al.* 2002; Macey and Schneider 2008). This difference is not only illustrative of the diverse perspectives on EE. It can also be connected to philosophical and theoretical debates about the primacy of

either agency or structure in determining an individual's course of action (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Stones 2005; Wacquant 2008). These debates are returned to within the more detailed discussion of ontology and epistemology within Chapter 4.

Table 7 also shows the need for more research into the individual experience of EE (Kahn 1992; Shuck *et al.* 2011), the characteristics of specific contexts (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rees *et al.* 2013; Shuck 2011) and the interaction between the two (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Crawford *et al.* 2010; Kahn 1992; Rees *et al.* 2013; Shuck et al. 2011; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Although not shown in Table 7, EE research is dominated by quantitative studies (Reissner and Pagan 2013; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011). These simultaneously decontextualize EE and treat it as a relatively stable state which is experienced in the same way by all individuals (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Demerouti and Bakker 2008; Demerouti *et al.* 2010; Macey and Schneider 2008; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011). The requirement for a more holistic and contextualised perspective required a research strategy which can consider all three perspectives. This clearly had implications for the research strategy and data collection methods and is also returned to within the methodology chapter.

Summary

Structured around an historical review of seminal EE literature this chapter provides the theoretical and methodological basis for the current study. Three broad perspectives on EE have been identified and the RQs have been refined to include aspects of EE requiring further investigation. Finally, although the seminal articles and most of the associated literature treat EE as a unique concept, there are continuing debates about its distinctiveness (e.g. Albrecht 2010; Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Kahn 1990; 1992; Little and Little 2006; Newman and Harrison 2008; Parker and Griffin 2008; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; 2008, Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). These debates and the absence of a sociological perspective on EE are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

EE AND BROADER CONCEPTUAL DEBATES

Introduction

This chapter considers two issues which draw attention away from the previous chapter's narrower focus on EE towards broader debates. First, is the question of EE's distinctiveness and its relationship with other work-related concepts. Second, as EE concerns the relationship between individuals and work there appear to be connections with sociological themes and perspectives which go unremarked within much of the EE literature.

Section 1 reviews debates about EE's relationship with commitment, job involvement and satisfaction; three concepts with which it is most frequently associated. It is argued that although there are some clear connections with these concepts (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010), EE is conceptually distinct as a 'whole person' motivational construct (Rich *et al.* 2010). The section concludes by identifying the conceptualisation of EE applied to this study.

EE's relationship with broader sociological debates is rarely considered. Little reference is made to research or literature beyond the fields of occupational health, work psychology and organizational behaviour (Parker and Griffin 2011). To address this absence, Section 2 discusses three different explanations for this 'sociological silence'. It is proposed that EE's treatment as a psychological construct (Little and Little 2006) leads to contrasts with sociological approaches and these contribute to the silence. Despite these contrasts a number of potential connections are identified which offer opportunities for a more sociological perspective on engagement.

Section 1:   Distinguishing EE

The question of whether EE is '…old wine in new bottles…' (Macey and Schneider 2008: 6), a '...cocktail construct...' Saks 2008:40) or something entirely unique has generated a great deal of debate within the EE literature (e.g. Albrecht 2010; Bakker et al 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Kahn 1990; 1992; Little and Little 2006; Newman and Harrison

2008; Parker and Griffin 2008; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; 2008, Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). It is also an important question for the current study. If EE is not distinct then the attempt to study it is flawed.

On first examination there are a number of similarities between EE and commitment, involvement and satisfaction. Like engagement, each concerns the individual's positive relationship with their employment. Like EE, each has been associated with improvements in individual and organizational performance and, finally, like EE, there is no consensus about their definitions and conceptualisation (Brown 1996; Judge and Hulin 1993; Meyer *et al.* 2004). Beneath these surface similarities, more detailed debates have taken place to establish the relationship with EE. These include the identification of conceptual differences and the use of statistical methods to test EE's discriminant validity (e.g. Christian *et al.* 2011; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Viljevac *et al.* 2012). Although there is still no consensus, there is increasing evidence that EE is a unique concept which is either an antecedent or consequence of these others (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Inceoglu and Fleck 2010; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Saks 2006; 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010).

Commitment
Commitment, like EE, is the subject of much discussion about its form and focus (Allen and Meyer 1990; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Meyer and Allen 1991; Meyer *et al.* 2004). It is variously described as an attitude (Mathieu and Zajac 1990), an affective state (Meyer *et al.* 2004) or a sense of obligation to stay in the organization (Allen and Meyer 1990; Meyer and Allen 1991). Common to all these conceptualisations are the individual's psychological identification with the organization and the effect this has on intention to quit (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006). The greater the level of commitment, the less likely it is that the individual will leave the organization (Meyer and Allen 1990; Meyer *et al.* 2004).

As both EE and commitment are associated with improved performance most authors accept a connection between them (Christian *et al.* 2011; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Opinions differ, however, about the nature and extent of that connection.

Commitment's focus on the individual's relationship with the *organization* is identified as a key difference by some authors (Christian *et al.* 2011; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). It is argued that EE is concerned with the more immediate aspects of the individual's work life, e.g. tasks, work or job role (Christian *et al.* 2011; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). This argument fails to acknowledge, however, both the relative absence of research into the focus of EE (Purcell 2012; Reissner and Pagan 2013; Saks 2006) and the evidence from Saks (2006) about the possibility of multiple foci. It also neglects evidence identifying different foci of commitment. For example, in a review of commitment literature Meyer *et al.* (2004) cite research showing commitment to a range of items including supervisors and work groups (Becker and Kernan 2003), customers (Stinglhamber *et al.* 2002) and organizational change (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002). The argument that EE is differentiated from commitment by virtue of the level of its focus is, consequently, undermined.

In a different approach, Saks differentiates EE by arguing that whereas commitment is an attitude, EE '...is the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles' (2006:602; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). Saks' (*ibid.*) does not explore the nature of attitudes further but emphasises that EE concerns the way an individual *behaves* during work activities. By implication commitment as an attitude differs from EE by *not* including behaviour.

Although there is considerable debate and research into the nature of attitudes, they are most often characterised as evaluative predispositions (Arnold *et al.* 1991; Augoustinos and Walker 1995). Individuals make judgements about the desirability of social objects based on prior knowledge, beliefs and/or experiences. Social objects may include specific items or people, e.g. Marmite,

wasps, Princess Diana, or less tangible items such as philosophies or ideas, e.g. Marxism, equality, capitalism. The judgements about such objects provide individuals with a readiness to respond in a negative or positive way (Augoustinos and Walker 1995; Little and Little 2006; Mullins 2007).

While more often associated with cognition and affect (Arnold *et al.* 1991), there is a suggestion that attitudes are also connected with behaviour (Arnold *et al.* 1991; Zanna and Rempel 1988 in Augoustinos and Walker 1995). The connection may be retrospective or prospective. Previous behaviour may influence the formation of an attitude or the attitude may create an inclination towards certain future behaviours (Zanna and Rempel 1988 in Augoustinos and Walker 1995). As EE is *also* said to include behaviour (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; 2010; Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2006; 2008) the relationship with commitment could be that of either an antecedent or consequence.

Saks' (2006) research found the two concepts to be independent yet connected; engagement mediated the relationship between job characteristics and commitment. EE is influenced by characteristics of the job and being engaged influences the development of commitment. Similar conclusions have also been reached by others testing the discriminant validity of EE (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Viljevac *et al.* 2012).

Macey and Schneider adopt a different approach. They suggest a closer relationship and describe commitment as '...an important facet...' of state engagement (2008:8). As already identified, Macey and Schneider (*ibid.*) portray state engagement as an amalgamation of older concepts including commitment, affective satisfaction, involvement and others. This amalgamation of older concepts is criticised by other EE scholars. Saks (2008), for example, argues that a cocktail of older concepts fails to take account of the existing academic work which differentiates EE.

Macey and Schneider's (2008) perspective is, however, reflected within much of the practitioner literature which portrays commitment to the organization, its goals and values as integral to EE (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Harter *et al.* 2002; Little and Little 2006; MacLeod and Clarke 2009; Macey and Schneider 2008; Robinson *et al.* 2004; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). For example, in a review of EE for the department of Business, Innovation and Skills, Macleod and Clarke describe EE as:

> '...a blend of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement and feelings of empowerment. It is a concept that is greater than the sum of its parts' (2009: 9).

In sum, there are a number of different perspectives on the relationship between EE and commitment. While there is currently no consensus about its exact nature, the majority of the academic literature treats the two as distinct yet related concepts.

Job involvement

As with commitment, job involvement has also been conceptualised in different ways (Brown 1996; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006). The two most frequently referenced are Lawler and Hall (1970) and Kanungo (1979 in Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006). Lawler and Hall describe involvement as a '...psychological identification with one's work...' (1970: 310) and related to self-image (*ibid.*; May *et al.* 2004). Kanungo (1979 in Brown 1996) refers to involvement as a cognitive state associated with perceptions about the ability of the job to satisfy individual needs. What both perspectives share is an emphasis on cognition (Christian *et al.* 2011); the rational, thinking aspect of an individual's relationship with work. It is this narrower focus on cognition which is used by some to differentiate involvement from EE.

EE is more often conceptualised as including affect and behaviour (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; Wefald 2008); two facets of the individual's relationship with work which are absent from involvement. Additionally, EE is associated with individual

wellbeing (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Robertson and Cooper 2010; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b) and role perception (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006); two further factors absent from the conceptualisation of involvement. Common to these authors is a view that EE includes a broader range of factors than involvement.

Kahn (1990) provides two further arguments for differentiating engagement from both commitment and involvement. Firstly, he argues that engagement's fluctuating nature sets it apart. Commitment and involvement relate to the relatively stable, on-going relationship between individuals and their employment; a relationship which Kahn characterises as a '...still photograph...' (1990: 718). In contrast, engagement concerns particular '...moments and situations...' (*ibid*: 693). When the intensity of commitment and involvement fluctuates it affects the extent to which individuals bring themselves to their role, i.e. are engaged or disengaged.   In contrast with others (May *et al.* 2004; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004), Kahn (1990) appears to imply that commitment and involvement precede and exist simultaneously with engagement.

In a later article Kahn (1992) differentiates engagement from involvement and commitment by referring to their respective research orientations. He argues that research into these two concepts is largely orientated towards identifying ways of driving individuals to perform given tasks and achieve organizational goals. Comparatively little regard is given to the perspective of individual employees (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013). Kahn suggests that this orientation contains a '...lingering homage...' (1992*:* 321) to Taylor's scientific management (1911 in Kahn 1992). Individuals are treated as if they have little to offer except their physical labour or effort. In contrast, engagement concerns the '...whole person...' (*ibid*: 331); a combination of the cognitive, emotional and physical aspects of the individual's identity (Christian *et al.* 2011; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rich *et al.* 2010). Any attempt to influence EE requires consideration of all three aspects combined with the recognition that it is largely within the control of the individual (Kahn 1990; 1992; 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Organizations may create conditions suitable for engagement yet individuals may choose not to

bring themselves fully into their role (Kahn 1992; Saks 2006; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009).

In spite of Kahn's (1992) insistence on EE's alternative orientation, Chapter 2 illustrates that some academic articles (e.g. Harter *et al.* 2002; Macey and Schneider 2008; Shuck 2011), and a majority of practitioners', (Jeung 2011; Robinson *et al.* 2004; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010) portray EE as instrumental to improving organizational performance (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Little and Little 2006; Robertson and Cooper 2010).

Finally, in addition to conceptual differences, the discriminant validity of EE and job involvement have been confirmed (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Rich *et al.* 2010). Hallberg and Schaufeli, for example, used the most frequently applied engagement survey (UWES) to explore the relationship between EE, commitment and involvement. They conclude that all three are '...empirically distinct concepts' (2006:124).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is also the subject of a great deal of research (Harter *et al.* 2002; Judge *et al.* 2001; Rich *et al.* 2010) and conceptualised in a number of different ways (Judge and Hulin 1993). The most frequently cited definition within EE literature is that of Locke who describes satisfaction as a '...positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job...,' (1976: 1300 in Rich *et al.* 2010: 618; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Warr and Inceoglu 2012). The combination of positive emotions and a focus on the individual's job means that there is, once again, a clear similarity to EE. With the notable exception of Harter *et al.* (2002) (see Chapter 2) there is, however, greater consistency within the EE literature about the conceptual difference between the two.

Satisfaction and EE are said to differ on the basis of the degree of energy or activation associated with each (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Warr and Inceoglu 2012). Satisfaction is based on a cognitive appraisal that needs have been met and will, potentially, continue to be met (Christian *et al.* 2011; Little and Little 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010).

Put simply, a satisfied individual feels they have already achieved what they wanted (Warr and Inceoglu 2012). Consequently, satisfaction is associated with satiation (Christian *et al.* 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008) and 'contentment'; both emotional states of relative passivity (Russell 2003). As satisfaction is based on an assessment of what has already occurred it can also be characterised as *retrospective*. It is anticipatory only in the sense that what has gone before is expected to continue in the same way.

In contrast, EE is consistently associated with motivation, energy/vigor and enthusiasm (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011; Inceoglu and Fleck 2010; Kahn 1990; 1992; Leiter and Bakker 2010; Rich *et al.* 2010; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Warr and Inceoglu 2012). Instead of a judgement about work conditions or job characteristics (Christian *et al.* 2011), EE concerns the way individuals bring themselves to their work (Kahn 1990; 1992; Saks 2006); it is a more active state than satisfaction (Christian *et al.* 2011; Inceoglu and Fleck 2010; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Saks 2006). Engaged individuals have needs which are yet to be satisfied and their energies are directed towards that which is personally meaningful (Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; May *et al.* 2004; Warr and Inceoglu 2012). Accordingly, EE can be characterised as *anticipatory* in expectation of future satisfaction (Warr and Inceoglu 2012). Finally, although conceptually differentiated, it is also important to note Schaufeli and Bakker's (2010) observation that there are yet to be any studies exploring the discriminant validity of EE and satisfaction.

Conceptualising EE

It is clear from the previous discussion that there are a number of connections between EE, commitment, involvement and satisfaction. Given the continuing debates about the exact nature of EE, it is unsurprising that there is also a lack of consensus about the nature of these connections (Bakker *et al.* 2011a). EE is variously described as an antecedent, a consequence or encompassing these other concepts (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Macey and Schneider 2008; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). There is, however, increasing evidence (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Inceoglu and Fleck 2010) and agreement (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Parker and Griffin 2011; Rothbard and Patil 2012) that EE's multidimensional

nature provides a unique and holistic perspective on the relationship between individuals and their employment (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995; Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). In a recent review of the current state of EE research Bakker *et al.* conclude that although a number of issues remain to be resolved:

> '...there is clear and sufficient theory [...] and research [...] demonstrating that engagement is an important standalone motivational construct that is independent of other such constructs...' (2011a: 9).

This premise is accepted for the purpose of the current study. EE is conceptualised in accordance with the first of the three approaches identified within the previous chapter: as 'self- in- role' (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006). However, in the definition employed for the current study the word 'experience' is substituted for the more remote terms of 'concept', 'state' or 'construct'. Consequently, EE is described as: *a positive fluctuating experience combining cognition, affect and behaviour which arises from the interaction between the individual and their organizational context.*

Section 2:   A Sociological Silence

The term sociological silence refers to two omissions within the EE literature. First, the majority of authors draw on theories from occupational health, work psychology and/or organizational behaviour. Reference to theories from outside of these three inter-related fields is sparse. For example, of the seminal articles, only Kahn (1990; 1992) draws explicitly from theories providing a sociological perspective, i.e. Goffman (1961a) and Merton (1957). This limitation goes largely unremarked, even within articles which explore or question the origin and distinctiveness of EE (e.g. Little and Little 2006; Macey and Schneider 2008; Newman and Harrison 2008; Parker and Griffin 2011; Wefald and Downey 2009).

Second, the literature search found no examples of EE *research* from a sociological perspective. These omissions are surprising given sociology's long history of exploring the on-going relationship between individuals and their employment (e.g. Beynon 1984; Blauner 1964 in Edgell 2006; Giddens 1971; Goldthorpe *et al.*1968; Goldthorpe *et al.*1969; Lockwood 1958 in Stones 2008; Mayo 1947 in Goldthorpe *et al.*1968; Weber 1968 in Giddens 1971; Mills 1951).

Together these two limitations contribute to a sociological silence, i.e. the absence of a sociological perspective on EE which would consider the links between the individual experience and the social context (Henslin 2013). Comparing and contrasting themes from the sociology of work (Watson 2008) with themes within the EE literature leads to three possible explanations for this silence involving positive psychology, instrumentality and the dark side of engagement. These also offer the potential for connections between the two fields with some more recent articles e.g. Kassing *et al.* (2012), providing sociological insights into EE and organizational power.

Positive psychology

Positive psychology provides a clear contrast between EE and the so-called '...conflict theories...' (Giddens and Sutton 2013: 21) found within work-related sociology. Whereas the latter concentrate on the negative aspects of workers' relationship with employment, e.g. alienation, power and inequality, EE considers work as a positive experience (Bakker *et al.* 2008*;* Harter *et al.* 2002; Jeung 2011; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010*;* Saks 2006; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Shuck 2011).

Psychology and occupational health research were traditionally focused on illness (Bakker and Schaufeli 2008) and the '...negative aspects of human behaviour' (Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b: 137). Articles addressing issues such as stress, mental illness and dysfunction outnumbered articles on positive issues by a factor variously identified as 14:1 (Myers 2000 in Bakker *et al.* 2008), 17:1 (Diener *et al.* 1999 in Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b) or 16:1 (Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b).

Around the turn of the 21st century a number of psychologists promoted the view that it was time to shift attention towards '...the study of especially positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organizations and their members...', (Cameron *et al.* 2003: 4 in Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b: 139). This broadened the field of attention beyond individuals to include the organizational context.

Jeung (2011) suggests that 'positive psychology' encompasses both Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) (Cameron *et al.* 2003 in Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Rothbard and Patil 2012) and Positive Organizational Behavior (POB). POS concentrates on the macro, organizational level whereas POB concerns the individual, micro level of analysis (Jeung 2011). This explanation of the difference between POS and POB contrasts with Cameron *et al.*'s description of POS as '...organizational research occurring at the *micro*, *meso* and macro levels...' (2003: 4, emphasis added).

Jeung (2011) also suggests that POS places little emphasis on improving organizational performance whereas POB focuses on how positive attributes can be '...effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace' (Luthans 2003: 179 in Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b: 139). The management orientation of POB is challenged by Wright who, in an argument similar to Kahn (1992) and Cameron and Spreitzer (2003), contends that POB research '...must also include the pursuit of employee happiness, health, and betterment issues as viable goals or ends in themselves...' (2003: 440). The respective orientations of POS and POB appear to mirror two of the perspectives towards EE; as instrumental to improving organizational performance (e.g. Gruman and Saks 2011; Harter *et al.* 2002) or related to the overall wellbeing of the individual (e.g. Robertson and Cooper 2010; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b).

Irrespective of debates about POS and POB, EE is consistently characterised as a positive experience (Bakker *et al.* 2008; Harter *et al.* 2002; Jeung 2011; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Shuck 2011). Consequently, it is often associated with

the field of positive psychology (Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Bakker and Schaufeli 2008; Bakker *et al.* 2008; Harter *et al.* 2002; Jeung 2011; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Shuck 2011).

As identified earlier, portraying work as positive contrasts with some of the dominant themes within work-related sociology, e.g. alienated labour (Haralambos and Heald 1985; Marx 1964 in Giddens 1971; Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968; 1969; Mills 1951). It is not possible, here, to review all of the debates surrounding the theory of alienation; however, it is possible to identify some of the contrasts with EE. For example, although some exponents of alienation suggest that it is inherent in the lives of all workers within capitalist societies (Giddens 1971), there is also research which shows some types of work are more rewarding than others (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969; Oldham 2012). This appears to be the experience of those who are engaged (Kahn 1990; 1992). Rather than work being '...external to the worker...' and associated with '...a feeling of misery...' (Marx 1964 in Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969: 180) engagement involves positive emotions and a sense of aligning self with work (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). In sum, whereas alienation concentrates on the disconnection between individuals and their work, the study of EE concentrates on the opposite.

The contrast outlined above is also illustrative of a larger divergence between positive psychology and sociology. There is currently no recognized specialty of 'positive sociology' and sociological research continues to concentrate on the challenging (or negative) aspects of work and society (Stebbins 2013). For example, an examination of the August 2013 edition of 'Sociology', the journal of the British Sociological Society, reveals articles about shame and poverty, distress, moral decline and disability with a ratio of 13:2 in favour of individual and societal challenges.

No attempt is made here to critique the value or otherwise of this focus but it is proposed that the contrast with positive psychology is a factor in the sociological silence surrounding EE. Whereas EE scholars focus on exploring the positive experience of work, sociologists are more likely to concentrate on the opposite.

Instrumentality

The first of two contrasts between instrumentality and EE relates to the source of meaningfulness or sense of purpose in an individual's life (Chalofsky 2003). In the classic study of 'affluent workers' in Luton, Goldthorpe *et al.* (1968; 1969) identified the majority of workers treating their employment instrumentally. Work was seen in economic terms; a way of financing life outside, e.g. with family or at leisure, and there was a sharp division between work and non-work time. Satisfaction and meaningfulness were found *away* from the workplace (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968).

There is a similarity between this view of work as a 'means to an end' and the psychological concept of extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan 1985 in Meyer and Gagné 2008). Extrinsically motivated individuals undertake work activities primarily because of an expectation that doing so will lead to the attainment of something desired, e.g. financial reward. With both instrumentality and extrinsic motivation rewards are dependent upon behaving in a manner required by someone or something external to the individual. For example, a bonus to pay for a family holiday is likely to depend on behaving in the way required by a manager or as specified by the organization (Deci 1975). The possibility of a bonus can therefore be seen as a means of exerting managerial control; the reward is contingent on behaving 'appropriately'.

In contrast to instrumentality and extrinsic motivation, engaged individuals see and experience meaning *within* their work (Chalofsky 2003; Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; Fairlie 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach and Leiter 1997; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). This appears similar to psychological theories of *intrinsic* motivation. These suggest that an activity is undertaken primarily '...for its own sake out of enjoyment and interest' (Meyer and Gagné 2008: 60; Herzberg 1987 in Hollyforde and Whiddett 2002) or for a

sense of autonomy (Deci 1975). Rather than being instrumental to a meaningful life *outside* of work, the work itself is experienced as meaningful (Chalofsky 2003; Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; Kahn 1990; 1992). In addition, rather than prioritising home life over work, recent research suggests that engaged individuals may do the reverse, i.e. prioritise work over non-work by spending more of their personal time in the workplace (Halbesleben *et al.* 2009; Halbesleben 2011).

The second contrast with EE relates to the conceptualisation of instrumentality as an attitude. As such, it is based on previous experience and predisposes the individual to act or react in a certain way towards their employment (Augoustinos and Walker 1995). This appears similar to Goldthorpe *et al.'s* conclusion that instrumentality is not solely a consequence of the nature of the work but is influenced by '...the wants and expectations which men (*sic*) *bring* to their employment...' (1968: 184 emphasis added). The workers' instrumental approach existed prior to their current employment and is a factor in their choice of high paid work (*ibid.*). As established earlier, EE is not an attitude (Christian *et al.* 2011; Rothbard and Patil 2012; Saks 2006; 2008). Instead, it concerns *how* individuals undertake their work roles and/or tasks using their cognitive, affective and behavioural energies (Christian *et al.* 2011; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2008). EE is a more immediate psychological state which contrasts with instrumentality as a pre-existing attitude towards work.

Although instrumentality differs from EE there is the possibility of a connection between the two concepts. This connection may be similar to the relationship with commitment and involvement (Kahn 1990; 1992) which was discussed earlier. Like those two attitudes, instrumentality is also seen as a relatively stable attitude towards work (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968). It seems theoretically possible that it may, like commitment and involvement, wax and wane in intensity. If this is so, individuals with an instrumental attitude may experience engagement during times when instrumentality weakens or loses its salience. While instrumentality and EE appear to represent opposing experiences of work, Chapter 2 provides examples of research where individuals maintain and

hold conflicting thoughts and attitudes simultaneously (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006). There is a possibility that individuals with an overarching instrumental orientation to work may yet experience engagement; the two concepts may, consequently, co-exist. Indications of something similar can be found in the Luton studies (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968; 1969).

In their typology of work attitudes, Goldthorpe *et al.* identify a '...solidaristic...' orientation towards work (1968: 38). Individuals with this orientation still have the economic imperative of instrumentality but experience work as '...emotionally rewarding...' and as '...a whole way of life' (*ibid:* 41). Although the Luton studies clearly precede academic interest in EE, the description of the solidaristic orientation shows similarities to descriptions of engagement. It may be that instrumentality does not preclude individuals from experiencing work as meaningful. Additionally, there is a possibility that individuals with a solidaristic orientation use engagement instrumentally as a way to achieve extrinsic rewards. For example, investing more of themselves in their work role precisely because it may lead to greater financial reward, e.g. performance related pay or bonuses. The potential for connections between instrumentality and EE has yet to be explored by either sociologists or EE scholars (George 2011).

In sum, the differences between instrumentality and EE may contribute to the sociological silence as scholars from the respective fields focus on contrasting perspectives of an individual's experience of work. In spite of these differences it seems possible that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive; someone may hold an instrumental attitude towards work yet also experience engagement.

'...the dark side of engagement...' (Bakker *et al.* 2011a: 17)

The literature search for Chapter 2 found only four articles which focus on the potential negative effects of EE. All are opinion pieces (i.e. Bakker *et al.* 2011a; George 2011; Halbesleben 2011; Maslach 2011) which discuss the potential harmful effects on individuals. This relative absence of attention to the disadvantages of EE provides the third perspective on the sociological silence.

The potential for harm can be separated into 'direct' and 'indirect' effects. The former arise from the physical and psychological experience of being engaged. The latter are associated with actions taken by managers and/or organizations in their attempts to increase levels of engagement or harness its effects (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013). Reference to managers opens the potential for connections with broader sociological debates related to issues of power and control between the individual and the organization (Stones 2005; Watson 2008). Along with the conceptual articles identified earlier, more recent research from Kassing *et al.* (2012) and Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) provides some insight into these issues albeit through the lens of communication and human resource management theories. Direct and indirect harm are considered in more detail below.

Direct negative effects are mostly associated with the idea of individuals being 'Too engaged...,' (Halbesleben *et al.* 2009: 1452; Maslach 2011). This may lead to behaviour which is detrimental to the individual's wellbeing, particularly over the longer term (George 2011). For example, engaged individuals are more likely to work longer hours (Beckers *et al.* 2004 in Bakker *et al.* 2011a) and/or take work home to be completed in what would usually be non-work time (Bakker *et al.* 2011a). Long hours are traditionally associated with workaholism, increased health problems and interference in family life (Halbesleben *et al.* 2009; Taris *et al.* 2010). Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) suggest, however, that the likelihood of negative effects is reduced for engaged individuals by a fundamental difference between their motivation and the motivation of workaholics. Whereas workaholics feel *compelled* to do longer hours out of a fear of what happens if they don't; engaged individuals *choose* to do longer hours due to the sense of meaningfulness they gain from work. Taris *et al.* (2010) found some evidence to support this view yet it also raises questions about the context in which such choices can be freely exercised (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013).

Other engaged behaviour may also lead to career or interpersonal difficulties at work. In an example which crosses the boundary between direct and indirect negative effects, Kassing *et al.* explored the links between EE and dissent,

i.e. '...the expression of disagreement or contradictory opinions about organizational policies and practices' (2012: 239). They report that engaged non-managers are more likely to express upward rather than lateral dissent. In other words, these individuals are more likely to talk to about concerns with their managers rather than with colleagues. In contrast, managers limit the use of upward and lateral dissent as they associate it with disloyalty towards the organization (*ibid.*).

The potential for negative consequences arises from the difference between the dissent attitudes and practices of managers and non-managers. For example, if a manager associates dissent with disloyalty it is unlikely that they will view such behaviour favourably. An engaged individual who disagrees openly with an organizational policy may, consequently, be penalised by their manager (Kahn 1990). Enacting engagement may, therefore, lead to a form of harm or disadvantage.

Given the practitioner emphasis on connections between EE and corporate performance (Harter *et al.* 2002; 2009; Macey and Schneider 2008; MacLeod and Clarke 2009), there is every likelihood that the organization will have a strategy to increase its levels (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). So, on the one hand, the hapless individual may be exhorted to be more engaged, and on the other, they may be penalised for being just that. Meanwhile, the organization stands to lose the potential benefits of employee feedback (Kassing *et al.* 2012).

Indirect disadvantages of EE are similarly associated with differences between employer and employee perspectives on engagement. In an echo of Robertson and Cooper's 'narrow engagement' (2010: 326), Maslach describes the contrast as follows:

> 'For corporate leaders, engagement is a way to "motivate without money"—which they see as a very good thing, especially in challenging economic times. However, that is not necessarily in accord with the view that engagement is the path to employee happiness' (2011: 51).

George (2011), likewise, questions the portrayal of EE as a win/win concept (Bakker *et al.* 2008*;* Harter *et al.* 2002; Jeung 2011; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010*;* Saks 2006; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Shuck 2011) and is critical of engagement research for adopting a largely managerial perspective (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013). She argues that whereas employers stand to gain increased productivity and profit from EE, employees benefit only from the intrinsic experience of being engaged. In a similar vein, Rees *et al.* express concern that the higher levels of energy and effort associated with engagement will become employers' default expectation. Rather than receiving reward for doing '...a good job... (2013: 2793), employees will be expected to consistently 'go the extra mile' with excess hours becoming the norm.

These concerns appear similar to long running themes within sociology about the balance of power and authority between employees and those who own (or manage) the means of production (e.g. Braverman 1974 in Haralambos and Heald 1985; Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968; Mills 1951; Mullins 2007; Weber 1968 in Giddens 1971). Critiques of earlier approaches to managing organizations seem particularly relevant. For example, in a criticism of the human relations approach, Mills refers to managers manipulating employees to '...secure and increase the will to work, a new ethic that endows work with more than an economic incentive...' (1951: 234). Although written over 60 years ago this description of managers' goals appears similar to those '...corporate leaders...' described by Maslach (2011: 51). EE is seen as a way to secure higher performance at no extra cost to the organization (Robertson and Cooper 2010).

There are two assumptions within these portrayals of the indirect negatives of EE which need addressing. Firstly, there is an assumption that all managers and all organizations adopt a corporate-serving economic approach to EE. There is some evidence which appears to contradict this view. As described in Chapter 2, Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) identify two contrasting approaches to EE. Referencing the field of human resource management (Storey 1989 in Jenkins and Delbridge 2013) these are characterised either 'hard' or 'soft'. The former treats EE instrumentally (or narrowly) as a means to increase employee effort and achieve corporate goals with little consideration of the effects on

individual wellbeing (Robertson and Cooper 2010). This appears to reflect some of the concerns identified earlier within both EE and older sociological literature (e.g. George 2011; Maslach 2011; Mills 1951) yet without explicit reference to the latter. In contrast, the 'soft' approach places the emphasis on '...creating a workplace context in which employees feel valued and supported...' (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013: 2680). This emphasis on intrinsic reward is supported extrinsically by awards of financial bonuses, interest free loans and social events as recompense for increased engagement. The soft approach appears to more closely reflect the portrayal of EE as a win/win concept.

The second assumption is that engaged individuals contribute directly and purposively to the achievement of organizational goals. Again, there is some recent commentary which undermines this assumption. For example, engaged individuals are reported as more likely to craft their jobs to gain greater resources (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Halbesleben 2011; Parker and Griffin 2011). This may mean prioritising engaging activities over those which hold less allure (George 2011; Halbesleben 2011). If the latter include activities of high strategic importance there is potential for engaged individuals to undermine the achievement of organizational goals (Halbesleben 2011) rather than to contribute to them. These individuals may still be '...going the extra mile...' (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010: 14) yet, from a management perspective, it may be in the wrong direction.

These two examples of recent research and commentary provide alternative perspectives on the indirect negative effects of EE. Not all managers and organizations approach EE solely from an economic perspective and, secondly, engaged individuals may not necessarily work to support the corporate agenda. Both perspectives contribute to a view of EE which is more complex than that which dominates the practitioner literature (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010).

Finally, some of the criticisms relating to the employers' instrumental approach (e.g. George 2011; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013) reflect long established sociological themes.   Given these similarities, the absence of a more explicit

reference to a sociological perspective on the dark side of EE is all the more surprising, yet perhaps it is the very recent emergence of a critical perspective which provides some explanation. If the dark side of EE is only now emerging as an area of interest for EE scholars it is less likely to have drawn the attention of scholars from other fields.

Summary

This chapter has examined debates about EE's distinctiveness by comparing and contrasting it with three other work-related concepts. EE was defined for the current study along with an exploration of the apparent absence of a sociological perspective on the concept. Taken together, the two review chapters led to a revised RQ framework concentrated on aspects of EE which required further research. In the absence of hypotheses for testing, the framework provided focus for the fieldwork without restricting the possibility for additional questions (Brewer 2000; Mason 2002). Finally, the review also informed the decision to adopt an ethnographic methodology which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

This chapter discusses the philosophical, theoretical and practical issues related to the conduct of the current study. It provides the rationale for the use of ethnography as the research strategy and for the practical and procedural choices which flowed from that decision (Brewer 2000; Carter and Little 2007). Throughout the chapter my role as researcher is made transparent through the use of the first person. This provides an overt acknowledgement that I was integral to the process (Altheide and Johnson 1998 in Brewer 2000; Emerson *et al.*1995; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and contributes to the credibility of the research (Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Mason 2002; Seale 1999).

The chapter is presented in four sections which approximate to stages traditionally associated with ethnographic study (Burgess 1984). The reality was more complex and far messier (*ibid*: 1984a) but the structure brings some clarity to the presentation of a twelve month research story. The first section, 'Getting Ready', concerns issues prior to the fieldwork. The research aim and questions are reprised along with a discussion of philosophical issues which contributed to my decision to use a qualitative ethnographic methodology. The role of reflexivity is briefly discussed before moving to address the practical, procedural and ethical issues as they relate to three stages of the fieldwork: 'Getting in, getting on and getting out…,' (Buchanan *et al.* 1988:53). The chapter concludes with a discussion about assuring the quality of ethnographic research and identification of the criteria adopted for the current study.

Section 1:   Getting Ready

The foreshadowed problem for the current study (Malinowski 1922 in Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) arose from my professional involvement with the civil service EE strategy (Cabinet Office 2007) and CSPS, the annual EE survey. CSPS collected statistical and narrative data yet only the former was ever reported. My curiosity about this omission and doubts about CSPS' ability to reflect the individual experience of EE led to a preliminary review of literature

(Saunders *et al.* 2003). This revealed that EE was only just emerging as a focus for academic interest and that there was much debate about its nature (Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2006; Shuck and Wollard 2010). Moreover, the preliminary review identified only one piece of research (Kahn 1990) which took account of the influence of organizational context. In contrast to the proposed study, that context was the American private sector.

A connection with personal experience is not an unusual starting point for research (Bryman 2004; Burgess 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Mills 1959). In this case EE also had the practical advantage of being of interest to my civil service employer. This increased the likelihood of gaining access to individuals and/or organizations to carry out the research (Burgess 1984). Consequently, I identified the aim of the study: 'To describe and explain the individual experience of EE within a UK civil service department' and devised three preliminary research questions (PRQs). Following the full literature review I revised these to create the RQ framework (Table 8 below):

Table 8: RQ Framework

Research Questions (RQs)	Central Issues Questions (CIQs)
1. How do individuals understand and experience EE?	a) With what do individuals engage? b) What is the scope and focus of engaged behaviour? c) What are the potential disadvantages of EE?
2. How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?	a) What is the role of trust? b) What is the role of perception and individual agency compared with the role of contextual factors (e.g. managers, cultural norms and values)?

The framework focuses on three under-researched perspectives: the individual understanding and experience of EE; the organizational context and, lastly, the interaction between these two.

The full review had also confirmed that EE research is heavily reliant on surveys (Christian *et al.* 2011; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011; Reissner and Pagan 2013; Shuck *et al.* 2011). These provide valuable information about the level, extent and aggregated influences on EE yet are limited in their ability to reflect organizational context (Demerouti *et al.* 2010; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1990) or the individual, subjective experience (Kahn 1992; Shuck and Wollard 2010). An alternative approach was required to address the three perspectives within the RQ framework.

While the literature review and RQs provided a practical and logical basis for choices about the research methodology (Carter and Little 2007), the decisions were also influenced by my philosophical stance towards the nature of social reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) (Blaikie 2007; Brewer 2000; Bryman 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Hughes 1990; Mason 2002). These issues are discussed next.

Ontology and epistemology

Ontological and epistemological issues are much debated within social sciences and other academic disciplines due to the implications they have for the design and conduct of research (Blaikie 2007; Bryman 2004; Carter and Little 2007; Cohen *et al.* 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Silverman 2005). The discussion here is limited to elucidating the philosophical and theoretical assumptions (Brewer 2000; Miles and Huberman 1994) relevant to my decision to employ an ethnographic research strategy.

According to Bryman (2004), the central issue within ontology is the extent to which social entities, e.g. organizations or culture, are considered to exist as external, objective facts independent of people. At one extreme is objectivism (*ibid.*) which holds that there is a single reality beyond individual perception or beliefs (Blaikie 2007; Potter 2000). This reality is not subject to human influence and is portrayed, largely, as a constraint on the individual (Bryman 2004; Cohen *et al.* 2008).

At the other extreme is constructivism which proposes that social entities are created and recreated continuously through social interaction (Becker 1982 in Bryman 2004; Blaikie 2007). Individuals have agency and behave differently from inanimate objects; they imbue situations and actions with meaning and are able to articulate that meaning (Brewer 2000).

While objectivism suggests that an external reality is the dominant influence in human behaviour, constructivism holds that there is no external reality, only constructs of the mind (Potter 2000). Between these two positions sit a variety of approaches which incorporate or reject aspects of the two extremes (Blaikie 2007). My own ontological perspective lies within that middle ground with the closest approximation being what Hammersley calls 'subtle realism' (1992:52). This perspective accepts that there is an external reality which impinges on people but rejects the idea that they are unable to influence it. Instead, social reality emerges through an iterative and dialectic process between individuals and external social structures (Blaikie 2007). The RQ framework reflects this perspective. For example, CIQ2b) contains reference to agency and perception (constructivism) yet also refers to cultural norms and values as if they exist externally to the individual (objectivism). The question also seeks to explore the interaction between the two; thus revealing the assumption that such a process is feasible. The challenge is then how to explore this combined perspective through research. Once again, the answer was influenced by my philosophical perspective on the nature of knowledge.

As with ontology, epistemology is most often discussed by contrasting two philosophical positions (Brewer 2000; Cohen *et al*. 2008; Saunders *at al*. 2003). The titles of these opposing philosophies vary (Cohen *et al*. 2008) but the most frequently used terms are 'positivism' and 'interpretivism' (Bryman 2004).

Positivism reflects the assumptions within objectivism (Brewer 2000). In simple terms it holds that there is a single external reality which can be known only through the use of the senses, particularly through observation and experimentation. Intentions, motives and emotions which cannot be observed

can be disregarded (Haralambos and Heald 1985). As people are part of the natural world they should be studied using the methods of the physical sciences. The goal of research is to provide law-like explanations for events (Brewer 2000; Cohen *et al.* 2008; Saunders *et al.* 2003) which can then be applied predictively to other situations (Cohen *et al.* 2008).

In contrast, interpretivism reflects the ontological assumptions of constructivism and argues that differences between human beings and inanimate objects require an alternative research approach. Knowledge is seen as a human construction based on assumptions and interpretations (Saunders *et al.* 2003). Consequently, research should take account of the fluctuating meanings which individuals give to their experiences (Bryman 2004; Hammersley 1990 in Brewer 2000). The goal is to gain an understanding of social phenomena (Schwandt 1994). This necessarily involves '...access to actors' own accounts...' (Brewer 2000:35), within their natural environment (Brewer 2000; Bryman 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Subtle realism shares this perspective and proposes that knowledge of the world 'out there' is only possible through the interpretations of human beings (Hammersley 1990 in Brewer 2000; Maxwell 2012).

Similar assumptions underpin symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969 in Maxwell 2012), a methodology with a long association with ethnography (Rock 2007). Firstly, people actively interpret the world and then act on the basis of that interpretation (Blumer 1997 in Rock 2007). Secondly, the act of interpretation relies on the interaction between the individual and their context Blumer 1969 in Benzies and Allen 2001). Finally, interpretations are fluid and change over time (Rock 2007). Consequently, knowledge is seen as '...partial, incomplete and fallible' (Maxwell 2012: 5). My own views reflect these less definitive perspectives on the nature of knowledge and I have previously conducted two research studies from an interpretivist perspective.

Treating knowledge as ambiguous has implications for any researcher wishing to convince others of the rigor of their research (Brewer 2000; Bryman 2004). In particular, as interpretive researchers accept that they are part of the research context (Davies 1999; Delbridge and Kirkpatrick 1994; Finlay 2002; Maxwell 2012) it is difficult to argue that findings reflect *only* the perspective of participants (Silverman 1997 in Brewer 2000). One way to address this concern is through a reflexive account of the research explaining the processes which gave rise to the research evidence (Brewer 2000; Mason 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007); acknowledging the researcher's role within the research and making methodological decisions transparent (Brewer 2000; Davies 1999; Seale 1999). It is this rationale which underlies the use of first person narrative throughout the thesis. These explicit interventions provide a reflexive account which draws on Brewer's (2000) guidance for good ethnographic practice. The issue of evaluating the quality of the study is returned to later. For now, I return to the remaining methodological decisions for the conduct of the research.

As well as reflecting ontological assumptions, positivism and interpretivism carry different implications for the way in which research is conducted (Blaikie 2007; Bryman 2004; Carter and Little 2007; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Positivism is more often associated with quantitative research and interpretivism with qualitative (Bryman 2004; Cohen *et al.* 2008; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Although the differences between the two are '...not absolute' (Bryman 2004: 443; Snape and Spencer 2003), Table 9 (below) draws on a range of research method texts (Blaikie 2007; Bryman 2004; Cohen *et al.* 2008; Mason 2002; Potter 2000; Ritchie and Lewis 2003; Saunders *et al.* 2003; Snape and Spencer 2003) to illustrate the most common contrasts and further demonstrate the appropriateness of employing a qualitative design for this study. Where the table shows a number of options, those applied to the current study are underlined and discussed in more detail throughout the remainder of the chapter.

Table 9: Positivism vs interpretivism - Implications for research

Factor	Positivism (Quantitative)	Interpretivism (Qualitative)
Role of researcher	Detached, objective: 'scientist'.	Integral to research, reflexive: 'detective'.
Role of researched	Passive subjects.	Active participants.
Goal of research	Universal explanation, generalisation.	Understanding of social phenomenon in context.
Research setting	Disregarded, artificial or controlled as a variable.	Natural, uncontrived.
Research approach	Deductive: theory testing	Inductive: theory building <u>Abductive: explanation building</u>
Research strategy	Experiment , survey	Case study, action research, grounded theory, <u>ethnography.</u>
Data gathering methods	Surveys, structured observation, experiment.	<u>Interviews, participant observation</u>, focus groups, diary studies, <u>document analysis.</u>
Sampling	Large numbers:, statistically representative	Small numbers: purposively chosen.

Research approach and strategy

The research approach concerns the role of theory within the study (Bryman 2004; Saunders *et al*. 2003). A deductive approach requires researchers to devise hypotheses in advance which are then tested via the study. For an inductive approach, theory is developed following data gathering and analysis (Mason 2002; Saunders *et al*. 2003). Between these 'before' and 'after' approaches sits the abductive approach. This involves a continuous process of movement between data and theoretical concepts and acknowledges the

role of the researcher within the reasoning process (Agar 2010; Coffey and Atkinson 1996 in Mason 2002). The goal is to provide the best explanation for events within a particular context (Agar 2010; Douven 2011). Although there is debate over the exact nature of abductive reasoning (Douven 2011), the interpretation adopted here is taken from Blaikie (2007). For Blaikie, abductive reasoning:

> '...incorporates what the inductive and deductive research strategies ignore – the meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions that people use in their everyday lives...' (*ibid:* 90).

Theoretical insights from the literature are integrated with unanticipated data from the field to generate new ideas and explanations (Wilson and Chaddha 2009). It is particularly suited to insider research (Agar 2010). As a civil servant studying other civil servants with an aim to uncover their understanding of the EE experience this approach was particularly apt.

I chose an ethnographic research strategy for a combination of academic and pragmatic reasons (Saunders *et al.* 2004). Although 'ethnography' has no single, agreed meaning (Hammersley 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), it has a number of common characteristics (Atkinson *et al.* 2007; Burgess 1982, Hammersley 1990). Brewer incorporates these within the definition applied to the current study:

> 'Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic way without meaning being imposed on them externally.' (2000:10).

As ethnography is concerned with identifying social meanings within natural, uncontrived situations (Brewer 2000; Bryman 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), it seemed the most appropriate way to explore EE from the three perspectives within the RQ framework. Additionally, Kahn's seminal study of

EE (1990; 1992) employed an ethnographic strategy in two American private sector companies. Adopting a similar approach within the UK civil service would make it possible to contrast the findings from the two studies (Brewer 2000; Mason 2002; Saunders *et al.* 2003) and provide additional theoretical insights (Mason 2002).

Finally, the direct role of the researcher within ethnography (Brewer 2000; Burgess 1995) also provided a pragmatic solution to one of the challenges of gaining access to data sources (Bell 1993; Bryman 2004; Saunders *et al.* 2003). While I was getting ready for the research (autumn 2010), the civil service was facing severe financial constraints following the May general election (Cabinet Office 2012b; Smith 2012). Access would be more likely if I could provide an immediate and ongoing return for the time and resources involved in conducting the research. Effectively, I could offer my 10 years' experience as an OD professional in return for being able to explore individual EE. Although this reasoning could also be applied to action research, I had concerns about balancing the demands of a sponsor with those of research participants (Burgess 1984; Miller and Brewer 2003; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Consequently, and in summary, the research strategy adopted for the study was qualitative ethnography involving multiple sources of data. These will be discussed further in Section 3. Having determined the strategy there were ethical issues which had to be considered prior to seeking access to a host organization (Saunders *et al.* 2003).

Early ethical issues

At this point there were two main ethical issues. The first was the question of whether to conduct overt or covert research (Brewer 2000; Saunders *et al.* 2003). The decision to be open about the research was very straightforward. In addition to adhering to the university's ethics code (University of Leicester 2012), as a civil servant I was (and still am) bound by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (2010). This requires me to act with integrity and honesty. The former prohibits the use of any official information in the pursuit of any '...private interests...' and the latter requires that I do not '...knowingly deceive [...] others' (Civil Service Commission 2010). By being open and

honest about the research I was able to stay within the law and gain my employer's support for the fieldwork.

The second ethical issue concerned power and the exploitation of prospective participants. The UK civil service is still a relatively hierarchical employer with every employee differentiated by grade as well as role title. I was designated a 'Grade 6' which put me within the top 7% of the civil service (Office for National Statistics 2011). There was a risk that participants might feel pressured to take part if an 'in-house' researcher was senior to them. (They also might not want to contribute at all, but that was a different problem). This raised the possibility of hiding my grade; a partial deceit which could lead to accusations of exploitation if later revealed.

While I anticipated this dilemma before the fieldwork started, it was likely that other issues would arise that I had not (Burgess 1988). I decided to adopt '...ethical situationism...' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003:219) as my approach. This is the middle of three ethical approaches which recognises that what is important in one situation will be less so in another. The need to avoid harm is central to this approach yet there is also a need to consider the implications of applying potentially competing ethical standards. As to the grade issue, I asked my sponsor to ensure that I was employed as a 'student researcher' rather than being designated by grade. This had the advantage of being 'situationally' accurate and fitted well with the overt approach to the study. Returning to the thread of the story, the next practical step was finding a part of the civil service willing to permit access and support the study.

Section 2: Getting In

A number of strategies are suggested to enable researchers to gain research access (Brewer 2000; Burgess 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Saunders *et al.* 2003; Smith 2007). Of these, the most successful appears to be using existing contacts. Working for the National School of Government (NSG) meant I had a network of contacts across a number of civil service organizations. I believed that these could help me to identify a host organization. Unfortunately, my confidence was misplaced and after three

months of abortive conversations I had to rethink my strategy. Fortunately, while I was contemplating my next move, I had some '...good old-fashioned luck', (Fetterman1989:12 in Rock 2001). A chance encounter while I was facilitating a conference led me, eventually, to GovDep:

> '*At morning coffee I was approached by M - one of the 45 participants. He was checking his Blackberry and commented that the department's EE survey results are due out today. "I read your biog*[graphy] *in the course brochure earlier and wondered if you might be interested in using* [GovDep] *as the focus of your research."*
> (Research diary: 6/12/10)

In spite of over thirty years in the civil service, I only knew GovDep through students attending courses which I ran at NSG. My unfamiliarity was an additional benefit for the research as I had a legitimate reason for asking naïve questions about the way things happened.

M was on the board of GovDep and he became the sponsor for my access to the organization (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Though he was very keen for me to join, his enthusiasm was insufficient on its own. There were also a number of 'gatekeepers' (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002) who had crucial roles in the negotiations. Some were 'exit' gatekeepers in NSG who seemed keen for me to stay where I was. Others were 'entry' gatekeepers at GovDep with roles in human resources and finance. It seemed I had to contact a different person for every aspect of joining GovDep, e.g. my contract, security clearance, medical check, parking permit. Each new person meant a new negotiation in what Hammersley and Atkinson describe as '...an unavoidable first step in gaining access...' (2007:58). I finally began the fieldwork on 18th July 2011, seven tortuous months after my chance encounter with M. I had secured a twelve month part-time contract based within GovDep's OD team. Three days a week I was to be one of six OD specialists working on a wide range of change projects; the other two days I would work at home on the research.

The long negotiations and the first few days at GovDep provided an unexpected insight into my sponsor's role. I had anticipated that M's seniority and support might have ethical implications. In particular, that he might try to influence the direction of the research or pressure people to take part (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Both suspicions proved to be unfounded. Apart from a single 'welcome' meeting during my first week he left me alone. This proved to be a mixed blessing. While it meant I had no pre-existing contact to help make my way I also discovered, during my induction period, that M was the focus of much distrust within GovDep. A degree of separation meant that I was free of a potentially negative association. This insight also highlighted the potential for unanticipated consequences from the relationships which might develop during the fieldwork (Burgess 1984; Coffey 1999).

Section 3:   Getting On

Creating and maintaining trusting relationships was essential to the progress of the research and relied on an awareness of what Coffey calls '...the ethnographic self...' (1999:36). In research terms, I aimed to be a participant observer '...researching the field while participating fully in it...' (Gold 1958 in Brewer 2000: 84) and my employment within the OD team was the means to that end. However, in GovDep terms, I had at least two contrasting identities. As a 'newbie' (Research diary 18/7/11) I completed an induction period in the same way as other recruits. This included a tour of the site and being introduced around the organization; a distinct advantage for building relationships. At the same time, my reason for joining was unusual. Being allocated to the OD team meant that most of my introductions were with middle or senior managers who seemed keen for me to provide a 'magic bullet' solution to increase EE. The following is illustrative of the reactions I encountered:

'Today, S [OD team member] introduced me to W, Head of [section]:

S: "*This is RB. She's joined the OD team and is doing some research into employee engagement.*"

W: "*That's great. You should swing by the office sometime and you can let me know where I'm going wrong* [laughs]."

        (Research diary 27/7/11)

Unwanted and unwarranted, I seemed to be considered an EE 'expert' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and I received a number of invitations like W's during my induction. The interest of these managers raised an additional ethical issue and a potential obstacle to the research. I was concerned that I they might expect me to share the findings of the research, particularly, the details of anyone from their team who took part. Although I had put the need for privacy and confidentiality in writing to both my sponsor and the Human Resources (HR) Director I felt the need to repeat it on a number of occasions with other managers. Additionally, and as earlier, if staff suspected the research was on behalf of managers they might not want to take part.

This is another example of ethical situationism (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I dealt with it by emphasising that I was a 'student researcher', i.e. I was still learning; both how to research *and* about EE at GovDep. I also decided to avoid managers as the route to research participants and use more direct methods to generate interest in participating in the study.

During August and September 2011 I put an article on GovDep's intranet, met with union reps twice and held an open forum meeting in the restaurant to answer questions about the research. These activities were in addition to my role in the OD team. Fortunately, my three days a week at GovDep were away from home. With no home-life I was able to work long hours (7.30am-6.30pm) and typed up scraps of fieldnotes during the evening at the bed and breakfast where I was staying. During the first three months at GovDep I also firmed up the sources of data and the sampling strategy for the remainder of the fieldwork (Emerson *et al.* 1995). The rest of this section concentrates on these aspects.

Data gathering

At the 'getting ready' and 'getting in' stages I anticipated using observation, interviews and document analysis to gather data. The final decision was, however, left open as the research focus might evolve in the light of new evidence from the field (Anderson 2002; Atkinson 1981 in Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In the end, all three methods were used as they each provided an alternative perspective on the RQs and CIQs. Observations, recorded as

fieldnotes, began from my first day at GovDep and continued throughout the twelve months of fieldwork. The interviews began in November 2011 and continued until the final month. Early analysis of the first few interview scripts led to a narrowing of the focus for the observations and also informed my selection of documents for the third source of data. The rationales, practical application and ethical issues for each method are discussed below.

Interviews

The literature review identified that EE involves a combination of cognition, affect and behaviour (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006). Behaviour can be observed but exploring the thoughts and feelings which accompany it required a different approach (Brewer 2000; Bryman 2004; Mason 2002; Mullins 2007). Additionally, the fluctuating nature of EE (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006) made observation problematic. I could not guarantee that I would be in the right place at the right time, even within twelve months at GovDep. Interviews, on the other hand, addressed both issues and enabled participants to share their individual perspective on both EE *and* the context in which it occurred (Lewis 2007).

The next step was to determine the nature of the interviews including the style. There are a number of ways to categorise interviews (Bryman 2004; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Most refer to the degree of control exercised by the researcher. At one extreme, interviews follow a strict schedule of questions applied in the same way to each interviewee (Cohen *et al.* 2008). At the other, interviewees are free to discuss any aspect of the research topic they wish (Cohen *et al.* 2008). Between these two sit a number of variations (Bryman 2004) and that's where the interviews in the current study were located.

Arthur and Nazroo (2007) argue that all interviews are structured to some degree and the main issue is the extent to which this is undertaken prior to the meeting. For the current study the RQ framework provided a pre-existing focus for the interviews and I sent participants an information note outlining the process (see Appendix 1). However, rather than a rigid structure, the note was

designed to provide guidance and reassurance. As GovDep is a hierarchical organization replete with formal processes I felt it was important to be seen to 'have a plan'. For the core of the interview I drew on Kahn's (1990) approach and asked participants to tell two stories: one of being engaged and the other of being disengaged. This part of the interview was in-depth and flexible to explore the issues raised by participants in greater detail. This semi-structured approach (Saunders *et al.* 2003) was designed to provide insights into all three perspectives within the RQ framework. I then had to determine who and how many participants to interview (Mason 2002).

Sampling for the interviews

The sampling decisions related to the research strategy, the RQs and practical issues (Saunders *et al.* 2003). As a qualitative ethnography I was not seeking to generalise to other populations so the sampling strategy was purposive rather than representational (Mason 2002). With the RQs focussed on individual experiences I was interested in the similarities and differences between those experiences. This led me to adopt a maximum variation sampling strategy with as wide a variety of difference as practicable (Patton 2002). Any patterns arising during analysis of such a diverse group are said to more accurately reflect key issues in relation to the focus of the research (Jepson and Rodwell 2008; Patton 2002). Additionally, this strategy enables the identification of unusual or unique instances (Saunders *et al.* 2003).

This strategy requires the use of selection criteria (Jepson and Rodwell 2008; Patton 2002). As EE is an experience associated with work (Kahn 1990; 1992; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002), I used criteria related to employment at GovDep: Division, length of service, grade and type of employment contract rather than demographic or personal characteristics. A secondary consideration was deciding how many people to interview. I chose to limit the number to twenty; a figure I considered practical due to being a lone researcher using multiple data gathering methods while working in an unfamiliar organization (Brewer 2000).

As participants needed to be willing to talk in-depth about personal experiences I opted for self-selection as the means of recruitment (Burgess 1984; Saunders *et al.* 2003). Combining maximum variation with self-selection could have been problematic if a homogenous group had volunteered, e.g. all from the same Division. I reasoned, however, that with nine months left at GovDep I had time to adjust the sampling strategy if needed. Fortunately, this proved unnecessary. In spite of my original maximum, there were twenty-four participants: nine women and fifteen men. One male participant later withdrew consent leaving twenty- three.

Table 10 (below) provides the details of the variation between study participants. In the interests of anonymity, the Divisions and grades are represented by letters and numbers respectively:

Table 10: Sampling - Participant variation

GovDep Division	No. of participants	Grades (1-8)	Length of service (Years)	Contract type (FTP, PTP, FTC)*
A	3	2x4; 1x6	5; 16; 22	1xFTP; 2xPTP
B	4	3x5; 1x6	1; 6; 11; 36	3xFTP; 1xPTP
C	3	2x5; 1x6	1; 1; 2	2xFTP; 1xFTC
D	4	1x3; 2x4; 1x5	4; 17; 32; 34	3xFTP; 1xPTP
E	3	2x4; 1x5	10; 37; 40	3xFTP
F	3	1x3; 1x5; 1x7	9; 29; 38	3x FTP
G	3	1x1; 1x2; 1x7	11; 12; 27	2xFTP; 1xFTC
Totals/ Range	**23**	**1-7**	**1-40**	**17xFTP; 4xPTP; 2xFTC**

*Key: FTP = Full time permanent; PTP = Part-time permanent; FTC= Fixed term contract

Conducting the interviews

In September 2011, I placed an invitation to participate on GovDep's intranet. I made a similar request at the monthly meetings of four Divisions. Some meeting times clashed so in three Divisions my request was read out by the Divisional manager. Prospective participants contacted me by email or telephone and I then sent them an informed consent letter with an attached information note (see Appendix 1). These provided further details of the research, e.g. information about privacy and confidentiality and the focus of the research 'conversation' (Burgess 1984; Mason 2002). Both documents had been piloted on two OD colleagues.

Once I received a signed consent form I agreed a date and time to suit the participant. Most of GovDep's offices were large and open plan which made meeting in private problematic. Fortunately, I managed to negotiate access to a small meeting room in the same building as HR and Finance. The location had two advantages. Firstly, it was down a remote corridor away from the other sections and, secondly, being co-located with two of GovDep's corporate teams meant participants could obscure the reason for visiting the building.   On the intranet booking system I entered only the name of the OD team and my extension in case of problems. Prior to each interview I checked the meeting room for tidiness and prepared it for use. I set the room up informally with two chairs at right angles to a small table where I placed the digital recorder, a pen and notepad. I also filled the kettle in case the participant wanted a hot drink. The aim was to put them at ease.

The first interview took place on 1st November 2011.   Five participants met with me twice making twenty-eight interviews in all. One participant was unable to identify an EE experience so in total I gathered twenty-seven EE stories and twenty-three disengagement stories. The last interview took place on 3rd July 2012; the month I left GovDep.

As a way into the interviews I thanked participants for their time and referred to the information note (Appendix 1) as a reminder of the subject, privacy/confidentiality and the expected hour's duration (Saunders *et al*. 2003).

The opening questions invited participants to talk about how they came to be working at GovDep and about their current role. These questions were designed to set participants at ease through enquiring about familiar circumstances which are part of their personal history (Arthur and Nazroo 2007). They also helped me to build rapport through acknowledging similarities and differences in our respective career histories (Fontana and Frey 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Rather than an aseptic interrogation the interviews were an active and interactive process (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 in Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I was mindful, however, that the focus was on the participant's experiences and kept my comments brief. Finally, the opening questions also provided a first opportunity for participants to tell a story, i.e. '...an account of an experience that is told in a sequenced way...' (Saunders *et al.* 2003:401). The interview then moved to the stories of disengagement and engagement; the core of the meeting. I asked additional questions to explore the two experiences at the greater depth of thoughts and feelings (Arthur and Nazroo 2007). When an interview came close to the anticipated hour's duration I simply stated the time. Participants were then able to decide for themselves whether or not to continue. The interviews ranged in duration from forty minutes to one and a half hours.

With participants' permission, each conversation was recorded (Bryman 2004). This enabled me to focus on listening, observing and questioning during the interview (Mason 2002) and provided the basis for later transcription (Nazroo and Arthur 2007). I showed participants how to operate the recorder so that they could switch it off at any time. Only one participant exercised that choice and he subsequently withdrew from the research. Following each interview I stayed behind to make additional notes. These included reflections on how it went (Bryman 2004) and also aspects which would not necessarily be clear from the transcript e.g. a participant's facial expression, the pitch or tone of voice (Fontana and Frey 2003), particularly during the two stories. I then had to decide the best way to transcribe the recordings (Lapadat 2000; Mason 2002; Riessman 1993).

Transcription

Conventions for interview transcription vary according to the purpose and focus of the research (Lapadat 2000; Riessman 1993). I intended to use the interviews interpretively to uncover participants' motivations, thoughts and feelings (Mason 2002). This meant that I chose verbatim transcription including paralinguistic aspects, e.g. 'ums', 'errhs' and silences which are associated with added meaning (Fontana and Frey 2003). As I wanted to share the transcripts with participants (Bryman 2004), I was mindful of Kvale's (1996) warning that the inclusion of such features may be embarrassing for the speaker. Consequently, I chose to follow Lapadat's suggestion and '...invent...' a transcription format for the study (2000: 214) and make its use explicit to participants. The key features of this format are shown in Table 11 (below):

Table 11: Transcription format

Feature	Explanation/approach
Punctuation	As for standard written prose
Grammar	As used by participants
Pauses/hesitation/unfinished phrases	Ellipsis, e.g. 'It was...it was just like...'
Paralinguistics	Closest approximation to the sound
Non-verbal sounds	In square brackets, e.g. [laughs], [sighs]
Emphasis	In **bold**
Names/designations	Square brackets, e.g. [Name]
Information implicit within context	Square brackets with explanation, e.g. 'this part of the world [south west]'
Participant thoughts or citing another person	Within double quotation marks, e.g. 'I thought, "This is pointless..."'

I transcribed the first interview (Dana) myself. Fitting the process around my OD role meant it took five days to produce twenty pages of script. By that time I had already interviewed two other participants. As I was using an iterative analysis process (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) I became concerned at the time commitment. Following a discussion with my tutor I decided to employ a professional transcriber for some of the remaining scripts.

I took a number of steps to ensure the continued confidentiality and anonymity of participants whose recordings were transcribed professionally. I asked the transcriber to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to any files being sent and changed the consent letter to explain her involvement. I used the Government Secure Internet (GSI) service to send and store recordings and transcripts securely. All electronic records, regardless of who transcribed them, were identifiable only by date and a respondent number and letter, e.g. R4. I maintained a separate 'Interview Matrix' as a key to these numbers and to the pseudonyms used within the Findings chapter.

Overall, I typed up twelve interviews and the transcriber completed fifteen. On receipt of the professional transcripts I read them while listening to the original recording. This enabled me to re-acquaint myself with the conversation and clarify implicit contextual data (Table 11). The analysis of the interview data began during transcription (Mason 2002). The emerging themes led to the interviews becoming the primary source of data supplemented by observations and GovDep documents.

Observation and informal conversations
From my first day at GovDep I kept a research diary (Atkinson 1992 in Emerson *et al*. 2007) in a large notebook with sections differentiated by a coloured strip at the page edge. Each section contained a different type of fieldnote: observations, interpretations and analytical notes (Mason 2002) which are probably '...incomprehensible to others...' (Emerson *et al.* 2007:356). Initially the process felt chaotic and although I was aware of the impossibility of capturing everything (Brewer 2000) I was also afraid of missing something vital (Mason 2002).

During induction I carried a GovDep notebook everywhere and openly jotted down key points from meetings and other encounters. Being new, I saw what was familiar to my OD colleagues as 'strange' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and wanted to capture that before it became so familiar as to be unremarkable. Most of that work is omitted from this thesis due to word constraints. It did, however, provide early insights into the language and culture of GovDep which assisted me during interviews and conversations whenever participants assumed a degree of common knowledge (Riessman 1993).

Greater clarity and focus for the observations came from the preliminary analysis of the early interviews. I continued to record my reactions and analytical insights in the research diary but began to concentrate the observations on meetings where EE was overtly referenced. This provided an alternative 'corporate' perspective on the themes emerging from the interviews (Mason 2002). Gaining access was relatively straightforward as the OD team was leading GovDep's attempts to increase EE. Sometimes I attended as a contributor and sometimes as an observer. Either way, my research role was overt and jotting in a notebook unremarkable; note taking at meetings was commonplace at GovDep. In addition to these formal situations I also drew on informal conversations.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that there is little difference between informal conversations and observation but in the current study they differed in three ways. Firstly, they were initiated by the other person and took place in a variety of *ad hoc* locations, e.g. at desks, over coffee, in the corridor etc. Secondly, I was not prepared in advance. Rather than digital recordings I relied on hastily scribbled notes made as soon as possible after the conversation finished (Emerson *et al.* 1995). Finally, relevance to the RQ framework could only really be determined afterwards when I reflected on the exchange.

The observations and conversations both raised particular concerns about informed consent (Mason 2002). Although the research was overt, the degree of awareness varied across the organization, over time and amongst people. I could not guarantee that everyone I met knew about my research role or how

the observations would be used (Burgess 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Mason 2002). Successful fieldwork is said to depend on the development of trusting relationships (Burgess 1984; Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The number of informal conversations increased gradually during my time at GovDep, perhaps as a reflection of increasing trust or just simply getting to know me. Whatever the reason, such relationships may be undermined by the presentation of a formal form, even though it is designed to generate trust and confidence in the research process (Bell and Newby 1977; Punch 1986 in Brewer 2000).

Exercising 'ethical situationism' I made detailed fieldnotes only about activities where participants were aware of my role or where those I was observing were aware. For example, at a large staff conference my attention was on the speakers and facilitators who knew about my role rather than the delegates who had less certain levels of awareness. While this might have led to some adjustment in behaviour (Saunders *et al.* 2003) it also meant people were free to exclude me from those activities should they wish. The latter occurred only once when a lead facilitator asked me to stay away from a meeting.

In summary, I used observation and informal conversations to provide an alternative perspective on the role of culture and contextual factors in EE. The final sources of data were documents produced and used by members of GovDep to represent the 'corporate' perspective.

Documents
To ignore 'official' documents would have meant disregarding an important source of comparative data and an integral part of corporate life (Prior 2003 in Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). As with the observations, I chose documents on the basis of themes arising from the interviews. These included policies and strategies, an invitation to a conference and two procedural handbooks. Each provided an alternative perspective on GovDep's culture and contextual influences on EE. I had obtained permission to use in-house documents prior to joining GovDep and each was freely available to employees and/or the public via the internet so there were no associated ethical issues.

In summary, the use of multiple sources of data enabled me to explore EE from the three perspectives within the RQ framework and to cross check data from one method with another (Bryman 2004; Saunders *et al.* 2003). It also meant that I amassed a great deal of raw data (Bryman 2004; Mason 2002; Spencer *et al.* 2003) which had to be honed and focussed through analysis.

Data analysis

I analysed the data in three main phases separated by time, intensity and purpose. The first phase took place throughout the fieldwork. As already indicated, the process was continuous and iterative (Brewer 2000; Emerson *et al.* 1995; Mason 2002; Saunders *et al.* 2003). During my two days a week away from GovDep I read and re-read transcripts and fieldnotes looking for themes and connections with the literature. Wherever possible I used *in vivo* expressions for theme titles to retain the connection with participants' experiences and the research context (Brewer 2000; Emerson *et al.*1995; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

I kept a log of themes and used them to inform subsequent data gathering (Brewer 2000). For example, in February 2012, I identified a 'speaking out' theme within the interviews. This raised additional questions about how this behaviour was interpreted at a corporate level. I subsequently obtained and examined GovDep's performance appraisal documents to establish any similarities or differences between the two perspectives. The same issue also raised questions about Kahn's (1990) identification of 'safety' as a pre-requisite for engagement. This led (abductively) to an idea that participants' EE was influenced by the relative salience of risk/meaningfulness. Consequently, I re-interviewed five participants and explored this issue in greater depth.

As the amount of data grew the practicalities of this continuous process became more difficult (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). It became almost impossible to write down every analytical decision and that part of my research diary includes only the more significant steps. I was helped to narrow the analytical focus by referring my interpretations back to participants (Brewer 2000). In March 2012, I sent twenty participants a one page summary of the emerging interview themes and asked about the accuracy of my interpretation. All twenty

responded and their replies provided support for the themes and additional data. Reassured, I began to concentrate the further analysis on these themes.

Phase two of the analysis started during the final months at GovDep. It began with a more structured thematic analysis of the transcripts using the RQ framework as a comparator. This was followed by a similar process with the fieldnotes and document extracts. There is some debate about the appropriateness of using a researcher imposed framework for the analysis of qualitative data (Bryman 1988 in Saunders *et al.* 2007), yet the approach had distinct advantages for this study. The RQ framework was broad enough to allow for themes to arise from within the data. Also, as it had been informed by the literature review the connection between theory and field was more explicit (Brewer 2000) and I could then use it to structure the findings and conclusions chapters of the thesis (Saunders *et al.* 2003).

Having rejected the use of a software package, I printed the scripts, re-read and annotated blocks of text according to their relevance to the RQs/CIQs. I then cut up the scripts and sorted the pieces into plastic wallets behind a header sheet containing the relevant RQ/CIQ (Brewer 2000; Saunders *et al.* 2003). The content of each wallet was then examined, coded and grouped into themes. At the same time I highlighted extracts which were illustrative of the themes and evocative of the EE experience (Emerson *et al.* 1995). As with phase one, I chose *in vivo* expressions wherever possible (Strauss and Corbin 1998). I kept a record of themes and codes in an index, including changes that occurred over time. I used that index as the basis for analysing and coding fieldnotes and documents which were then added to the appropriate plastic wallets.   At the end of this second phase I reconciled the results with the themes from phase one and identified those to be included within the Findings chapter.

As I re-read and coded the transcripts, it became clear that this form of cross-sectional thematic analysis (Mason 2002) raised particular challenges when applied to the RQs. Participants' feelings, thoughts and behaviours were intertwined within their stories. Separating and presenting them as if they occurred independently risked undermining these complex descriptions.

It also diluted the sense of context (Bryman 2004; Mason 2002); an issue of central importance within the RQ framework. Lastly, splitting the scripts into small extracts showed how participants left some phrases incomplete, relying on '...tacit assumptions shared with the listener' (Feldman *et al.* 2004:150). I was expected to 'fill in the blanks' using a combination of cues from elsewhere in the story and pre-existing contextual knowledge. When added to the narrative's content, this information enables the listener to understand the story in the way it is intended (Cortazzi 2007). Disaggregating the EE stories meant the cues were lost and so was some of the sense. The solution was to examine whole stories using narrative analysis techniques to uncover the meanings they contain (Cortazzi 2007; Riessman 1993). Narrative analysis became the third and final phase of the analysis.

I re-printed the scripts and read them again; this time concentrating on the EE experiences. In particular, I sought to identify participants' evaluations (Labov 1982 in Riessman 1993). This is '...where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning...' (Riessman 2003: 3). Evaluations contain the narrator's interpretation and/or judgements about their experience and reveal attitudes and underlying values (Cortazzi 2007; Riessman 1993; Riessman 2003). These were particularly important for RQ2. Part way through this analysis phase my twelve months at GovDep came to an end. It wasn't, however, the ending I had originally anticipated when I began the fieldwork in July 2011.

Section 4:   Getting Out (and Quality Issues)

In October 2011, three months into the fieldwork, I received a letter from the Cabinet Office setting out some changes to the civil service:

> '...*and then in the second paragraph – almost as an aside - it adds that* NSG [my home department] *will shut in March 2012; it will simply cease to be. I will be redundant 9 months into my agreed 12 months of fieldwork.'*
> (Research diary 11/10/11)

Being 'on loan' to GovDep from NSG involved a reciprocal financial arrangement between the two departments and was only possible due to my status as an existing civil servant. The closure of NSG meant an end to both aspects and I would be required to leave GovDep earlier than expected.

Advice about ethnography often recommends that researchers keep a record of personal reactions to their experiences in the field (Brewer 2000; Burgess 1984; Davies 1999; Emerson *et al.* 1995; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Mason 2002). Less frequent is an acknowledgement of the researcher's other life, beyond the field, and how one may affect the other (Bryman 2004).

My redundancy threatened the research in more ways than a premature termination of the fieldwork. Until October, I managed the dual insider/outsider role of participant observer (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) by using my continuing employment contract at NSG as an 'anchor'; a separate and stable identity. Now that was gone, it became more difficult to focus on the research. The days away from GovDep became filled with 'other life' rather than research activities as I prepared for the end of my erstwhile career. Additionally, and with ethical implications, I had to decide at what point (and who) to tell at GovDep. By the time the dissertation was completed I would no longer be a civil servant and the whole basis of my access was undermined. In the end, I chose to selectively disclose my redundancy on a 'need to know' basis and kept reference to it to a minimum. There is no doubt, however, that the balance between my different roles became more difficult to manage for the remainder of the fieldwork.

Quality issues

As my philosophical orientation reflects subtle realism I drew on Hammersley's (1990; 1992) work for techniques to assure the quality of the research. Hammersley (1992) identifies two criteria: validity and relevance. Rather than its more usual application to quantitative research (Bryman 2004), for Hammersley (1992) validity concerns the accuracy of knowledge claims. Relevance refers to the importance of the topic and/or its contribution to the existing literature (Hammersley 1990).

Subtle realism treats knowledge as uncertain and constructed so any claims for a single, definitive truth are suspect (Brewer 2000). Instead, Hammersley (1990) suggests that plausibility and credibility can be used as the basis for making reasonable judgements about the accuracy of any claims. A number of techniques can be used to increase validity. Those applied to the current study are outlined below.

Within subtle realism researchers are deemed to be part of and an influence on the research context (Finlay 2002). This makes it difficult to claim that findings reflect only the perspective of the participants (Silverman 1997 in Brewer 2000). Relevant to this research, there are also debates about the extent to which interviews are social constructions (Hammersley 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and concerns over the possibility for misinterpretation of narratives (Boudens 2005; Feldman *et al.* 2004; Riessman 1993).

As identified earlier, one way to address both issues is through a reflexive account of the research decisions, including clarification of philosophical assumptions (Brewer 2000; Davies 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Mason 2002). My reflexivity is evidenced throughout this thesis: in the introduction, the literature review, in this chapter and in the clarification of analytic and interpretative inferences in the Findings chapter (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Riessman 1993).

A second technique used here was the comparison of data from different sources (Lewis and Ritchie 2003; Mason 2002). These include the maximum variation sampling for the interviews (Saunders *et al.* 2003) and respondent validation of analytical themes (Brewer 2002). Though not directly improving validity they do provide a broader perspective on EE (Mason 2002) and support the inferences which were drawn (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Finally, in relation to relevance, a number of incremental contributions to the EE literature are identified within Chapter 6 (Wilson and Chaddha 2009).

Summary

This chapter has described and explained the philosophical, practical and ethical aspects of the current study as they relate to the stages of the fieldwork at GovDep. The decision to carry out a qualitative ethnography was consistent with my ontological and epistemological assumptions and appropriate to meet the aim of the study and answer the questions within the RQ framework. Having clarified the methodology and justified the decisions taken, the next chapter presents the study findings.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONTENT AND PROCESS OF EE

Introduction

This chapter presents and explores the fieldwork data using the analysis approaches described and justified within Chapter 4. The RQ framework (Table 8 below) provides the high level structure for the chapter.

Table 8: RQ Framework

Research Questions (RQs)	Central Issues Questions (CIQs)
1. How do individuals understand and experience EE?	a) With what do individuals engage? b) What is the scope and focus of engaged behaviour? c) What are the potential disadvantages of EE?
2. How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?	a) What is the role of trust? b) What is the role of perception and individual agency compared with the role of contextual factors (e.g. managers, cultural norms and values)?

The first four sections correspond to RQ1 and its CIQs and concern the *content* of EE i.e. the feelings, thoughts and behaviours associated with the experience (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008; Maslach 2011; Rich *et al.* 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). The findings for Sections 1 and 2 show that participants understand and experience EE as a combination of active emotions, positive thoughts and changes in work behaviour. Through *'doing something worthwhile'* or *'making a difference'* participants experience a sense of connection with others which is enhanced by receiving positive recognition and feeling valued. These factors, and a range of other referents, contribute to an individual interpretation of EE work as 'meaningful'. It is this work which lies at the heart of participants' engagement experience.

In Section 3, participants describe behaviour during EE which goes beyond contractual requirements: *'working longer hours'* (WLH) and personal initiative (PI) including speaking up to question the way things are done (Frese *et al.* 1996; Frese and Fay 2001 in Macey and Schneider 2008; Kassing *et al.* 2012). The focus of this behaviour is meaningful work. Whether GovDep, as an organization, benefits from this behaviour appears to depend on the serendipity of an alignment between a participant's EE referents and the corporate goals rather than on any conscious intent to contribute.

In Section 4, the disadvantages of EE are shown to be more associated with managers' reactions to EE behaviour than with any direct negative effects associated with being 'Too engaged...,' (Halbesleben *et al.* 2009: 1452).

Section 5 corresponds to RQ2 and its CIQs and concerns the *process* of EE; the interactions between the individual and organisational context (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Saks 2006; Shuck *et al.* 2011). The amalgamation of these findings into one section reflects participants' greater emphasis on the content of the EE experience rather than on its process. Put simply, participants spoke more about what EE was like than how it came to be.

Nevertheless, the findings in Section 5 show that trust between participants and line managers plays an important role in creating opportunities for EE and reducing the risks associated with PI. Additionally, there is evidence of cultural influences on EE; firstly in a 'no-challenge' norm and, secondly, in two values which are consistent with the GovDep's public role. Perception is shown to play a mediating role while examples of agency are illustrated by participants behaving in ways contrary to organizational constraints.

As described in Chapter 4, the data within this chapter is drawn primarily from twenty-seven individual experiences of EE. This is supplemented within Sections 3, 4 and 5 with fieldnotes and documentary analysis which add a more contextualised perspective on EE within GovDep.

Within the interview extracts my voice is kept to a minimum. This is to foreground the voices of the participants rather than increase my authority as a researcher (Brewer 2000; Emerson *et al.* 1995). My dialogue is identified by the preface 'RB'. The first participant contribution in any exchange uses their pseudonym in full.   Subsequent responses during a single exchange are preceded only by the initial of their disguised name. Within fieldnote extracts I appear in the first person.

To assist the reader, interview extracts are numbered sequentially and preceded by the section number in which they first appear (Silverman 2005), e.g. Extract 1.1 is the first extract within Section 1. The same number is then used in any subsequent references to the same extract. Some longer extracts contain narrative which is unexplained. This is to provide greater '...depth and texture...' (Emerson *et al.* 1995: 181) to the narrative and enable a tacit understanding of the story.

Section 1:   RQ1) Understanding and experiencing engagement
This section presents an overall picture of participants' EE with a particular emphasis on feelings and thoughts during those experiences. This provides a foundation for addressing the more detailed aspects of EE within the related CIQs.

One experience is used as an illustrative example (Brewer 2000) throughout the chapter. Andrew's story provides '...a good description...' (*ibid*: 111) of the index codes which emerged during phase two of the data analysis. The story illustrates analytical themes which are then supported by extracts from other interviews (Emerson *et al.* 1995).

Andrew's story
Andrew has been at GovDep for 17 years. He works in a team of technicians who create, produce and maintain navigational charts for the Royal Navy (RN). His role is to ensure the accuracy of the graphics which represent physical structures on those charts, e.g. lighthouses, ports, buoys, etc. The opening extract is substantial as it illustrates how EE combines head (cognition), heart

(affect) and hands (behaviour) (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Rich *et al.* 2010). It begins with Andrew's own orientation (Cortazzi 2007) which provides the context for the experience:

Extract 1.1:   Lines 1 -35

Andrew: *'We had a visitor who was a Royal Navy officer but he was working with the Merchant Navy; he was a liaison officer. And he mentioned in passing about the piracy problem that had come to the fore and the problems they had communicating with all the ships; making* [...] *all the merchant ships aware of what's going on and we could really do with giving lots of information in one place. And the idea came up of doing a chart, a specialist chart. Um...and while he was actually in our office I quickly mocked up* [unclear] *and said, "Something like this with the information on it?" and he said, "That would be great."*

RB: *'So, what was it like when you were working on it?'*

A: *'Um, it was good. It was a very busy atmosphere. As I said earlier, there wasn't* [sic] *enough hours in the day. Um, you know, the deadline was coming up and we were trying to get it out in a couple of weeks and you think, "There's so much more we can do with more time." Um, but...in a positive way, um...because we wanted to make it the best it possibly could be which was why I was happy to come in in the evenings and carry on working on it.'*

RB: *'What was it about the work that led to you feeling that way?'*

A: *'Um...because there was such a big, um, need for this thing, apparently, a huge appetite for it. And we were getting such positive feedback back from the guys on the ground. And yeah, we just turned the thing around, quite complex thing, really quickly. Just to move it that bit further along and to do the best possible thing. [...] Um, yeah, it was just so exciting. You'd go home and think, "That was a good day, I've done something useful today" and you were almost chomping at the bit to get back in and carry on. You go home in the evening and you think, "I'm home, I'll get the kids to bed and I'll shoot back." And it was constantly going over in my mind. In the middle of the night you'd wake up and think, "Oh, we could do that, there's a way we can do that." You*

write that down before you forget. Get in next morning and do it. And it just dominated my thoughts for those couple of weeks even when I wasn't at work. But in a positive way; I wasn't worrying about it. It wasn't keeping me awake but it was constantly whirring in my mind and I'd think, "What if we did that?" and "That would be an easy way of doing that."

Andrew describes excitement and a sense of urgency. These are associated not only with the practical demands of a tight deadline but also with the '*huge appetite*' for the new chart from '*the guys on the ground*'. The project dominates his thoughts to the extent that he wakes at night to note down ideas and works into the evening in a desire to create the best possible product. His feelings and thoughts are both focused on producing the charts and appear closely intertwined with the increased working time.

While Andrew's EE story is presented as a whole, those which follow are segregated to more clearly illustrate the analytical themes relevant to each of the RQs/CIQs. The two themes for RQ1 concern the feelings and thoughts associated with EE.

Feelings of EE
Positive feelings were a consistent theme within participants' stories of EE, both at the time of the experience and in hindsight:

Extract 1.2:   Lines 1-3
James: '*I could hardly contain my excitement...I used to walk home smiling, all the way home. I couldn't believe that I was getting paid good money for something that I loved doing. It was fantastic!*'

Extract 1.3:   Lines 1-2
Alan: '*...very energised...it's what I got up for every morning* [...] *it's extremely stimulating...*'

Extract 1.4:   Lines 1-2

Alex: *'So that's kind of when my passion came, so...in the middle of it I just felt energised. I just felt...this is fantastic!'*

Extract 1.5:   Lines 1-3

Helen: *'It was just such a buzz. I walked out of here, going to the car and thinking, "God, that's been a satisfying day and I have made a difference"...'*

Extract 1.6:   Lines 1-2

Eddie: *'...I was genuinely content and happy with what I was doing [...] I felt...I genuinely felt very, very happy...'*

Extract 1.7:   Line 1

Carol: *'A real sense of achievement. So, I **love** doing that...'*

Extract 1.8:   Line 1

Nick: *'...it was just the buzz...'*

Extract 1.9:   Line 1

Valerie: *'I absolutely love it. I don't just like it, I **love** it!*

Extract 1.10:   Line 1

Zeb: *'...well, it felt **great**, of course! I really enjoyed doing it...'*

Apart from Eddie's '*contentment*', participants' feelings reflect active emotional states (Russell 2003). Rather than more passive emotions such as calm or serenity these involve greater levels of energy and are associated with increased motivation and altered behaviour towards the object of the emotions (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995; Chalofsky 2003; Russell 2003).

Finally, while most participants recall one or more experiences of EE, this is not the case for everyone. Iain was recruited within the last six months to be a team leader. Instead of an example of EE his attention returns frequently to a

sense of discrepancy between the advertised job and his day-to-day experience:

Extract 1.11: Lines 1-9

Iain: '...*I had a job description because when they advertised the job that's what…they have but it was kind of the gap between that and reality.* [...] *to be honest the job that I was sold wasn't the same as that* [the advert].

RB: '*That's interesting...*'

Iain: '*Yeah, they're always, kind of, slightly different* [...] *But…, you know, there was* [sic] *lots of questions in my mind as to, "What should I be doing here? How should I be doing that?" And…* [...] *it's proving difficult but when you're new and you're standing there alone you're thinking to yourself, "Help! Is it just me?"*'

Three aspects in the final sentence are significant in Iain's inability to identify an experience of engagement. Firstly, he categorises the ambiguity of his role as '*difficult'.* This makes it likely that he is experiencing negative emotions and thoughts which make engagement unlikely (Crawford *et al.* 2010; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004). Secondly, he identifies being '*new'* and '*alone'* as contributory factors. Being new to an organization involves a degree of anxiety (Saks and Gruman 2011). This anxiety and the implied absence of support are associated with a decreased sense of safety (Kahn 1990; 1992; Saks 2006) and with burnout rather than engagement (Maslach and Leiter 2008). Finally, Iain begins to question whether the confusion is his responsibility. Self-doubt and inefficacy are also associated with burnout rather than engagement (González-Romá *et al.* 2006; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007a). Iain's situation appears to have more in common with disengagement or burnout so it is perhaps unsurprising that he is unable to identify an EE experience.

For every other participant, EE is associated with both positive emotions and thoughts. These thoughts are often expressed as part of an overall evaluation of the EE experience and are considered next.

Thoughts of EE: Evaluating the experience

Evaluative phrases signify aspects of an experience which are particularly important for the speaker and which they wish to emphasise to the listener (Boudens 2005; Labov 1982 in Riessman 2003). Participants in the current study appear to evaluate their EE experience in terms of the significance of the work for other people.

In Extract 1.1, Andrew uses the expression '...*done something useful...*' in relation to a day spent working on the piracy charts. It appears reasonable to infer that the '*something*' which he has '*done*' refers to tasks or activities which contribute towards the charts' production. For ease, activities undertaken during EE experiences are hereafter referred to simply as 'work' or 'EE work'. For Andrew's work to be '*useful*' implies that it has a practical purpose or that it contributes towards a practical purpose (MacMillan Online Dictionary 2014; Shorter Oxford Dictionary 2007). Hence his EE work has practical utility for some*one* or some*thing* else. During his story Andrew refers to a Navy liaison officer and to *'guys on the ground'* who provide positive feedback as the work progresses. It seems reasonable to conclude that he considers his EE work to have '*done something useful'* for the RN and for the safety of the broader seafaring community. In other words, Andrew's work has practical utility for his customers and it is also a factor in his evaluation of EE as a positive experience.

The utility of the work in the form of 'doing something' also features in other participants' evaluations. Eddie, who also works in chart compilation, refers to the regular task of tracking navigational data from its initial receipt through to chart production:

Extract 1.12: Lines 1-5

Eddie: *'It's the fact that you can sit down with a job and pick up a bit of information, um, assess that information, discuss it with someone, um, resolve whether it's usable or not; whether it's something that needs promulgating to the mariner.* [...] *And you actually feel like you're doing something useful.'*

Like Andrew, Eddie leaves the '*doing something*' phrase incomplete. He does, however, make reference to ensuring that '*usable*' information reaches the '*mariner*', i.e. the person who will ultimately use the chart for navigation. It seems reasonable to infer that achieving that goal is what leads Eddie to conclude that his EE work is '*doing something useful*' for mariners.

James provides two EE experiences. In an example from the first Gulf War (1990-1991), he links the utility of the work to a direct connection with '*the customer*,' i.e. the RN:

Extract 1.13: Lines 1-5

James: '*I was in an area where we um…dealt with specialist products* [...] *so you felt like you were really doing something worthwhile and, again, it's* [...] *probably the first example of when I was working on something that went straight to the customer.* [...]*You felt excited by it but you're also doing something that was really, really worthwhile.'*

James uses the '*doing something*' phrase and qualifies it twice with the word '*worthwhile*' indicating that what was done was worth the time and effort. As with his other EE experience (Extract 1.2) he also refers to being '*excited*' providing another example of active, positive emotions during engagement.

For Robbie, the utility of a new database is important. He expresses pride in knowing that the data he contributed is still accurate and used by both colleagues and customers more than five years after the work is completed:

Extract 1.14: Lines 1-9

Robbie: '*... there was a **result**, a product at the end of it.* [...] *And on the screen now there's stuff I did 5 years ago and it's still...still current. And there is quite a lot of pride in having that...”Well I designed that”, or “I drew that **and** it's still in use now!” It's something to feel proud of.'*

RB: '*So there's a real, tangible outcome from that?'*

R: '*Absolutely, yeah! It's something to feel proud of... you know you've done a good job.'*

RB: *'How do you know it's a 'good' job?'*

R: *'Because it's still in **use** and no-one's ever changed it since!'*

Similarly for Sean, it is taking a new navigation system from testing through to delivery to customers which provides his EE experience:

Extract 1.15: Lines 1-4

Sean: '*I was taking the* [navigation] *system from test,* [...] *and putting it into life, so drawing a full plan of all the things that needed to happen within my area.* [...] *Making something happen…it was successful. So…it's…doing something, it's achieving something for customers...'*

Andrew, Eddie, James, Robbie and Sean each evaluate their EE experiences in terms of the perceived practicality of their work for other people. This practicality connects them with others; with the colleagues and customers using the new database or charts.

Other participants evaluate EE experiences in terms of *'making a difference'*. The expression implies that an engagement activity influences or alters some aspect of the status quo. As with the phrase *'something useful'* it is often left incomplete or imprecise. Once again, there is a tacit assumption that the listener will be able to identify the missing ingredient and discern the speaker's meaning (Feldman *et al.* 2004).

Participants using this evaluation also appear to interpret their EE work in terms of making a connection with others. Rather than altering abstract processes, policies or systems they refer to positively influencing the views and/or behaviour of other people. This influence can be either short or longer term. Matt, for example, is self-employed and working at GovDep on a six month contract. As a temporary employee, he is unlikely to see the overall project through from start to finish. Instead, his EE story is about providing a new perspective on a problem:

Extract 1.16: Lines 1-9

Matt: *'And so…by…being able to talk to all of those* [people] *and bring them around to a common vision um* […] *building that up and being able to then share it with people who will look at it and say, "Ah yes, I see what you're doing there! Um…yes, I hadn't thought about it like that."*

RB: *'Yeah.'*

M: *'And then you think "Ah ha- you* **know***!" And so it's just that…that sort of realisation that comes over people when you've added some value to understanding …it maximises the understanding that people have and gives them a common point of view.'*

Matt's insight has no direct or immediate practical application. Instead of the work's utility he connects with others through influencing their understanding of the problem.

Whereas Matt describes short term influence, Carol and Alex refer to the longer term influence through delivering training. Carol refers to on-the-job training for a new team member. She uses the analogies of bringing up children and growing flowers to illustrate this longer term influence:

Extract 1.17: Lines 1-3

Carol: *'I love it...on-the-job-training when they've gone, "I understand that"; it's lovely* [...] *That someone's progressing and you see them grow almost. It's like nurturing your children, isn't it? It's like seeing them blossom.'*

Alex is more specific about the effects of his EE work. He describes designing and delivering a five week training course to a group from South America. His decision to share this EE experience reflects his evaluation that it '*made the most difference*':

Extract 1.18: Lines 1-18

Alex: '*It wasn't the biggest thing I've ever done but it was the one that kind of stands out as…that has made the most difference* [...] *because it had an impact.'*

RB   'Yeah... so it's significant for you?

 A: 'Yeah, it had an impact on me, yeah. [...] and…during it the people…again it goes back to people [...] the students were fantastic. They appreciated everything you did, you could see them develop and learn during the 5 weeks; the rapport when we left...I mean there were tears when they left and got in that minibus, you know? And that wasn't just the students... that was…it was a real bonding exercise...'

RB: 'So, it was about the students' learning and the rapport you developed?'

A: 'Yeah,... and the difference it makes to those organisations um…you know, maybe some of it's intangible but you do see the impact through um…future contacts with those students who become senior ranking officers within their own organisation, um…the increase in contact with the Regional Teams because these people have been to the organisation [GovDep].' You know it just… you can really make a difference.'

Although Alex has the opportunity to comment on the personal impact of the experience he turns the narrative towards the students. He stresses *their* learning, the '*rapport*' and the longer term relationship between the students and GovDep as important to his sense of engagement. Once again, the emphasis is on the significance of the work for other people. When asked again to reflect on the personal impact of the experience, Alex refers to '*feeling valued*' for his work:

Extract 1.19: Lines 1-4

RB: '*You said earlier that this* [experience] *had an impact on you...tell me some more about that...in what way?*'

Alex: '[...] it *goes back to those words again doesn't it: "feeling valued", thinking you're making a difference in some way...,*'

Alex associates his work with the South American students with a personal sense of being appreciated. His efforts result in an enhanced sense of personal worth. This suggests an element of reciprocity or exchange between the

significance of the work for others and Alex's sense of being valued. Other participants also refer to being valued during their EE experiences:

Extract 1.20: Lines 1-3

Pauline: *'I was putting some value into the business…and what I was doing was valued as well. I felt I was making a difference. I felt what I was doing was being valued...'*

Extract 1.21: Lines 1-4

James: *'And then to work up the results and get the results and produce the report on it and everyone…everyone is pleased with what you've done, you've achieved all your objectives.* [...] *I suppose, quite simply, you're feeling valued.'*

Extract 1.22: Line 1-2

Robbie: *'...just to know that people have noticed the work I've done... it's brilliant!'*

Extract 1.23: Lines 1-2

Zeb: *'...and we were getting great feedback from the print room and people like that* [...] *So we knew...we were going the right way...'*

Extract 1.24: Lines 1-3

Dana: *It is about this 'being valued' thing, of knowing that you are needed to do it* [the work]. *I can go home at the end of the week thinking, "Made a difference this week and I was valued"...'*

In these extracts, participants associate their sense of being valued with their EE work. Apart from Zeb, most participants avoid being explicit about *who* is doing the valuing or how they know this to be the case. James, Robbie and Dana come closest to explaining yet still they use generic terms for other people referring simply to '*everyone*', '*people*' and '*someone*'. As with the utility of the EE work, the connection with others is left implicit.

When evaluating their EE experiences participants emphasise aspects which are of particular importance to them (Boudens 2005; Labov 1982 in Riessman 2003). In each case it is the significance of the work for *other people*; it has either practical utility or positively influences the thoughts or behaviour of others. EE is an experience which connects participants with customers or colleagues through the medium of the work. That connection provides an opportunity for positive recognition and a consequent sense of being valued. The theme of 'connection' and the role of the work in making that connection is re-enforced by analysis of participants' stories of disengagement.

Contrasting EE and disengagement

Asking for a story of *disengagement* provided an opportunity for additional insights through comparing and contrasting it with the EE experience. This contrast is done by participants themselves (Emerson *et al.* 1995) and through logical inference (Feldman and Sko¨ldberg 2002; Feldman *et al.* 2004). When Andrew contrasts his two experiences he emphasises the utility of the work and the level of customer enthusiasm as key differences:

Extract 1.25: Lines 1-13

RB: '*I know they are different tasks, but what was the difference between the two...that* [sic] *means that one is more positive than the other?*

Andrew: '*Um...One of them we were trying to produce a tangible end product. You could see the reason we were doing it...an enthusiastic customer* [who] *appreciated our efforts. Um...and on the other side it appeared to be a thankless task for no good reason that we were doing just because somebody thought the concept was a good idea* [...] *And so...it was tangible, it was meaningful, um...and the people we did it for, um, we knew they wanted it. Whereas in the other case, we knew that the main intended customer for the database* [...] *really didn't care, they really didn't want it. So it was a long and thankless task...it was all totally unnecessary and I felt other people would find it unnecessary as well, or wouldn't utilise it.'*

Andrew believes that the database customers have no interest in the end product. He concludes that the work has no practical purpose and evaluates it as both *'totally unnecessary'* and *'a long and thankless task.'* This contrasts sharply with the work on the piracy charts. That work has practical utility in the form of a *'tangible end product'* and *'enthusiastic'* customers. Andrew's evaluation of the EE experience underlines the contrast: '*...it was tangible, it was meaningful.'* In terms of the earlier discussion, the utility of the piracy charts provides a connection to the RN liaison officer and to the '*guys on the ground'* who will use the charts to avoid pirate attacks. For Andrew, the practicalities of the product and customer appreciation combine to create an overall sense of meaningful work.

Zeb identifies similar issues when contrasting his experiences. His disengagement experience concerns the introduction of a new software package. The package was purchased from a private contractor with a promise to adjust its parameters to suit GovDep's requirements. In spite of several weeks of trials the implementation fails to achieve its goals. The EE experience relates to a project to improve customer service by reducing the overall production time for a chart. Zeb identifies the purpose of the projects and people's reactions as the contrasting features:

Extract 1.26: Lines 1-10

RB: '*So, if you were to compare* [*sic*] *those two examples...what would you say makes the difference?'*

Zeb: '[...] *it's the fact that what we were doing had a point and I could see why we were doing what we were doing whereas, in the previous one, I didn't see much point because, you know, the contractor was ignoring it all anyway so why were we bothering? So there's not much point in continuing with this, whereas the other one, you could see day-by-day that people were sitting up and taking note of what was going on.'*

RB: '*Because you were getting some sort of reaction?*

Z: '*Yeah...we were getting the feedback, exactly! Yes. Yes.'*

In the disengagement experience it is difficult to see a point to the work '*because the contractor was ignoring'* the efforts of the project team. Zeb links this with his own inability to '...*see much point...*' to the work. He draws a reverse conclusion for the engagement experience; the EE work has a point because people are '...*sitting up and taking note...'* Once again it seems that the connection with others through the medium of work plays an important part in the EE experience.

In addition to participants' contrasting their experiences it is possible to infer implicit meaning from what the experience is *not* (Feldman *et al.* 2004). For example, in Andrew's case, if the practical utility and customer enthusiasm for the piracy charts combine to make the EE experience *'meaningful'* then it is reasonable to infer that the database work, with its lack of utility and disinterested customers, is 'meaning*less'*. There is no practical purpose to the work, no possibility of recognition and, consequently, no 'connection' with customers.

Similar themes emerge in participants' evaluations of their disengagement experiences. Using a variety of expressions there are references to a lack of purpose, a lack of recognition and an overall sense that the work lacks meaning:

Extract 1.27: Line 1
Carol: '...*I just felt, "What a waste of energy and time."*

Extract 1.28: Line 1
Gareth: '*Um…so it's the futility coupled with the helplessness* [...].*'

Extract 1.29: Line 1
Helen: *'...I felt I couldn't...I just didn't feel that I was valued.'*

Extract 1.30: Lines 1-2
Pauline*: 'What was the point of doing any of it because someone else would change it?'*

Extract 1.31: Line 1

Zeb: '...*quite a lot of the time I felt "What's the point in doing this really?"*

These evaluations enable an inference to be made about participants' contrasting engagement experiences. If disengagement is associated with meaning*less* work it is possible to infer that engagement is associated with its opposite, i.e. meaning*ful* work (Feldman and Sko̎ldberg 2002; Feldman *et al.* 2004).

Some participants also describe their thoughts *during* disengagement. They use terms which indicate a cognitive disconnect from the work; a psychological absence from the here and now. For Andrew and Carol this process appears to happen without conscious thought:

Extract 1.32: Lines 1-2

Andrew: '...*you just sort of wonder, "Did I sort of semi switch off there or was I away with the fairies...?"*

Extract 1.33: Lines 1-2

Carol: '...*you actually got lost in time; I have to say...you ended up looking out the window...'*

These descriptions imply a drifting away of attention; away from the work to somewhere or something else. Other participants imply a more conscious decision to detach themselves mentally from the situation:

Extract 1.34: Line 1

James: '...*I kept myself to myself a lot more.'*

Extract 1.35: Line 1

Helen: '*I think personally I really did go into my shell...'*

Extract 1.36: Line 1-2

Robbie: *'...you know, I just retreated into my shell...the sooner I get this done the better then I can get out of my shell and see everyone...'*

Extract 1.37: Line 1

Eddie: *'There was no great connection or, sort of, affiliation with the work...'*

Extract 1.38: Line 1

Michelle: *'It was better for me if I don't get attached...'*

Pauline, Dana and Zeb take this disconnection a step further by questioning the purpose of physically attending work:

Extract 1.39: Line 1

Pauline: *'You know... what was the point of getting up in the morning?'*

Extract 1.40: Line 1-2

Dana: *'...I thought, "I can't go into work tomorrow"; I just didn't want to come in.'*

Extract 1.41: Line 1-2

Zeb: *'What's the point going into work when they're not going to change anything?'*

Regardless of the level of self-awareness, each participant describes being psychologically disconnected from their work during disengagement. Applying the logic of contrast (Feldman and Sko¨ldberg 2002) implies that during engagement participants are connected with their work; an inference which is also supported by the earlier descriptions of active emotions and thoughts during engagement.

Overall, these descriptions and evaluations of disengagement experiences appear consistent with the 'connection' theme identified earlier. *Disengagement* is associated with work which is neither '*useful*' nor '*makes a*

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difference'. Devoid of purpose the work has no significance for others and little possibility of being valued or recognised for doing it. Without a connection with others, the work is interpreted as pointless or a waste of time. This sense of pointlessness is manifested in an additional disconnection, i.e. a psychological distancing from the work. Though physically present, participants are cognitively absent, either intentionally or otherwise. In contrast, EE work connects participants with others through *doing something worthwhile* and/or *making a difference and* provides the possibility of being valued or recognised for that work. The utility, influence and opportunity for recognition appear to contribute to an overall sense that the EE work is meaningful.

From these findings meaningful work appears to be at the heart of the engagement experience. It is during such work that participants experience positive thoughts and feelings and the opportunity to connect with others. This then raises further questions about the nature of meaningful work and the connections it facilitates. Are there factors beyond the connection with others which contribute to an interpretation of the work as meaningful? How many connections do participants associate with their EE experience? These questions are addressed below.

Section 2:   CIQ1a) With what do individuals engage?

Asking participants to reflect on what is particularly important about their EE experience leads to additional references to making connections. Some participants re-iterate the importance of connecting with clients or colleagues; others refer to a longstanding sense of personal identification with the EE work (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Chalofsky 2003; Kreiner *et al.* 2006) or a sense of duty towards the safety of mariners and/or public service. Some participants identify a number of these 'referents' for the same experience. What remains constant throughout is the centrality of the work.

'MyWork'

For some participants, the EE work appears to have intrinsic meaning, i.e. in and of itself (Deci and Ryan 1985). They describe a strong personal interest in the content or subject of their work. In some cases this interest dates back

many years to adolescence and/or to academic interests. The strength and/or longevity of the interest imply that it is part of their personal identity (Ashforth *et al.* 2008). The EE work provides an opportunity for participants to connect aspects of personal identity with the social identity of their work role. The term 'MyWork' reflects the association with identity.

Robbie, who is the source for the term, works in the radio signals team. The team maintains radio signals books. These are a legal requirement for all merchant ships and, according to Robbie, *'...cover every radio…maritime radio station in the world, maritime radio broadcasts, port authorities, piloting authorities, anyone which a ship would contact on a radio...'* The first of his two EE stories concerns the creation of a digital version of the books; transferring the hard copy data to a new software package. When asked about the project Robbie refers to his love of radio and describes how his interest developed over forty years ago:

Extract 2.1:   Lines 1-15

RB: *'So, tell me what's important to you about that experience...'*

Robbie: *'Uh…mainly it's a subject I've always loved; I've been in radio since I was 13.'*

RB: '*Oh, right!'*

R: '*Initially I joined the Air Training Corps in 1973. My eyes are rubbish so they thought, "What can **you** do? Oh, you can do radio...", because they had this dusty old radio receiver in the back office and I cleaned it up, got it working, they were amazed! Learnt Morse Code at the age of 13, um…bought a radio for home use, tuning the bands and hearing what's around, got my amateur licence at 16, got my professional qualifications at 19 and I've been involved in maritime radio since. So…it's my life basically.'*

RB: *'Right...in work and out of work by the sounds of things.'*

R: *'Oh absolutely, yeah! Indeed yeah! All the time* [...] *I love my work, basically.'*

There is a clear connection between Robbie's lifelong interest in radio and his work during EE. The connection is so marked that he refers to '*maritime radio*' as his '*life*' thereby blurring any divide between work and home life. Robbie's sense of self is knowingly wrapped up with his work role (Kreiner *et al.* 2006). Engagement enables him to manifest that connection through the application of his knowledge and skills (Chalofsky 2003) in a meaningful activity.

Other participants also refer to a long term personal interest in the work at the centre of their EE experience:

Extract 2.2:   Lines 1-2

Alan: '*I was eleven years in the Royal Navy* [...] *it's* [the work] *important to me as an ex-navigator...*'

Extract 2.3:   Lines 1-2

Colin: '*It's always been a lifetime interest* [...] *both my father and uncle were at sea...*'

Extract 2.4:   Lines 1-3

Dana: '*Well, my degree is in Marine Resource Management* [...] *and I thought "I've got to find something that I really like", that's the most important thing.*'

Extract 2.5:   Lines 1-2

Eddie: '*I've always been keen on geographic, IT...work, type setting and it combines all those. I think that aspect of it is very important to me.*'

Extract 2.6:   Lines 1-2

Nick: '*Um…uh… I was very interested in geography and mathematics while I was at school...*

Extract 2.7:   Lines 1-2

Stephen: '*...it's something I've always had a strong desire or interest in...is* [sic] *maps and cartography...*'

Extract 2.8:   Line 1-3

Xanthe: *'Well* [...] *I did a quite sort of specific um…geography and GIS* [Geographic Information System] *degree* [...] *I am genuinely interested in the area* [...] *and **using** my brain in that* [geospatial] *way...'*

Extract 2.9:   Line 1

Zeb: *'I was **always** interested in geography and drawing...'*

This long term interest influenced career decisions. Participants sought and found work which offers opportunities for intrinsic satisfaction through the application of their knowledge and skills. Such longstanding interest is not the case for all participants. For example, Michelle joined GovDep in the last six months in an occupation she entered only five years ago. Nevertheless, she identifies the work as part of her identity:

Extract 2.10: Lines 1-5

Michelle: '*I am very engaged with my work...it is part of who I am. I feel pride in delivering excellent work but I'm trying to not get too hooked up into* GovDep*. I don't want GovDep to become my world where I wholly identify with it. It's better for me if I don't get attached* [...] *as I don't want to lose my sense of self* [...]*.'*

The strength of Michelle's connection with her work is illustrated in a number of ways. Firstly, and similarly to Robbie, she embraces the work as part of who she is. Secondly, she adds an emotional element by referring to pride in the quality of her work. Finally, she differentiates between engagement with her work and engagement with GovDep expressing concern that engagement with the latter may result in a loss of *'self'*.

The 'MyWork' referent differs from the earlier evaluations of EE experiences in its durability and direction of connection. Within those evaluations, the utility or influence of the work connects participants with others. The duration of the connection is, therefore, linked to the duration of the work. In MyWork, the longevity and/or depth of personal interest indicate that it is part of participants'

personal identity (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Brewer 1991). As such, it endures beyond any single experience of engagement. Rather than a connection with others, meaningfulness is found in work which connects aspects of personal identity with social identity (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Kahn 1990; Kreiner *et al.* 2006).

MyPeople

This term reflects participants' references to people with whom they have direct contact, either face to face or by phone. In earlier examples (e.g. Extracts 1.1, 1.12-1.24), participants use non-specific references to other people. Analytic inference is required to identify the referents as customers and/or colleagues. Further questioning leads to the clarification of MyPeople referents including line managers (MyBoss) and fellow team members (MyTeam).   Participants also return to the earlier themes of utility/influence and positive recognition and begin to reveal more than one referent for the same EE experience.

'MyBoss'

Dana and Xanthe are among those participants who identify an intrinsic interest in their work as important to their EE experience (Extracts 2.4 and 2.8). This is not their only similarity. They both work for senior managers in a role which Dana likens to a Staff Officer in the armed forces; running the back office while her line manager works away. Both she and Xanthe identify their managers as an important referent for their EE experiences.

In Dana's first EE story she talks about contributing to an important ministerial decision:

Extract 2.11: Lines 1-5

Dana: *'All of a sudden it turned around and, actually, I was being called out of the* [...] *meeting because,* [name] *for the Secretary of State for Defence wants to talk to me about it, um, and at the time it was a bit sort of, um, flying by the seat of your pants but, on reflection, I think, "That was brilliant".*

It is during the initial discussion of this experience that Dana explains the importance of doing work that she likes (Extract 2.4). When asked to say more she begins speaking about the role of her manager:

Extract 2.12: Lines 1-11

Dana: *'I have to say it's probably* [Name]*, my boss...the way he is with me. He's a brilliant leader; he makes you want to do stuff for him. He doesn't have to ask you, um, and I'd follow him pretty much anywhere and do whatever he asked me to do...'*

RB: *'I'm curious...what part did he play in you contributing to that decision?'*

D: *'Given the freedom for me* [...] *it's this trust thing of backing me up. He trusts me to be able to make decisions and be able to do things for him but will be there for me if it's not right. I guess, he's really good at praise and, um, he's really good at telling you when you've done something right and doesn't leave the office without thanking you for everything you've done that week…things like that.'*

Dana emphasises several positive aspects of the relationship with her boss. First, she refers to '*the way he is*' and connects this with her willingness to undertake any task he requires. This implies an ongoing loyalty which, like her interest in the work, stretches beyond the immediate EE experience. Second, she refers to having the *'freedom'* to deal with the EE situation alone. This autonomy is underpinned by a sense that her manager will support her, even if things go wrong. The issue of trust is returned to later but, for now, it is worth noting that Dana's sense of trust is two way; her boss trusts her to do the right thing and she trusts him to support her even if she doesn't. Finally, Dana refers to the recognition that her boss provides in the form of praise and regular expressions of gratitude for her work.

Contributing to this important decision is an opportunity for Dana to do something practical on behalf of her boss which, in turn, offers the potential for positive recognition. It is unclear whether Dana receives any acknowledgement for this particular task yet, based on previous experience with her manager, the possibility is there. This appears consistent with earlier evaluations of EE work

which also refer to the potential for recognition. For Dana, the work itself is of intrinsic interest (Extract 2.4) but her sense of a positive ongoing relationship; of freedom, support and recognition combine to mean that her boss is also an important referent for her EE experience.

Xanthe's EE experience concerns a report written on behalf of her line manager. Similar to Dana, she describes a sense of trust, working without close supervision and positive recognition. Xanthe's manager has recently left GovDep so she uses both past and present tense during the following extract:

Extract 2.13: Lines 1- 11

RB: '*What was particularly important, to you, about doing that report?*'

Xanthe: '*I felt good that, you know, he didn't have anything to change or substitute, or it wasn't wrong. It was right and it was good enough for the Head of* [Designation] *to give it to the Chief Executive* [...].'

RB: '*That's* [Name] *you're talking about?*

X: '*Yeah. I appreciate that* [Name – Line Manager] *…thinks I can handle this stuff.* [...] *So, being able to do that, and…and being trusted to do that without being micro-managed is quite nice* [...] *When you did something really good, that he really liked he just went, "Brilliant! You're wonderful! Thank you!" Pat you on the back and you'd be like, "Yeah!"* [Punches the air and grins]'

Xanthe refers to feeling good because the report was passed unaltered to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This implies a sense of intrinsic satisfaction from a job well done and is consistent with her earlier expression of a longstanding interest in the work (Extract 2.8). Perhaps prompted by the clarification of her manager's name, she then starts to talk about '...*being trusted...*' Like Dana, she makes no direct reference to receiving praise for this particular work, yet provides examples of the type of praise which she receives for '*really good'* work. Once again, it would seem that a combination of trust and the possibility of recognition are factors in Xanthe's boss being an additional referent for her EE experience.

Dana and Xanthe are the only two participants to identify their line managers as referents for EE. They are also the only participants to work more closely with their managers than with peers. More frequently, participants are members of a team working together towards an overall goal. For some participants the team is also a referent for their engagement.

'MyTeam'

When participants identify their team as a referent for an EE experience the personal perspective expands to encompass the view of the whole team. When Andrew, James and Sean talk about their teams the 'I' of the individual changes to the 'we' of the team yet the themes of utility and positive recognition remain constant.

From Andrew's first description (Extract 1.1) the inference is that his customers are the main referent for his EE. In Lines 20-21 he refers to the feedback from those customers: '*And we were getting such positive feedback back from the guys on the ground.*' The use of '*we*' implies that the feedback is for the whole team. Later, he identifies the charting team as an additional referent and describes how they work together during the project:

Extract 2.14: Lines 1-10

Andrew: *'And there just was a real positive atmosphere of, um, "We just want to do the best we possibly can for this job."* [...] *it was just such a positive spirit in the whole team.'*

RB: *'How did know there was a good team spirit?'*

A: '*Well....I knew that I could chuck anybody something and they would pick it up and do it really well, really quickly and get it back to us to incorporate into the product.* [...] *And yeah, it was a good team bonding exercise and at the end of it* **everybody** *in that room had had input into it and done something towards it* [...] *we were all proud of what we'd done.'*

Andrew begins by emphasising that the focus of effort is '*this job*', i.e. producing the piracy charts. He highlights the project as a '*bonding exercise*' and the

sense of pride in the end product. It seems that the team 'spirit' is closely associated with the task at hand. The work's meaningfulness increases the willingness to work together and is manifested in the team's behaviour. According to Andrew, they work better, faster and longer to produce a quality product. The issue of EE behaviour is returned to in Section 3.

Like Andrew, Sean emphasises a connection with customers through the utility of a new navigation system (Extract 1.15). During the more detailed discussion of this experience he also identifies his team as a referent:

Extract 2.15: Lines 1- 6

Sean: '[...] *people in my team really got together for that period of time* [...] *all having to do their bit, all working together and coordinating... and we did it and we succeeded* [...]. *And, you know, people said, "You've done a really good job, you had lots of difficulties", and everybody got a pat on the back.* [...] *And…you know, it's quite simple* [...] *it was a group of people working together …to achieve something as a team....*'

While emphasising the team's co-operation, Sean's description also reiterates the earlier themes of positive recognition and utility. The former appears as '*a pat on the back'* for each member of the team while the latter is implied within the final evaluating sentence: '*working together to achieve something'.*

James refers to team-working during his EE experience in the first Gulf War. He describes team members putting aside individual differences and provides an explanation for this behaviour:

Extract 2.16: Lines 1- 10

James: '[...] *we worked as a well-oiled team. Everyone knew what their job was going to be and pulled in and it was just…it was really good.* [...] *people just…immediately pulled together; there was no bickering,* [...] *people pulled together immediately.'*

RB: '*I just wonder what it was that…?'*

J: *'I think there was …an immediate understanding of everyone about what the overall objective was,* [...] *everyone knew what was at stake potentially, you know? Awareness of it...everyone knew what we were working towards and there was a complete emotional acceptance because, um…you felt like you were contributing to the war effort.'*

In James' explanation, *'understanding'* is a facet of cognition (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995); a rational, thinking process about the project goals, whereas *'acceptance'* is an *'emotional'* and *'felt'* response. James suggests that it is the combination of thinking and feeling which underpins the coherent team-working. This appears similar to descriptions of individual EE as a multi-faceted concept (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Rich *et al.* 2010).

In the final sentence, James refers to *'the war effort'* as the focus of the team's effort and emphasises the *'complete emotional acceptance'* of that focus. The combination of thinking and feeling indicates that the war effort is also a referent for the EE work; one which goes beyond the immediate team, beyond the project and beyond the customers with whom James has regular contact (Extract 1.13). The focus of EE behaviour is also returned to in Section 3.

MyCustomers

A number of participants re-iterate the earlier connection with customers. For example, when Andrew is asked to reflect again on his EE experience he becomes more specific about his RN customers:

Extract 2.17: Lines 1-7

RB: *'Tell me some more...what's particularly important ...for you...about the work on the piracy charts? '*

Andrew: *'You got lots of direct contact with the end customer. [...] And, when you got positive feedback, you got it direct, so people wrote to you to say "Thank you to you and your team for doing this for us", and, um, that's very rewarding. It's very nice to know that the stuff you're doing is being used and appreciated.'*

Once again, Andrew emphasises both the utility of the work and the pleasure of receiving positive recognition, this time in the form of written thanks. Similar sentiments about the direct relationship and the gratitude of customers are expressed by others:

Extract 2.18: Lines 1-2

James: *'...the fact that we work very directly with our customer* [...], *we've got very um…long term relationships...'*

Extract 2.19: Lines 1-4

Helen: *'I've almost gone round in a circle in the 22 years,* [...]. *So a lot of the people and the names of the businesses are exactly the same now* [...]. *What I love is knowing we've given them a good service and getting the "thank you" at the end.* '

Extract 2.20: Lines 1-3

Valerie: *'...it's the relationship you build up with people from other countries and then year after year you go back to them,* [...] *they're just so grateful, really grateful.'*

As with some of the earlier examples of intrinsic interest (Extracts 2.1 to 2.9), these participants refer to customer relationships which are long term and endure beyond the EE experience. They also include additional references to positive recognition. The utility of participants' work connects with customers who reciprocate with expressions of gratitude which, in turn, contributes to a sense that the EE work is meaningful.

In summary, the 'MyPeople' referent includes a range of people with whom participants have regular contact; sometimes in relationships maintained over many years. While some participants identify only one 'MyPeople' referent, others identify a combination, e.g. James, Andrew and Sean each identify customers *and* team colleagues.

The final referent is also one which endures beyond the immediate EE experiences. 'MyDuty' is an amalgam of factors which, though less tangible than 'MyWork' and 'MyPeople', is frequently accompanied by strong emotion.

'MyDuty'

This term, used by Dana, incorporates GovDep's reputation for quality products, safety of mariners, naval defence and an overall sense of public service and/or duty. These have four factors in common. First, they relate to GovDep's organizational role. Second, they emerged only as part of the more in-depth discussion of EE experiences. Third, participants expressed and displayed signs of strong emotions when referring to these referents. Field and transcription notes describe voices becoming quieter or more hesitant at these points. Finally, and without prompting, participants actively defend or justify these referents; most often by contrasting them with less desirable attributes of either GovDep or other organizations. The first two extracts, from Dana and Valerie, illustrate all four attributes.

Dana has already spoken of an intrinsic interest in her EE work (Extract 2.4) and her boss (Extract 2.12) as referents for her EE experience. In the following exchange she adds mariner safety and the Navy and provides the title for this referent:

Extract 2.21: Lines 1- 15

RB: *'...is there anything else that is important to you about that experience?'*

Dana: *'Um...I absolutely believe in what we do. I'm a sailor and I've used the products and I really believe in what we are doing and I...I think I couldn't go and work for a commercial company which, I felt, weren't doing the right thing'.*

RB: *'So what's the difference then? Wouldn't a commercial company want to have products that were good quality* [...]*?'*

D: *'I think it's the business side to it, um, the sort of undercutting and the nastiness around it... [...]. I believe in what we're doing and [...] I think it's about meeting the needs of the Defence customer... I almost feel there's...it's weird really...it's my duty to serve.'*

RB: *'So there's something about, for you...about the service side?'*

D: *'Yeah, for me...it's about supporting the Navy... supporting the Navy and being able to do that at no cost to them by being able to sell our products commercially...*[...] *to fulfil our public task...'*

Dana separates and consciously prioritises some aspects of her employment over others. She associates her sense of duty with two of GovDep's civil service roles: ensuring the safety of mariners through high quality '*products*' and the national defence role of '*supporting the Navy'*. She contrasts *'doing the right thing'* in GovDep with *'undercutting and the nastiness'* of commercial companies.

This contrast is particularly interesting given GovDep's status as a Trading Fund; the hybrid of a commercial company and the civil service. In its commercial capacity, it sells products in the global market (GovDep 2013a). The profits from these sales fund what Dana calls the '*public task'* responsibilities for mariner safety and UK defence via the RN. GovDep's commercial activities are, consequently, central to the delivery of its civil service responsibilities.

Dana previously worked in the private sector and joined GovDep over 11 years *after* it became a Trading Fund. From this mixed sector experience she chooses GovDep's civil service responsibilities as referents for her EE experience, referring to them as a belief in '*what we're doing'*. The words *'really'* and *'absolutely'* emphasise the depth of that belief and make a strong personal connection with both the EE work (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Kahn 1992) and GovDep's '*public task'*.

Dana acknowledges the interdependency between the commercial and civil service roles yet she prioritises the latter as referents and rejects the commercial aspect. The rejection is reinforced by the suggestion that she could not work for a commercial organization. Regardless of her own private sector background and in spite of GovDep's clear commerciality, Dana prioritises the civil service responsibilities in relation to her EE experience. Other participants

also differentiate between GovDep's dual roles and, like Dana, identify the civil service responsibilities as MyDuty referents for their EE.

Valerie has worked at GovDep for over thirty years. The first referent for her EE experience was her international customers, with whom she has a long term relationship (Extract 2.20). When asked again to identify what is important about her EE experience she speaks very quietly about her pride in working at GovDep before telling the story of the small American flag which sits on the corner of her desk:

Extract 2.22: Lines 1-16

Valerie: [very quiet] *'I'm proud to work here; I really am* [...]*'*

RB: *'What are you proud of?'*

V: '*Our reputation, of what I do* [...] *helping out the other countries...um...I really don't think we should ever move away from Government.'*

RB: *'So, you think it's important to stay part of...?'*

V: *'Yeah, we celebrated when all that fell through thanks to the Americans...'*

RB*:*   *'Tell me some more about that* [...]*. Were they* [the government] *trying to privatise GovDep?'*

V: *'Yes, that's what it was, but the Americans said they wouldn't deal with a non-government department...and they rocked up with lawyers and said, "We won't* [co-operate] *and if you do this, we'll not only stop dealing with you, we'll stop dealing with this one, and that one, and the other," and basically just pulled the rug out from underneath them. So, I'm **proud** to say I work for the Government... **and** I've got a little American flag on the corner of my desk!'* [Laughter]

As with Dana, Valerie is well aware of the commercial imperative for GovDep and also that the privatisation attempt reflects an ongoing policy of the government which she is proud to serve. In spite of these apparent contradictions, she identifies '*reputation'* and government service as additional referents for her EE experience. Her pleasure at GovDep remaining part of the civil service is symbolised by the American flag which she keeps on her desk.

Eddie is also alert to the commercial aspects of GovDep yet, like Dana and Valerie, he identifies one of the two public tasks (GovDep 2013b) as an additional referent:

Extract 2.23: Lines 1-5

Eddie: *I think* [...] *the "safety of life at sea", that idea of what we do ...and I think it's what a lot of people take pride in... it's that we're not just producing something of commercial value. It's something that is inherently going to help people do their job and save their life...and I think it's got a bit of a moral value behind it* [smiles].'

Eddie contrasts the '*commercial value'* of the navigational charts with their '*moral value'* in safety of mariners; one of GovDep's two public tasks (GovDep 2013b). He diminishes the former by the use of *'just'* while the latter is associated with a sense of pride which he identifies as common to other GovDep colleagues. Pride also features in other participants' descriptions of 'MyDuty' referents.

Nick, like Valerie, begins by describing his pride at working at GovDep before describing the service it provides and, by implication, its positive reputation:

Extract 2.24: Lines 1-6

Nick: *'I can honestly say I am proud to work here* [...]'

RB: *'What are you proud of? What is it…?'*

N: *'Because of what we're actually doing, um…uh…providing information to the mariner and the Royal Navy um…I just feel we're doing a particularly valuable service...and I think that over the years we've maintained that reputation.'*

Alex, likewise, begins speaking about his sense of pride at working at GovDep:

Extract 2.25: Lines 1-6

Alex: *'I really…you know…do value what we do and have got a pride in working here.* [...] *the renown it's held in internationally... that for me is*

invaluable and that's what…that kind of gets me out of bed in the morning [...] *you know, you're going to…to work in a place that makes a difference...*[...] *I mean, just the incident at the weekend with that vessel just brings it to life really…'*

Alex speaks hesitantly about his MyDuty referents, pausing frequently as if to find the right words. He connects his pride with GovDep's positive reputation and stresses it as '*invaluable*' to his motivation. To illustrate the way in which GovDep '*makes a difference'* he refers to the grounding of the Costa Concordia cruise ship off the coast of Italy in January 2012. For Alex, there is an implicit connection between that incident and GovDep's civil service responsibility for the safety of mariners.

When Zeb is asked to say more about what is important about his EE experience he uses the story of an oil tanker captain to illustrate his answer:

Extract 2.26: Lines 1-11

Zeb: '...*there was a new oil terminal opened in Indonesia and BP were* [*sic*] *going to run some tankers into there and* [...] *the Indonesians had made some charts for them. So* [the captain] *had these Indonesian* [...] *charts and I was at my desk and he phoned me up.* [...] *and he said, "I've got these Indonesian charts." He said, "They're no good to me", he said, "What I want is something with the GovDep crest on it!" He said, "If I've got that I'm happy and I haven't!" And I thought, "Fantastic!"* [...] *You know, to know how much the users value what we do...because we've got a fantastic reputation out there* [...]. *I've remembered it ever since, you know, and I know it sounds twee, but we're all trying to achieve this goal and the goal is delivering a good service to the mariner at sea. It's a **real** sense of pride.'*

Zeb identifies a connection with the captain through '*users*' valuing '*what we do'* before expanding the EE referents to include GovDep's reputation for quality and service to mariners. In the last sentence he evaluates the story by referring to his *'sense of pride'*.

Later on, in the same conversation, Zeb contrasts his EE referents with other aspects of his employment at GovDep:

Extract 2.27: Lines 1-5

Zeb: *'...we've got this management conference coming up in a couple of weeks' time. We're going to talk about CP12* [Corporate Plan 2012] - *I mean how dry and boring is that? The plan...who cares about how what I do contributes to the plan? It's how it contributes to the ships' safety at sea which is important.'*

The Corporate Plan is GovDep's overarching business strategy for the next five years and, as an employee and senior manager, Zeb is required to contribute towards it. In spite of this obligation, Zeb knowingly separates his MyDuty referent from this less valued aspect of GovDep. Similar to other participants, he then justifies the referent by contrasting the importance of '*ships at sea*' with the *'dry and boring'* Corporate Plan. Finally, he hints at how his behaviour may be affected by these priorities. In his earlier story of a disengagement experience (Extract 1.41), he describes a reluctance to attend work. Here, he expresses a lack of interest in contributing to GovDep's strategic plan.

In a final example brought forward from earlier, James identifies the *'war effort'* as a referent for his and his team's EE during the first Gulf War:

Extract 2.16: Lines 8-10

James: [...] *everyone knew what we were working towards and there was a complete emotional acceptance because, um…you felt like you were contributing to the war effort.'*

This example differs from James' other EE experience (Extracts 1.21 and 2.18). In those extracts the EE work is meaningful because of a connection with longstanding customers. Here, the customers are unknown to him or his team yet he describes a strong emotional and cognitive association with the work. Providing navigational data during a conflict encompasses both mariner safety and naval defence and contributes, overall, to the '*war effort'*. It seems

reasonable to infer that it is these aspects which make the Gulf War work meaningful. For James, referents for meaningful work may differ according to the context of the work.

The final finding for Section 2 concerns a potential referent which participants do *not* identify, namely financial or other extrinsic rewards. Robbie is the only participant to mention a bonus in relation to his EE experience. After relating the story of building the new database he responds to a direct question about recognition for the work:

Extract 2.28: Lines 1-8

RB: *'Was there any recognition for the* [engagement] *work you were doing?'*

Robbie: *'Oh yeah. I had some little bouquets; I had two enhanced bonuses, two years running. Which was nice...and the letters as well with it...which I've kept at home.'*

RB: *'So you've kept them have you?'*

R: *'Oh yeah, yeah, yeah!* [...] *just to know that people have noticed the work I've done – it's brilliant! And anything else is a bonus for want of a better word.'* [laughs]

Robbie clearly appreciates the financial reward but it is the letters which appear to have greater significance. It is more than five years since this EE experience and yet Robbie has kept the letters; they are a tangible sign that '*people have noticed the work I've done'*. Once again, it appears that positive recognition is a factor in meaningful work.

In summary, and to address the questions at the end of Section 1: there are connections beyond those with other people which contribute to an interpretation of EE work as meaningful. These include an intrinsic and longstanding interest in the EE work (MyWork) and GovDep's public service tasks (MyDuty). The different referents are not mutually exclusive and the exact number and combination varies from person to person and also potentially between experiences. Each referent represents something valued by participants. The EE work is meaningful as it connects participants to these

values. For example, with the MyWork referent the EE work is meaningful as it incorporates what is intrinsically interesting to the participant. In other words, it connects elements of personal identity with the work identity (Chalofsky 2003; Kreiner *et al.* 2006). Similarly for the MyDuty referent, the EE work is meaningful as it connects participants' personal beliefs and values with GovDep's public tasks (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Edwards 2005). Meaningful work is at the heart of the EE experience and the referents are ingredients of that work.

So far the findings have concentrated on the emotional and cognitive aspects of EE. These are, however, only two of the three components said to comprise EE (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Rich *et al.* 2010). The next section presents the findings in relation to the final component, i.e. behaviour.

Section 3:   CIQ1b) The Scope and Focus of Engaged Behaviour
The literature review identified two underlying questions about EE behaviour. The first concerns limitations on its scope i.e. whether it involves only discretionary actions outside of the work role (Macey and Schneider 2008) or in-role activities and the way these are performed (Newman and Harrison 2008; Saks 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010). The second question concerns the focus of EE behaviour; whether it is focussed only on corporate objectives (Harter *et al.* 2002; Macey and Schneider 2008) or whether there are alternative goals. The findings for each of these two questions are presented separately.

In addition to interview extracts, this section includes evidence from fieldnotes and from GovDep's Performance Management (PM) Handbook (2011c). These additional sources are used because behaviour (engaged or otherwise) differs from thoughts and feelings in both its nature and in the way it is treated by GovDep. Whereas thoughts and feelings can only be inferred (Mullins 2007), behaviour is observable by others, e.g. by colleagues and managers. Behaviour is also a distinct element within GovDep's performance management scheme. The PM Handbook (2011c) is GovDep's guide to that scheme. Appendix 1 of the Handbook contains '*descriptors'* (2011c: 6) of required (and

approved) behaviours and those deemed to be unacceptable. These are used by GovDep managers as criteria for assessing and rating individual performance.   The rating is then used to allocate or withhold annual performance rewards. The descriptors are used here for a comparative analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) between participants' descriptions and corporate expectations of behaviour.

Scope

Participants spoke about a range of engaged behaviour. The two most common were '*working longer hours'* (WLH) and personal initiative (PI) (Frese and Fay 2001 in Macey and Schneider 2008). PI includes acting autonomously and speaking up to question managers and/or organizational policies or protocols (Frese and Fay 2001 in Macey and Schneider 2008; Kahn 1990; 1992; 2010; Kassing *et al.* 2012).

Neither WLH nor PI features within GovDep's descriptors (PM Handbook 2011c). Consequently, they are not a requirement of employment and can be characterised as discretionary or adaptive behaviours (Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2008). Nevertheless, participants make no such distinction and simply describe what they do during times of engagement. Both behaviours are mentioned in relation to day-to-day roles. As WLH and PI are distinctive behaviours which provide insights into other CIQs, they are used to explore the scope of EE behaviour.

'Working longer hours'

The findings which follow illustrate how working time is interpreted in GovDep in relation to EE and disengagement. The relationship is not straightforward and appears to differ between participants and managers. Participants willingly undertake extra hours during EE and describe the experience in positive terms. The key to this willingness appears to lie in the meaningfulness of the EE work. In a subtle difference, managers seem to equate long hours with engagement, regardless of the nature of the work. Consequently, managers prioritise physical presence (behaviour) over the emotional and cognitive elements of EE. Meanwhile, leaving work on time, working contracted hours or less than

contracted hours are each associated with disengagement by participants and managers alike.

The extracts begin with a return to Andrew and the piracy charts. In Extract 1.1, he refers to working '*in the evenings*' and connects the longer hours with a desire to make the piracy charts '*the best*'. The desire to create a quality product is such that he is '*happy*' to work the longer hours:

Extract 1.1:   Lines 15-17

Andrew: '...*we wanted to make it the best it possibly could be... which was why I was happy to come in in the evenings and carry on working on it.*'

Andrew prioritises the quality of the chart (the work at the heart of his EE experience) over his non-work time. Later, he explains that no-one in the team receives additional pay for the extra hours:

Extract 3.1: Lines 1-2

Andrew: '*And there was no overtime available so we were all doing it and we weren't getting any overtime.*'

Others also describe WLH during EE experiences and, like Andrew, appear content to do so:

Extract 3.2: Lines 1- 2

Dana: '*...we were working overtime and coming in on Saturday just to get through everything. I loved it.*'

Extract 3.3: Line 1

Eddie: '*...I was much happier; I was working longer hours* [laughs].'

Extract 3.4: Lines 1-3

Helen: '...*it was just a buzz* [...] *even to the flipchart of everybody's names and saying, "Right Saturday morning, afternoon, Sunday morning, afternoon, go and put a tick on which bits you can do, which bits you can't."*

Extract 3.5: Lines 1

James: '...*we worked through the night producing stuff* [...]. *You felt excited by it...*'

Extract 3.6: Lines 1-2

Nick: '...*we were coming in at weekends; we were doing an awful lot of work. Um…it was just the buzz.*'

Extract 3.7: Lines 1-2

Robbie: *'I'd come in on a Sunday to do it, you know, I was that keen to get it done.* [...] *It was interesting.*'

In each case the EE work is prioritised over personal time. Each participant also evaluates the experience with a positive thought or feeling. These are similar to those expressed earlier about the overall EE experience (Extracts 1.2-1.10) and imply that participants willingly work more than their contracted hours. WLH is not, however, synonymous with engagement, even when there is a financial incentive. Carol, for example, receives overtime payments yet she associates the extra hours with increasing pressure and an inability to concentrate:

Extract 3.8: Lines 1-11

Carol: *'Um...the hours sometimes are horrific and we're getting more and more pressure* [...] *And I've been doing a lot of extra hours, um…*

RB: *'You said earlier that you're part time, so what hours are you meant to do?'*

C: *'I'm supposed to do 30 hours a week but I'm probably doing more like 40, 45* [laughs]*...sometimes. Yeah, I have Wednesdays off, so I've*

been working my Wednesdays where I can ... and I worked three weekends in a row [...] *but they're* [GovDep] *not getting the best out of me by doing that either because I'm constantly interrupted by thinking about the children. Do you know what I mean? It's very stop/start...I mean it's quite, quite hard sometimes.'*

In contrast to other participants, Carol's experience of WLH is negative. During weekend overtime she is distracted by thoughts of her family which she recognises as interfering with her ability to do the job well. As with the earlier experiences of disengagement (Extracts 1.32-1.37), Carol is physically present yet her thoughts are elsewhere and she brings only part of herself to the tasks at hand (Kahn 1990; 1992).

The number of hours that people work and its relationship with EE also feature in conversations with managers. The first time this happens is during my induction in a meeting with David, a member of the senior leadership team. After asking about the current study he refers to '*a sense*' of EE at GovDep:

Extract 3.9: Lines 1-4

David: *'I've worked in quite a few places* [...] *and you get a sense of how engaged people are. There just isn't that same sense here...every day out of this window,* [nods towards a window overlooking the main access to GovDep] *I see a mass exodus at 4pm.*
(Fieldnote: 1/8/11 11.30).

GovDep operates a flexible working scheme. Staff can start work at 7.30am and finish at 4pm having completed a standard 7.5 hour day (Induction Handbook 2011a). It is possible that the people David sees have completed a full day's work, yet he appears to interpret the *'mass exodus'* as a sign of disengagement. Applying the logic of contrast (Feldman and Sko¨ldberg 2002) makes it possible to infer that he views people who stay after 4pm as engaged.

Within a week of this conversation a similar observation is made by Beth, a middle manager who I also met during my induction. Later, she invites me for

coffee to talk about her part-time studies for a master's degree. We meet in her office which overlooks GovDep's staff car park. Part way through our conversation she breaks off and looks out of the window:

Extract 3.10: Lines 1-9

Beth: *'There's an example of disengagement* [nods towards the car park]: *at 4pm the car park here just empties. People come in early and then on the dot of 4pm there's a rush for the cars and they're off.'*

RB: *'Well, I suppose, if they come in early...'*

B: *'Yes, well...they can't always have finished what they're doing. I always like to finish what I've started rather than go home in the middle of something. You know, to me, when you're disengaged in a job you're kind of "Oh* **god***,* [rolls eyes] *when's lunch? I've got 2 hours and 15 minutes before I go home" and you're sort of getting your coat on at 5 minutes to 4....'*
(Fieldnote 8/8/11 15.30)

Having started with a reference to the departing cars, Beth expands her description of the behaviours she associates with both engagement and disengagement. Using herself as an example, she first clarifies her view that engaged individuals are more likely to complete the task in hand before leaving work for the day. Next, she associates disengagement with clockwatching and a sense that time is dragging. Similar observations are made by Zeb who is both a senior manager and a participant in the current study. Like Beth, he associates disengagement with going home in the middle of a piece of work:

Extract 3.11: Lines 1-6

Zeb: *'It's the…disengaged…it's a kind of… "I come in, do my job, and when it's time to go home I'll go home* [...]*" and that's really it. If they get to going home time and that particular bit of work isn't finished, "Well, I'll do it tomorrow now, it doesn't matter, it'll wait until tomorrow, or next week, or whatever"* [shrugs]*, without really thinking, "Well no, it* **needs** *to be done today".'*

Zeb implies that individuals should prioritise the urgency of the work over a desire to go home. He makes no mention of the nature of the work or how this may affect a willingness to stay. This contrasts with his own story of disengagement where he struggles to go into the office due to the work's pointlessness (Extracts 1.26, 1.31 and 1.41). Here, in relation to others, he makes no reference to the nature of the work only to the *need* for it to be completed on the same day.

Zeb and Beth, like David, appear to equate WLH with engagement and leaving on time with disengagement. Neither appears to consider the nature of the work nor the emotional and cognitive elements of EE. Physical presence appears to be treated as synonymous with engagement.

Eddie also refers to completing a current task during his story of disengagement. Using almost the same words as Zeb, he describes how he preferred to go home rather than work through:

Extract 3.12: Lines 1-6

Eddie: *'...I just came in, did my hours and went home. I did the work but I wasn't too enthralled about staying on for a few hours just to do something that had come in late in the day. If I had something that was needing* [*sic*] *to be finished by the end of the week...well, it would be finished by the end of the week rather than finished on the same day.* [...] *if it came to 4 o'clock, I was like, "Well yeah, I'll go home now".*

Despite his disengagement, Eddie describes working the contracted hours and completing tasks within the required timespan. He is, though, unwilling to do anything beyond those obligations. Instead he consciously limits his efforts to what needs to be done. This contrasts with his engagement experience where he is *'much happier'* (Extract 3.3) doing longer hours on work he describes as *'doing something'* (Extract 1.12). The meaningfulness of the EE work appears to make the difference to the amount of time Eddie is prepared to spend in the office. Put simply, during engagement he does what makes him happy, regardless of the time commitment.

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Dana and Xanthe also refer to the amount of time spent at work during times of disengagement. Unlike Eddie, even completing the required hours is a challenge and Xanthe's countdown to home-time reflects the clockwatching referred to earlier by Beth (Extract 3.10):

Extract 3.13: Lines 1-3

Dana: *'And I struggled to even do my hours* [...] *I used to be like, "Ooh, is it 4 o'clock so I can go home?" And I always had a negative flexi* [flexible working time] *balance.'*

Extract 3.14: Lines 1-4

Xanthe: '*...you are sort of like... "And I can leave in 3 minutes, I can leave in 2…and I'm out the door!" My flexi* [flexible working time balance] *just went down, and down, and down, I got in later and later and left earlier and earlier.'*

Constant checking of the time implies that their attention is elsewhere during disengagement and both are keen to physically remove themselves from work as soon as possible. In contrast, during engagement, both appear happy to do extra hours. Dana '*loved*' doing overtime (Extract 3.2) while Xanthe takes pleasure in losing herself in the work, even when it means keeping her boyfriend waiting:

Extract 3.15: Lines 1-6

Xanthe: *'I still drive in with my boyfriend and he'll be "Can we go home?" And I'm like, "Just 15 more minutes, just 15 more minutes, just 15 more minutes". I've made him stay until, like, seven o'clock some nights. I go up to his office and he's there by himself..., "They've all gone home!"* [sad tone and face] *I'm like, 'Sorry!'* [sing song voice] [...] *So, yeah, it is…and I like…I **love** being lost in it* [the work].'

The potential negative implications of Xanthe and others' long working hours are returned to within Section 4. Meanwhile, in summary, participants frequently report WLH in relation to EE work. They appear to do so willingly

and express positive thoughts and feelings in relation to those additional hours. For participants, WLH is associated with work which is meaningful. In a subtle difference, managers appear to see longer hours as *synonymous* with engagement, regardless of the meaningfulness of the work. In contrast, doing standard hours and working to the clock are associated with disengagement; an association made by participants and managers alike.

While participants willingly extend their hours there are also examples of changes in the *way* the work is undertaken (Saks 2008). Participants describe examples of initiative during both overtime and contracted hours.

Personal initiative (PI) and challenge

PI behaviours include, '...self-starting, proactivity and persistence... (Frese and Fay 2001 in Macey and Schneider 2008:17) and speaking up to question the way things are done (Frese *et al.* 1996). Each of these appears within participants' stories of EE. In the first example, brought forward from earlier, Andrew explains how the work dominates his thoughts:

Extract 1.1: Lines 25-30

Andrew*: 'And it was constantly going over in my mind. In the middle of the night you'd wake up and think, 'Oh, we could do that, there's a way we can do that.' You write that down before you forget. Get in next morning and do it. And it just dominated my thoughts for those couple of weeks even when I wasn't at work. But in a positive way; I wasn't worrying about it.'*

Not only does Andrew physically return to work in the evenings he also spends time at home thinking about and planning ways to improve the charts. He develops solutions and improvements proactively, i.e. without being prompted to do so. This investment of time and effort demonstrates a persistence which is over and above what is necessary to fulfil his GovDep role.

Valerie displays similar behaviour in her EE story of coming to the aid of a customer stranded at an international conference:

Extract 3.16: Lines 1-10

Valerie: *'...with the conferences, especially the Caribbean one... I log on at the weekend because of the time difference* [...] *I got some woman who got stuck…'*

RB: *'It's just as well you did log on, isn't it, really!'* [Laughter]

V: *'Yeah.* [Laughter] *I logged on to this list of emails, "Help me! Please help me!" She's the head of* [country] *Office* [...] *And she was going from St Kitts back to* [home] *but in the meantime the airline had gone on strike so she got stuck. So, I booked her some more flights, paid for some more flights.* [...] *Yeah, I've spent another thousand dollars! But you know... It's good! It's good!* [Laughter]'

Like Andrew, Valerie willingly works more time than required. Rather than a one-off special project, however, this experience concerns her day-to-day role. Supporting overseas customers is part of that role yet, when engaged, she goes beyond her contractual obligations. Recognising the impact of the time difference, she logs into her GovDep email account over the weekend from home. Additionally, she decides to buy extra flights without contacting her manager for approval or support. Both actions demonstrate PI and are also consistent with Valerie's MyCustomers referent (Extract 2.20).

The next example also relates to a day-to-day role. As described earlier, Robbie has a longstanding interest in his radio signals work (Extract 2.1). In the following extract, related to a second EE experience, he identifies a deficiency in the signals data:

Extract 3.17: Lines 1-5

Robbie: *'I picked up the books one day and I thought, "We've absolutely nothing on the Far East"; [...] so I got my teeth into it and did a lot of research. I've been hammering all my contacts abroad and so on, building up the contacts, [in] China, Korea, Japan, and now we've become the authority on that area.'*

Having used his initiative to identify the gap, Robbie demonstrates persistence by using a combination of personal research, existing contacts and the development of new contacts. As with Valerie, the behaviours are applied to Robbie's day-to-day role yet they also appear to go beyond what might be expected.

In the following extract, Eddie describes a mixture of behaviours during EE:

Extract 3.18: Lines 1-3
Eddie*: 'I was actually a lot more productive and also getting involved in a lot more aspects of the job as well. I was taking up roles on some of the, um, management, um, sort of, technical groups. It was much more fun [laughs].'*

Eddie demonstrates PI through volunteering and undertaking tasks beyond those of his day-to-day role. Later, he reflects on his approach to work during EE and describes a combination of WLH and perseverance:

Extract 3.19: Lines 1-4
Eddie: *'...it's not just that you're willing to spend a bit more time and a bit more effort. If something does crop up that's a problem you don't want to pass it on to someone else. You feel, "Actually, I can resolve this" [...] rather than just dumping some work on someone.'*

For Eddie, engaged behaviour involves a combination of longer hours, greater effort and a willingness to persist and see a task through rather than simply '*dumping*' it on a colleague. This is a logical contrast with his earlier description of disengagement when he left for home at the first opportunity (Extract 3.12). Eddie's persistence during EE also appears to match Beth and Zeb's views about engaged staff completing a current task (Extracts 3.10-3.11).

In a final extract, Alex describes how he delivers part of the training course for South American students (Extract 1.18) in Spanish; a language he does not naturally speak:

Extract 3.20: Lines 1- 5

Alex: *'I got all the training material translated into South American Spanish,* [...]
       and I actually delivered the training... so I was standing up there with the
       Spanish, pointing to this slide in Spanish! I had my English translation
       next to it so it was all organised...'

Delivering training courses is part of Alex's role but doing so in an unknown
foreign language falls outside of what would normally be expected (Macey and
Schneider 2008). He demonstrates initiative in obtaining the translations and
creativity in identifying a technique to ensure the delivery is accurate.

Each of these extracts illustrates discretionary behaviour which appears to
benefit GovDep as the employer. When participants willingly work extra hours
projects can be completed more quickly. When no overtime is paid this
happens at no extra cost. PI is also free of additional cost and in these extracts
it contributes towards new products (Andrew and Robbie), improves customer
relations (Valerie and Alex) and expands role responsibilities (Eddie). Although
these behaviours benefit GovDep, the corporate goals are rarely the direct
focus of participants' efforts.

Focus

With one exception, the findings show participants concentrating their energies
towards the EE work and the referents which make it meaningful. Whether this
contributes to corporate goals appears to rely on a match between those goals
and participants' EE referents.

James is the only participant to refer explicitly to achieving corporate objectives
(Extracts 1.21). They provide an explanation for the positive recognition he
receives; recognition which contributes to the work's meaningfulness. For the
rest, their behaviour appears more directly focussed on the EE work and the
referents which make that work meaningful. If this focus coincides with the
corporate goals then participants' behaviour contributes. However, there are
also examples of participants deliberately and knowingly challenging or working
around organizational protocols. For these individuals it seems that meaningful

work is prioritised *over* corporate requirements to the possible detriment of GovDep and at increased risk for the individual.

Each of the following extracts illustrates a different way in which participants' EE behaviour diverges from GovDep's requirements. The extracts proceed from simply offering alternative solutions through to a form of collusive subterfuge in refusing to carry out a specific managerial instruction. In the first extract, Matt suggests actions which contrast with GovDep's corporate *'message'*:

Extract 3.21: Lines 1-5

Matt: *'So…I was a bit of a devil's advocate and say to the team, "Well what about doing something like that?" and they look around* [at each other] *and think, "No, he's not on the* [GovDep] *message", but I don't care because that is another step to making it a better vision of what the problem is or how the solution should look.'*

Matt appears unperturbed by contradicting GovDep's '*message'*. For him, solving the problem or finding the right solution is more important and takes priority over staying on message. This is consistent with his earlier emphasis on making a difference through influencing other people (Extract 1.16).

As Matt is self-employed on a fixed contract it could be argued that he has less invested in adhering to GovDep's protocols. Additionally, he may also have been employed specifically to challenge the status quo. Two related factors counter these arguments. Firstly, although self-employed, he is subject to GovDep's performance management processes (PM Handbook 2011c). The behavioural descriptors require non-managers (like Matt) to work: *'...in accordance with* [GovDep] *procedures and policies...'* (2011:11) and in support of *'...corporate goals and decisions...'* (*ibid:* 13). Secondly, Matt refers to the possibility that his contract might be extended:

Extract 3.22: Lines 1-2

Matt: '...*it might be that there is some extension beyond that* [6 months]...*but I don't know about it yet.'*

A contract extension would seem less likely if Matt behaves contrary to requirements. Both of these factors imply that it is in Matt's best interests to conform to GovDep's way of working. Instead, he knowingly chooses to prioritise what, for him, makes the work meaningful, i.e. the opportunity to make a difference.

Dana also challenges the status quo. Unlike Matt, her challenge is a direct attempt to alter a high level decision. In an additional story of engagement, her boss asks her to co-ordinate an international exchange visit to New Zealand by one of GovDep's hydrography experts:

Extract 3.23: Line 1-7
Dana: ' *...at the moment I'm battling for travel approval for somebody* [...] *they're out chairing a meeting, um, and we are saying, "No you can't fly out a day earlier for your meeting so that you can recover even though it's in Wellington".* [...] A*nd they are going to be there over their own weekends, not being paid for it. I'm willing to put my foot down and I've said to* [board member], *"No, I'm going to fight for this because I really believe in it".'*

Dana's referents for meaningful work include: a longstanding interest in navigation (Extract 2.4), her boss (Extract 2.11-2.12) and a sense of duty towards mariner safety and naval defence (Extract 2.21). Each of these appears to be an ingredient within her willingness to challenge a board member: the task is delegated by her boss and it concerns a conference on the safety of life at sea. Dana's behaviour, like Matt's, conflicts with GovDep's requirement to support corporate decisions (PM Handbook 2011c). Instead, it seems she prioritises her referents and without regard to any personal consequences.

This story also contains links to the differences between managers and non-managers views WLH (Extracts 3.2-3.11). Dana refers to the expert working weekends without financial compensation. The board member appears to disregard these weekends when refusing permission for an earlier flight. While it is not possible to determine whether the expert is engaged, Dana cites those

same weekends as part of her justification for *'battling'* on his behalf. For her, the earlier flight is a way in which the expert can be recompensed for the additional time. Dana implies an expectation of reciprocity: the expert's unpaid weekends in return for an earlier flight, yet this is unforthcoming from the board member. The outcome from this challenge remains unknown as the fieldwork ended prior to any resolution being reached.

In the third example, Alex explains how he gains support for training the South American students. This short term project is important for GovDep's international reputation; which is also a referent for Alex's meaningful work (Extract 2.25). In spite of this apparent consistency of purpose, Alex acknowledges that he sidesteps GovDep's usual processes during the development phase of the project:

Extract 3.24: Lines 1-5

Alex: '*I needed people's support within the business, I knew what I wanted to do, I knew when I needed to do it by, I knew who I needed to support it* [...] *so I pulled out some kind of…I didn't properly follow due process but I called a few favours in internally and that sometimes…what goes around comes around, doesn't it?'*

Alex makes a deliberate choice to call in personal favours and verbally shrugs away the discrepancy between this approach and GovDep's requirements. Although this project is ultimately a corporate success story, Alex chooses an alternative route to that success; one which carries a degree of risk should his methods come to light.

In the next extract, Andrew describes how the Piracy Charts project went ahead in spite of its initial rejection by '*Commercial'*, the GovDep Division responsible for deciding which products are developed for the market:

Extract 3.25: Lines 1-6

Andrew: '...*we were willing to do it whilst Commercial said, "You're wasting your time...nobody wants this." And then to think, "Well, we're going to prove them wrong because our guys on the ground seem to think they're wrong." They [Commercial] were talking about, "We need to do a six month market study and all the rest of it." And I was like, "Sod it. We're going to do it **now**."* [...] *And we did it and it took off – great.'*

The objections and procedural constraints of the Commercial Division are rejected in favour of the views of *'our guys on the ground'*, i.e. the customers who initiated the request for the piracy charts. Put simply, Andrew's MyCustomers referent (Extract 2.17) appears to trump the corporate requirements.   Although Andrew describes the project as an overall success this was by no means certain at the point when the decision was made to go ahead.

In the final example, Sean tells the story of what happens when it comes to replacing the navigation system which features in his earlier EE experience. At first, he follows GovDep's protocols and writes a business case.   When this fails he decides to ignore the management instruction to switch the system off:

Extract 3.26: Lines 1-11

Sean: '...*our old system is so much easier to maintain... we can use it really easily on every chart we do.* [...] *And I wrote the business case for keeping it.* [...] *And the answer was "no". I tried reason...I wrote out a business case and it's been rejected. So I was told to turn off the old one and just maintain the new one. Um, so in that case we actually said "Fine, that's what we'll do" and we didn't do that* [laughs]. *We still maintain the old one because I'm beggared if I'm gonna* [...] *waste our and the Royal Navy's time and money on something which doesn't work so well.'*

RB: *'So, effectively then is that a, sort of, secret?'*

S: *'Yeah. Within my office we're aware that the* [old] *database is there.'*

In Sean's original story he emphasises the system's utility (Extract 1.15) and later adds his team as a referent (Extract 2.15). Both elements also feature in his justification for keeping it switched on. Firstly, the old system has greater utility: it is flexible, easy to use and cheaper to run than its replacement. Secondly, maintaining it in secret requires a degree of complicity amongst the team members in order to avoid discovery. This is made clearer in the next extract:

Extract 3.27: Lines 1-11

RB: *You still use it do you...the old one?*

S: *'Yeah, yeah. I had a quiet word with my, um, team counterpart who's taken on some of my old responsibilities. I said, "Look, if we turn this thing off, there's going to be all this hassle every time you want the data; it's a lot of work. Are you happy to carry on using it?" He was happy, I was happy. When the senior manager came and asked, 'So, you're now doing this and that's* [the old system] *been switched off?' We lied. We said, "Yes"* [...] *We're happy because we're not wasting our time to do something that's complex and unnecessary, um, and we have more time to do other things. So, it's one of those things where you think, "Well, I'm just not going to do it. There's no sense."*

Sean's colleague accepts responsibility for maintaining the old system and is '*happy*' to keep using it. That the switch-off request comes from a senior manager implies that its closure is in keeping with GovDep's corporate plan. The need for secrecy in its continuing use supports this interpretation. Sean justifies his behaviour with a reference to the inefficiency of the new database and the time saving for the team. Sean, like Andrew, prioritises his EE work over corporate requirements. Both he and his team colleagues risk disciplinary action should the subterfuge come to light.

In summary, this section has presented the findings in relation to the scope and focus of EE behaviour. For the scope of EE behaviour the two behaviours most commonly described are WLH and PI. These are discretionary as they are not

a requirement of employment at GovDep yet both are also described in relation to participants' day-to-day role.

For the focus of EE behaviour the findings show participants concentrating their efforts towards meaningful work. Where that work aligns with GovDep's corporate objectives participants contribute towards them yet this appears to be more by coincidence than through deliberate choice. Finally, the extracts show participants consciously disregarding GovDep's processes during EE, even when this puts them at risk of sanctions. Although ignoring protocols may also have a detrimental effect on GovDep, the aim of the current study concerns the *individual* experience of EE. The next section, therefore, considers EE's potential disadvantages from that perspective.

Section 4:   CIQ1c) The Potential Disadvantages of EE

The findings in this section concentrate on the potential disadvantages of the two EE behaviours identified in the previous section, i.e. WLH and PI. Potential disadvantages seem to arise more from the perception and action of managers (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013) than from participants being 'Too engaged...' (Halbesleben *et al.* 2009: 1452).

Disadvantages of WLH

Although evidence elsewhere suggests WLH is detrimental to health (Halbesleben *et al.* 2009; Taris *et al.* 2010), none of the participants describe any such effects. Instead, they associate the experience with positive emotions (Extracts 3.1-3.7). Andrew even provides reassurance that constantly thinking about work is a positive thing:

Extract 1.1: Lines 29-32

Andrew: *'...it just dominated my thoughts for those couple of weeks even when I wasn't at work. But in a positive way; I wasn't worrying about it. It wasn't keeping me awake...'*

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This reassurance implies that Andrew is aware that his behaviour may be interpreted negatively or as involving some personal risk. While no participant refers to ill health, Dana and Xanthe both hint at the potential strain placed on personal relationships. As with Andrew, however, they also emphasise that the experience of engagement outweighs any negative effects. The following extract begins with Dana acknowledging that there are some disadvantages of WLH:

Extract 4.1: Lines 1-8

Dana: '*I've had to give up quite a lot, um* [...] *I've split up with my boyfriend and, actually, that helped in a way because I then didn't feel this pull of, "Ooh, should I be going home or doing this?" I do have to just drop things to be able to do it and I think my friends here* [...] *can't handle that, "No, I can't come to lunch anymore and I can't do this after work and I can't come out because I've got to be okay the next day." So, giving up my life...a little bit* [laughs] *and* [...] *that...that's just all part of it and the benefits definitely outweigh that.*'

Dana doesn't directly blame WLH for the break up with her boyfriend yet the comment about being pulled in different directions suggests that the two issues are connected. She immediately goes on to identify the break up as positive as it frees her up to spend more time in work. When she speaks about cancelling activities with friends, she intimates that it's their inability to cope which is the issue rather than her extra hours. In spite of this recognition of the downsides of long hours, Dana's overall conclusion is that the benefits of engagement are worth the costs.

Earlier, in Extract 3.15, Xanthe explains how she makes her boyfriend '...*stay until, like, seven o'clock some nights...'*. This is thirty minutes past GovDep's latest clocking off time (Induction Handbook 2011a). There is no possibility of financial recompense or time off in lieu so the time is, effectively, donated for free. By the time she gets to his office, her boyfriend is upset at being the last remaining person in the section. Although she describes apologising for the

delay this is followed immediately by a reference to how much she loves being absorbed in the work.

For both Xanthe and Dana there are indications that the longer hours have an adverse effect on their ability to balance work with personal lives. In both cases, however, they emphasise the pleasure they get from being engaged.

A second potential disadvantage of WLH comes indirectly from the interpretation of that time by GovDep's managers. Rather than being associated with meaningful work, there is some evidence that physical presence and completing a current task are seen as synonymous with engagement (Extracts 3.9-3.11). Those who work longer hours are, quite literally, seen to be engaged. Managers appear to prioritise physical presence over the cognitive and emotional aspects of EE (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Rich *et al.* 2010).

The risk for participants is that managers may come to expect longer hours. If these are not forthcoming an individual's behaviour may be adversely assessed during appraisal. There are indications of this in Zeb's characterisation of disengaged staff: *"I come in, do my job, and when it's time to go home I'll go home"* (Extract 3.11). Zeb implies that doing the work and leaving for home on time are insufficient; something more is required. Secondly, a degree of pressure may be applied to encourage WLH. Again, it is Dana who provides some evidence of this. Having mentioned that her boss works twelve hour days she goes on to talk about how he jokes about the hours worked by her and her team colleagues:

Extract 4.2: Lines 1-11

RB: *'I was interested in what you said about your boss working from 7 to 7. Does he expect you to do the same thing?*

Dana: *'I don't come in at 7 **every** day. He says I have the sleeping habits of a teenage boy. He'll tell people that – thanks* [laughs loudly]. *Um, I come in when I come in. It's usually about 8 or half 8. [...] and he knows that I'm busy because he'll see me before that and there'll be little jokes*

> *about "Oh, has there been a fire in your flat or something?" And..., he did say in the past, it was a sort of jokey thing, "Thanks for popping in" to the first person who goes, that sort of thing* [laughs]*'*

RB: *'You're smiling when you say that...'*

D: *'Yeah – you've got to.'*

Though Dana laughs at her boss's jokes two factors imply a degree of pressure to work longer hours. First, Dana's boss is a referent for her engagement and she would, *'...follow him pretty much anywhere and do whatever he asked me to do...'* (Extract 2.12). She is clearly keen to meet his expectations and this may include reading between the lines of his humour to infer a tacit prescription to work longer. Second, the imperative *'you've got to'* implies that she feels an obligation to smile at his humour. If so, she may also feel an obligation to act in accordance with the direction of that humour and work longer hours.

In summary, the only examples of disadvantage arising directly from WLH are related to balancing work with personal relationships. Indirect risks may also arise and there is evidence of GovDep managers prioritising physical presence over other aspects of engagement (Extracts 3.9-3.11, 4.2). Standard hours are viewed as a sign of disengagement and pressure may be applied in an attempt to increase participants' working hours.

Disadvantages of PI

The findings within Section 3 show that PI may involve actions which contravene GovDep's corporate requirements (Extracts 3.21-3.26). In those examples participants' behaviour remains undiscovered by managers and no individual experiences any detriment. However, when behaviour like this comes to the attention of a GovDep manager the risk may translate into harm in the form of disciplinary action or other penalties. The following extracts provide three stories of negative consequences associated with PI during engagement. In the first example, Stephen acts above his grade and breaches GovDep's protocols. In the second and third examples Alex and Andrew reflect on the penalties of expressing contrary opinions during EE. In all three cases it is a manager who precipitates the negative consequences.

Stephen's longstanding interest in his work is a referent for his EE experience (Extract 2.7). In the following extract he describes what happens when he exercises his initiative and replaces some damaged charts:

Extract 4.3: Lines 1-10

Stephen: '*I was in a chart branch responsible for the* [Name] *Sea. It was really fascinating. We would use* [country] *sources and my grade* [...] *was not allowed to order foreign government charts directly, it had to be a senior grade.* [...] *And the two source charts I had were very creased down the centre and torn all the way around the side* [...] *so in my opinion they were not adequate* [...] *So I used my initiative and ordered two reprints and I got a real ticking off for that by the head of the branch at the time.* [...] *The actual senior manager was not happy at all!'*

RB: '*Really?'*

S: '*Yeah...because I was outside my remit.'*

As with the participants in Section 3 (Extracts 3.21-3.27), Stephen is aware that his behaviour contravenes GovDep's protocols yet he still goes ahead and orders the new charts. When his actions come to light he is reprimanded by a senior manager for going beyond the limits of his authority.

In a second interview with Alex he describes what happens when he questions part of the corporate plan. In line with the plan, his manager asks him to design a new competence framework and associated training. Alex starts the project by undertaking a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) which then leads him to suggest an alternative way forward:

Extract 4.4: Lines 1-8

Alex: '*I am passionate about* [training] *and I won't hesitate to have input. I thought I knew what needed to be done as a training manager and to do things* [...] *um ...through an evidenced approach* [...]*…so I was pushing back on this* [...] *I put a proposal around to say, "Actually, there's a different way of…this is a good opportunity to look at training generally, how we do it, how we offer it, and utilise some of the*

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expertise we have in the business at senior level" [...] *and I did fail an objective because I didn't do it* [produce the framework].*'*

The TNA is not part of the original request. Alex undertakes it on his own initiative using his knowledge and experience of training. His alternative approach contrasts with the corporate plan and with his manager's request and is rejected. During his annual appraisal Alex is assessed as failing the relevant performance objective. Failing an objective may lead to additional adverse consequences. For example, it may affect the overall grading of performance for the year and result in the loss of a financial bonus (PM Handbook 2011c). Alternatively, it may mean being rejected for promotion. These penalties are instrumental or extrinsic factors (Deci and Ryan 1985 in Meyer and Gagné 2008) yet Alex identifies adverse effects of a more intrinsic nature:

Extract 4.5: Lines 1-3

RB: *'What was that* [experience] *like?'*

Alex: *'You feel disrespected and start to question yourself and your own competence and knowledge.'*

Although he is engaged *during* the TNA, Alex describes a sense of disrespect when his proposal is rejected. This contrasts with his earlier EE experience where he feels valued for the work (Extract 1.19). The TNA work is meaningful at the time yet, instead of positive recognition, Alex receives disapproval which then leads him to question his own abilities. He goes on to reflect on the difference between his positive intent and the interpretation of his managers:

Extract 4.6: Lines 1-5

Alex: *'I thought I was providing constructive input, based on my L*[learning] *and D* [development] *experience, but it was a view that was in opposition to what was being proposed, and it wasn't welcomed as it was seen as challenging senior managers. Although,* [...] *it wasn't **just** challenge, I did propose alternative solutions.'*

What Alex sees as helpful behaviour is viewed by '*senior managers*' as a negative challenge regardless of the inclusion of alternative proposals.

A similar example is provided by Andrew. In a second story of EE, he describes what happens at a product review meeting when he questions the portrayal of a graphic on a navigational chart. The extract begins with Andrew's orientation for the story (Cortazzi 2007) and the rationale for his actions:

Extract 4.7: Lines 1-5

Andrew: *'...it's a chart that's got waterworks on it* [...] *and it was squashed* [...] *And you think, "Well…for guys buzzing around in little boats, doing navigation of buildings and things, if they think, 'Oh we're a mile away, then a mile and a half is taking 50% longer to get there', um…and it's just not right um…which is why I questioned it...'*

The graphic's *'squashed'* appearance interferes with the scale of the drawing leading to potential confusion for '*guys*', i.e. customers, using the chart. Customers are one of Andrew's EE referents (Extract 2.17) and, as with the piracy charts, he prioritises their needs during EE. He goes on to describe the consequences of his actions:

Extract 4.8: Lines 1-9

RB: *'And what happened?'*

A: *'The response I got was relatively hostile and I was immediately um…batted down* [...] *I thought, "That's fine, that's OK, it's been considered but I just thought I'd point it out."* [...] *And then a fairly senior manager from that area phoned me up out of the blue and gave me a really hard time about what he called my 'challenge', even though it appeared to be necessary um…yeah, it sort of knocked you back a bit and thinking, "Well…shall I not bother then?"* [...] *But ultimately it's some poor bugger out there on a boat!'*

Having had his query dismissed during the meeting Andrew accepts that as the end of the matter. Later he is surprised to receive a call from a senior manager

about his *'challenge'* and begins to question whether he would do the same thing again. In the last two sentences Andrew articulates the tension between the personal risk of speaking out and his desire to keep mariners safe.

The former provides a reason to stay quiet while the latter provides a reason to speak up. As earlier, Andrew chooses to prioritise his EE referent over the risk of speaking up. Having been disciplined, he begins to reconsider this decision and anticipates acting differently in future:

Extract 4.9: Lines 1-8

RB: *'And what about now...what would you do now?'*

Andrew: *'I think now…I would…think long and hard [...] before saying anything else. I still go to plenty of meetings about these products [...] Um…and if I risk again going up against people of one and two grades above me um… it will be the same impact as last time but probably fivefold because I've done it **again**! I think, "Well not this time. I'm not going through all that again."* [snorts and rolls eyes] *That's part of me I put to one side.'*

In this reflection on the experience, Andrew identifies the source of risk as senior colleagues and expects the negative consequences to be amplified by any repetition. To avoid this he chooses to *'put to one side'* that *'part'* of himself which questions things. By side-lining an element of his personal identity Andrew is choosing not to engage during future meetings (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Rich *et al.* 2010). In this case the threat of further sanctions is more important than the meaningfulness of the work.

Unlike WLH, the speaking up aspect of PI (Frese *et al.* 1996) appears in the behavioural descriptors (PM Handbook 2011c). Under the guise of 'challenge' it features more frequently than any other behaviour. For example, within the ten descriptors relevant to Alex and Andrew, there are nine references to being '...*constructive when challenging...'* (*ibid:* 12; 14-15). As there is no definition or clarification of this phrase there is potential for alternative interpretations. There is some indication of this in both Alex and Andrew's examples. Alex gives alternative proposals and Andrew's behaviour is focused on mariner safety; one

of GovDep's public tasks (GovDep 2013b). Nevertheless, both are penalised for their EE behaviour indicating that the managers do not consider it to be *'constructive'*.

In addition to the challenge descriptors, there are requirements that individuals should *'...always support decisions made by others in the corporate interest'* (*ibid:* 12) and *'Always* [be] *positive and supportive of change initiatives...'* (*ibid:* 14-15). The use of the word *'always'* allows for no exceptions and *'corporate interest'* remains undefined. Andrew and Alex could argue that their behaviour is in the corporate interest; the former on the grounds of identifying a risk to mariner safety and the latter on the basis of cost and efficiency. Nevertheless, both are penalised. It seems that the descriptors provide GovDep managers with a source of written authority to discipline or take other punitive action against those who speak up or challenge. Taken together, the descriptors and the experiences of Alex and Andrew provide evidence of a 'no-challenge' norm at GovDep which acts against PI behaviours and EE; this is returned to within Section 5.

In summary, the findings in this section show there to be potential disadvantages from both WLH and PI. Managers' interpretation of, and attempts to control, these behaviours are key factors in those disadvantages. WLH is seen as synonymous with EE; it is to be encouraged, even where this means individuals feel pressured to do more than their required hours. In contrast, speaking up is portrayed negatively as 'challenge'; it is undesirable and penalised. Finally, the incremental progression through the extracts (Emerson *et al.* 1995) has begun to illustrate the complex interplay of perception, agency and organizational context in the creation and maintenance of EE; issues discussed in the final section.

Section 5:   RQ2) Creating and Maintaining Individual EE
This section presents the findings related to the *process* of EE; the influences and interactions between the individual and their context which are said to give rise to engagement (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Saks 2006; Shuck *et al.* 2011). In

comparison with RQ1, the issues within RQ2 generated less direct data and much of the evidence is brought forward from the earlier extracts in Sections 1-4. Consequently, the findings for the two remaining CIQs are combined within this last section.

The findings for CIQ2a) show that trust plays an important role in enabling and supporting participants' engagement, particularly where the source of trust is the line manager.   Managers' trust initiates participants' involvement in the EE work and contributes to a sense of freedom or support which reduces concerns about acting autonomously.

In relation to CIQ2b), no participant refers explicitly to either norms, values, perception or agency yet the presence and role of each of these aspects can be inferred from earlier extracts and within fieldnotes. Three cultural elements are identified; each with a role in influencing participants' EE. The extent of that influence is, however, mediated by participants' perception of these and other factors.

CIQ2a) The role of trust

Trust appears both explicitly and implicitly in participants' stories of EE. Rather than a more remote trust in GovDep as an employer or organization it takes the form of interpersonal trust between individuals (Sztompka 1999). In most cases the trust is between participants and their line manager.   Some participants refer only to the sense of freedom from being trusted, while others acknowledge trust as reciprocal. This reciprocity is described succinctly by Dana, whose boss is one of the referents for her EE work:

Extract 2.12: Lines 7-9

Dana: *'He*
    trusts me to be able to make decisions and be able to do things for him
    but will be there for me if it's not right;'

Dana believes that her boss trusts her to act appropriately on his behalf. This means that she can act without the need to check things constantly or ask his

permission. In return, she trusts him to support her if things go wrong. Both of her EE experiences draw on this reciprocal trust. In the first experience she has to make a quick decision on his behalf (Extract 2.11). His trust reduces the sense of risk associated with acting alone or without explicit instruction. Similarly, in the second experience, trusting in her boss's support reduces the risks associated with challenging a board member over GovDep's travel policy (Extract 3.23).

Valerie also refers to reciprocal trust. During her rescue of the stranded customer (Extract 3.16) she spends additional money for flights and explains the trust between her and her manager:

Extract 5.1: Lines 1-8

Valerie: *'I know I can do that and I'll have the full back-up of my line manager when I get back* [from the weekend].   [...] *I get a lot of freedom...I only go to my manager if I've got a problem because he knows what I'm doing and I can just get on with it.'*

RB: *'Is that important to you then?'*

V: *'Yeah...I think because it shows that he trusts me and he knows that I'm going to do it properly and if I've got a problem or something goes wrong I will tell him.'*

For Valerie, the freedom to *'just get on with it'* is a sign that her manager trusts her to do the work properly and, in return she will go to him only if things go *'wrong'*. She has a tacit reassurance that using her initiative and acting autonomously are supported by her manager, even if there are negative outcomes. In other words, the risks associated with both behaviours are reduced.

Both Valerie and Dana have an *expectation* of future support should it be required. Pauline, on the other hand, needs her manager's support *during* her EE experience when things go wrong between her and a more senior manager:

Extract 5.2: Lines 1-7

Pauline: *'...he was very supportive of me and he trusted me.'*

RB: *'What did he do?'*

P: *'I suppose mainly, from my point of view, that he was 'hands off'. Also he was between me and* [name-senior manager]*. I knew* [...] *that he put* [name] *right on something, you know what I mean? "Pauline's doing a good job, she's doing this, she's doing that."* [...] *to see someone recognise that made me feel good.'*

Pauline's manager demonstrates his trust by not interfering in her work. Later, when she needs him, he demonstrates his trustworthiness by defending her ability to do the work to their senior manager. Knowing that her boss supported her reduces Pauline's anxiety. As with other participants (Extracts 1.19, 1.22-1.23, 2.28), she identifies the positive effects of recognition and is reassured about the quality of her work.

Whereas Dana, Valerie and Pauline identify the reciprocal nature of their trust, Xanthe refers only to being trusted to work without constant supervision:

Extract 2.13: Lines 7-8

Xanthe: *'...being trusted to do that without being micro-managed is quite nice, actually.* [...]*'*

Extract 5.3: Lines 1-5

RB: *'Not being micro-managed?*

X*:   'Yeah. Not having someone…you know... every 5 minutes, "What are you doing? Have you done it? Have you done it?" Having the sense that **you've** achieved something... you **can** do it* [...] *and you **don't** need someone to tell you how to do it.'*

In addition to the absence of close supervision, Xanthe refers to a sense of personal satisfaction from achieving something independently. Her manager's trust means she can take personal credit for the work as it is hers alone.

While these participants refer explicitly to the trust between them and their managers there are also examples of implicit trust. Fifteen of the twenty-seven EE stories concern one-off projects or tasks outside of the usual day-to-day roles. Participants are chosen specifically for the work implying that the manager trusts their ability to succeed. The following extracts illustrate this implicit trust and how its nature varies. They are presented in an ascending order of the degree of trust. In the first extract, a project is underway to test a new product and Helen is asked to take responsibility for the test team:

Extract 5.4: Lines 1-3

Helen: *'...the project manager said, "Helen, you've had a lot of background in testing and managing a test team. Will you go over into that Portacabin and create some order and shape and make it happen?"*

The manager's reference to Helen's previous experience suggests it is a factor in trusting her with the job. The timing of the request and its phrasing provide additional clues about the parameters of Helen's contribution and the extent of her manager's trust. As the project is already established it seems unlikely that she is expected to contribute to that aspect. This inference is supported by the manager's use of a closed question requiring only a 'yes' or 'no' answer. The combination of *'managing'* and *'...create some order and shape...'* implies that Helen is being asked to do the same things as before; she is being trusted to apply her existing managerial skills in the same way to a new project. The extent of managerial trust appears limited to what Helen has done before.

In relation to EE behaviours, though Helen worked longer hours during this project (Extract 3.4), she does not describe examples of PI during EE. There is insufficient evidence to determine causality but it may be that the limitation on her manager's trust is connected with her behaviour during EE.

The next extract returns to Alex's project to train the South American students (Extract 1.18). He describes how his involvement came about:

Extract 5.5: Lines 1-3

Alex: '*I had to go and see* [board member] [...] *and he said, "We've got to deliver training to South Americans* [...] *Okay, how are we going to do that?"*

The board member's (BM) trust is implicit within the initial invitation and in his question to Alex. Like Helen's manager, BM appears to trust that Alex has the skills and experience to deliver the project. *Unlike* Helen's manager, BM invites Alex to contribute from the very start of the project and he uses an open question to encourage the sharing of ideas.

In relation to EE behaviours, this can be interpreted as an invitation to use PI and there is an implicit assurance that doing so is acceptable for this project. BM's use of the word *'we'* during the question may be interpreted in at least two ways. Firstly, it may further reduce any sense of risk as it implies that he is associating himself closely with the project and will share responsibility for its delivery. Alternatively, it may indicate a degree of control through that same close association with the work. Once again, although causality cannot be confirmed, the discovery that Alex '...*didn't properly follow due process...'* (Extract 3.24) is perhaps less surprising given BM's initial invitation and implied trust.

In the last extract, Zeb describes the extent of his line manager's trust when asked to run a change programme:

Extract 5.6: Lines 1-3

Zeb: '...*and we had* [Name] *as line manager who said, "Just do what you've got to do. Go ahead and do whatever you've got to do to achieve these particular goals* [...]". *We had a clear open road* [...].'

Zeb's manager invites him to do whatever needs to be done. Unlike Alex, Zeb is not required to explain in advance how he will deliver the project. He is simply trusted to go away and deliver. The only limit to his actions is the achievement of the corporate goals. This is another example of PI being

encouraged and Zeb later refers to how he and his team identify new ways to improve customer service.

While trust is most frequently identified between participants and their managers it is also implicit within EE stories involving teamwork (Extracts 2.14-2.15, 3.26-3.27). Participants trust their team colleagues to do their share of the work and act for the good of the team, even where those actions contradict corporate requirements. For example, Sean has a MyTeam referent for his experience (Extract 2.15). In his story of the continuing use of the old system (Extract 3.26-3.27) there is an inferred sense of trust between those colleagues. The team members must work together in secret to maintain the old database and trust each other to continue with the subterfuge.

In summary, trust plays an explicit and implicit role in participants' EE. For some, a manager's decision to trust them is the initiator of their involvement in the EE work. For others, trust provides a freedom to act whilst also providing the security of support should things go wrong. In each case it seems that trust is an enabler of EE and contributes to a sense of autonomy. The involvement of managers connects with the remaining CIQ which addresses the complex question of the comparative influences of agency and context.

CIQ2b) *Perception and agency vs the influence of contextual factors*

The evidence in this section draws on earlier extracts and fieldnotes to identify three cultural elements which create dilemmas and risk for participants who demonstrate PI during EE. Addressing these dilemmas requires the exercise of individual agency. What emerges from the findings is a complex interweaving of influences on EE mediated by participants' perception. The findings begin with contextual factors before moving to perception and agency.

Managers

GovDep managers feature in participants' EE stories as both a positive and negative influence. On the positive side, some managers contribute to what makes EE work meaningful. Dana and Xanthe's managers, for example, are referents for their EE experiences (Extracts 2.11-2.13). Other managers

provide positive recognition for EE work (Extracts 2.28 and 5.5), opportunities for EE by entrusting participants with special projects (Extracts 5.4-5.6) and/or a safety net of support in case things go wrong (Extracts 2.12-2.13 and 5.1-5.2 and 5.5). Where participants feel trusted they talk about being able to act freely, make decisions and control their own work; all actions associated with autonomy and PI ((Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti *et al.* 2001*;* Frese *et al.* 1996; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Sztompka 1999; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2007).

On the negative side there is evidence that GovDep managers may add to the risks of engagement (Kahn 2010) through their interpretation of WLH and PI. In relation to WLH physical presence is interpreted as EE and prioritised over the emotional and cognitive elements (Extracts 3.9-3.11 and 3.23). This may increase the likelihood that individuals feel pressured to work extra hours (e.g. Extracts 3.8, 4.2) leading to cognitive and affective withdrawal from work (e.g. Extract 3.8) and the loss of engagement (Schaufeli and Salanova 2011; Taris *et al.* 2010).

In relation to PI, there is evidence of managers penalising participants for contravening GovDep's formal processes (Extract 4.3) and for challenging or speaking up (Extracts 4.4, 4.8) (Kahn 1990; 1992; Kassing *et al.* 2012). This is, perhaps, unsurprising given that managers are required to use the behavioural descriptors as criteria for assessing staff performance (PM Handbook 2011c). The constraints on challenge are particularly strong within the descriptors and, when combined with the evidence below, indicate the existence of a 'no-challenge' norm as part of GovDep's organizational culture (Cooke and Szumal 1993; Schein 1992).

Cultural norms and values

The three cultural elements which feature in participants' EE experiences emerged from a combination of the interviews and fieldwork.   The first is an established 'no-challenge' norm. The second and third elements are deep-seated values which feature within MyDuty referents and as two of GovDep's four corporate goals: 'safety of mariners' and 'naval defence'.

The norm and the values are opposing influences on participants' EE. The risks associated with breaching the no-challenge norm may influence individuals *away* from EE and, in particular, from displaying PI. In contrast, the values may influence individuals *towards* EE through the emotional and cognitive connection with personal identity. Put simply, they pull in opposite directions.

The evidence for the no-challenge norm is taken from fieldnotes concerning a staff conference and a series of follow-up workshops. The events are part of GovDep's strategy to increase EE (People Strategy 2011b) through actively involving staff in the Corporate Plan 2012 (CP12). Zeb refers to CP12 and the forthcoming conference in his interview. He characterises both as '...*dry and boring...*' and contrasts them unfavourably with the importance of doing work which contributes to '...*ships' safety at sea*' (Extract 2.27). The latter is Zeb's 'MyDuty' referent for his EE experience. It is also a corporate objective within CP12 which is the subject of the conference. In spite of this apparent overlap between Zeb's referent and CP12, he refers disparagingly to both the plan *and* the conference. In this case it seems that *doing* meaningful work takes priority over *talking about* meaningful work.

Conference attendees receive an invitation letter signed by GovDep's CEO. The letter explains the conference' aim in words which reflect the content of the People Strategy (2011b):

Extract 5.7: Lines 1-3

> *'...to enable a more "bottom up" collaborative approach. To enable people to voice their ideas and be listened to and share in the decisions of how we deliver our goals.'* (Conference invitation letter 11/11)

This appears to be an unequivocal invitation to contribute towards GovDep's corporate plan and it provides reassurance that contributions are welcome. There are, however, certain limitations on contributions which are implicit within the wording. Although attendees will be *'listened to'* the extent of any influence is narrowed to a '*share*' in '*how*' GovDep delivers its corporate goals. In other words, ideas should concentrate on implementation rather than the formulation

of the corporate plan. Contributions are welcome but only within certain parameters.

Having been alerted to the conference by Zeb, I arrange to attend as an observer. I arrive early and find a seat at the back of the room. The fieldnote begins with a description of the room layout:

Extract 5.8: Lines 1-5

> *'People sit around tables in small groups of up to six. Each table has a facilitator who is equipped with a large felt tip pen and sheets of flipchart paper. Everyone is able to see the conference speakers on the stage and talk face to face with the others at their table. The layout implies that participation is on the cards.'*
> (Fieldnote 22/11/11: 09.35)

The first speaker, Robert, is a longstanding member of GovDep's board. He begins by explaining the purpose of the conference before adding:

Extract 5.9: Lines 1-2

Robert: '*I am inviting challenge about what we are doing and I see this as the first of a series of face to face meetings.*'
> (Fieldnote 22/11/11)

Whereas the room layout *implies* an opportunity to participate, Robert's opening statement and the CEO's letter are both explicit invitations to contribute ideas and challenge, now and in the future. Together these three factors appear to promise an opportunity for active input; albeit within certain parameters. Unfortunately, the fieldnotes reveal that even this promise remains unfulfilled:

Extract 5.10: Lines 1-4

> *'For three hours speakers take it in turns to talk 'at the room' or to their PowerPoint slides projected onto the screen behind them. No-one allows time for discussion; no- one asks for questions and the facilitators sit playing with their pens.'* (Fieldnote 22/11/11 16.30)

These extracts illustrate a discrepancy between the intent behind the conference and what subsequently transpires. On the one hand, attendees are encouraged to contribute (and challenge) and, on the other, no speaker allows time for this to happen. Meanwhile, there is the constant backdrop of the behavioural descriptors (PM Handbook 2011c). Even if speakers allowed time for participation and/or challenge there is an underlying risk for anyone who chooses to do so.

The day after the conference, the organiser asks me to stay away from the smaller follow-up workshops; as a *'stranger'* to GovDep, my *'sitting at the back'* may inhibit attendees' contributions' (Fieldnote 23/11/11 17.00).   I am, however, allowed to speak with anyone attending the workshops and with the middle managers who act as workshop facilitators.

In April 2012, a month after the workshops begin, I join a meeting of these facilitators as they review progress. At the very start of the meeting the conversation turns to attendees' behaviour:

Extract 5.11: Lines 1- 14

Belinda: *'Honestly, you should have heard what one chap on my table was saying. He's* [...] *really anti CP12.* [...] *he managed to turn all the others against it as well. He was saying how this is all a waste of time and is nothing to do with what GovDep should be about.'*

Emma: *'I had someone like that as well... on a different day. I told him that his behaviour wasn't right but he didn't stop…'*

Lyn: *'Yeah, his behaviour was completely inappropriate and we should tell* [name - his boss] *to speak with him. We can't have people behaving like that.'*

RB: '*What did he say then?'*

E: *'Well, it was all negative about the* [Corporate] *plan and how it's not what GovDep is for; not about charts ...'*

L: *Yes, we must get* [name - manager] *to deal with him. So how are we going to ensure that this sort of reaction doesn't come to dominate the view of the plan?'* (Fieldnote 4/4/12 12.00)

In an echo of Zeb's earlier comment (Extract 2.27), the two workshop attendees speak out against CP12 arguing that it is not *'what GovDep should be about'*. Whether these individuals were engaged is unclear but both appear to be acting on Robert's invitation to challenge (Extract 5.9). Nevertheless, their behaviour is viewed negatively by the manager-facilitators to the extent that the second individual is to be reported to his manager with a view to disciplinary action. This reaction appears more in line with the behavioural descriptors than with the invitation to challenge.

Six weeks later I meet informally with Beth. She tells me about her experience at another of these workshops; this time for managers. She describes what happens when a senior manager on her table provides feedback to the EE 'Strategy Lead' who calls in at the end of the workshop:

Extract 5.12: Lines 1-14

Beth: *'…[name-Strategy Lead] came in at the end to take some feedback, literally 5 minutes at the end so…you thought, "Well that's not really too much time."* [...] *A senior manager in there very, very tactfully said, "Oh, I think maybe people need to be a bit more educated in how this is actually going to work, we haven't had any information* [...] *I'd just like a little bit more detail", and* [Strategy Lead] *went…, "Thank you for your feedback, we'll take it on-board"* [sing-song voice]*. She didn't even write it down! And you're thinking, "Well you could at least write it down!"'*

RB *'So you weren't convinced?'*

B: *'It was literally legs crossed, drinking a cup of tea "Thank you for your feedback. Next question!"* [Mimics position and uses sarcastic tone] *And you can see people just going, "Oh there's no point."* [Rolls eyes] *So then no-one really bothered to say anything* [else].'

(Fieldnote 16/5/12 10.00)

Beth interprets a number of factors as signs of disinterest or disapproval towards the senior manager's intervention. Firstly, there is the length of time allowed for feedback. Secondly, no note is taken of the senior manager's

comments so there is no record of what has been said. Finally, Beth interprets the Strategy Leads' posture and tone of voice as an attempt to cut off further comment. In this case, it seems to work as no-one else provides any further input.

Although it is not possible to identify the senior manager as engaged, there is, again, evidence of a contradiction between the ostensive purpose of the workshop and the way in which his comments are received.   In addition, whereas the manager-facilitators judged staff harshly for speaking up, in this case the speaker is a senior manager who talks *'...very, very tactfully'*.
The 'who' and 'how' of challenge seems to make no difference to the reaction to that behaviour.

Although GovDep's EE strategy (Extracts 5.7-5.10) contains an intention towards participation and challenge, the opportunity to do so is limited to within certain parameters (Extract 5.7; PM Handbook 2011c) and in practice (Extracts 5.10-5.11). Those who act on the new intention are ignored or risk disapproval, regardless of seniority (Extracts 4.4, 4.8, 5.11- 5.13). One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the existence of an established 'no-challenge' norm. This is formalised within the behavioural descriptors (PM Handbook 2011c) and reflected in the behaviour of those delivering the CP12 events (Extracts 5.11-5.12). Individuals who act in accordance with the EE strategy experience the consequences of the inconsistency between the established norm and the new intention.

In a final extract related to these events, Andrew provides an example of how this inconsistency influences his behaviour. He also illustrates the complex interplay of individual and organizational factors influencing EE. He refers to the experience of two team colleagues who attended one of the CP12 workshops. Both return to the office angry at the negative reaction to their input; it seems they also experienced the 'no-challenge' norm. Andrew then decides not to attend any of the subsequent workshops:

Extract 5.13: Lines 1-8

Andrew: *'Um…I'm glad I didn't go because I'd probably be more upset than they are. So…even those sorts of things that are done with good intentions…I'm not going to go to those* [workshops] *because I'm going to* [...] *crack on with what I'm doing.'*

RB: *'So your focus, really, is your day-to-day work?'*

A: *'Yeah.* [...] *the positive thing is what I give our customers.* [...] *in my case, it's a bloke* [sic] *on a ship and um…yeah, that's what gives…if I get any pleasure from my job that's what it is.'*

Although Andrew acknowledges the positive intent behind the workshops this is insufficient to encourage him to attend. He identifies two factors which influence his decision to stay away; one negative and one positive. First, is his concern about becoming *'upset'* in a similar way to his colleagues; he perceives a risk in attending the workshop which he wishes to avoid. Although the upset will be Andrew's, it is associated with the workshop and the no-challenge norm. Second, like Zeb (Extract 2.27), the opportunity to contribute to CP12 is of less value than Andrew's EE referent. He prefers, instead, to focus on what makes the work meaningful, i.e. his RN customers: '*a bloke* [sic] *on a ship'*. It is not possible to determine which of these two factors is more significant yet it is clear that both contextual and individual factors influence the potential for Andrew's engagement.

In contrast to the negative influence of the 'no- challenge' norm, there is evidence that 'safety of mariners' and 'naval defence' are organizational values which positively influence participants' towards EE. References to both occur implicitly and explicitly throughout the extracts (e.g. 1.1, 1.12-1.13, 2.21-2.27, 4.6, 5.11, 5.13). As 'MyDuty' referents they are accompanied by signs of strong emotion and prioritised over less esteemed aspects of GovDep (Extracts 2.21-2.23, 2.26-2.27, 5.13). The frequency of reference and emotional response both support the inference that these are strongly held values and part of GovDep's organizational culture (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Cooke and Szumal1993; Ortner 1973; Schein 1992). They are also two of GovDep's public tasks (GovDep 2013b) and half of the strategic objectives (GovDep 2013a). There is,

therefore, a partial fit between participants' values and the corporate goals. Where the work connects with these 'hydrographic' values it appears more likely that participants will invest emotionally, cognitively and physically in that work (Kahn 1990).

Finally, the extracts for the cultural elements raise further questions. For example, if the no-challenge norm influences against PI behaviours then what accounts for participants demonstrating them during EE, e.g. Extracts 3.21, 3.23, 3.26, 4.4, 4.6-4.7? Likewise, if the hydrographic values influence *towards* EE then what accounts for participants' disengagement from work which ostensibly supports or connects with the corporate goals (e.g. Extracts 1.25-1.41, 3.8, 3.12-3.14)? One solution to these paradoxes lies in the role of perception and agency within EE; issues considered in the final paragraphs of this section.

Perception and agency

The extent to which the cultural elements and other factors influence EE appears to depend on their salience, i.e. participants' perception of their subjective importance and relevance to the situation at the time (Ashforth 2001; Ashforth *et al.* 2008). Acting on these perceptions involves individual agency; with some participants choosing to behave in ways which expose them to risk of disadvantage or harm. Perception and agency are further illustrated by reference to trust and meaningful work.

In the case of trust, participants have a *sense* of trust; a perception of being trusted and of the trustworthiness of others (e.g. Extracts 2.12, 3.23, 3.27, 5.1-5.6). Trust is anticipatory as it concerns expectations about the future behaviour of others (Chugtai and Buckley 2008; Sztompka 1999). Participants who perceive their managers as trustworthy (e.g. Extracts 2.12, 5.1-5.2) have an *expectation* of future support should things go wrong. This expectation provides reassurance and reduces the sense of risk associated with acting autonomously and/or PI. Likewise, participants who feel trusted by their managers (Extracts 2.12, 5.1-5.7) experience a sense of freedom to act without any of the usual constraints and without the need to check for managerial

approval (e.g. Extract 3.16). In both cases, it is the *perception* of trust which provides reassurance (Christian *et al.* 2008; Kahn 1990; Macey and Schneider 2008; Reychav and Sharkie 2010; Saks 2008).

It seems that participants may choose to contravene the no-challenge norm where the perception of trust is more salient than the risks associated with speaking up or challenging. For example, Dana takes considerable risk in challenging the decision of a GovDep board member (Extract 3.23) but appears safe in the knowledge that her boss will back her up. Put differently, her perception of his trustworthiness is more salient than the risks of breaching the no-challenge norm.

Paradoxically, while the perception of trust provides reassurance it also involves risk. This is because there is no guarantee that others will behave in the desired or expected way or that the perception is accurate (Sztompka 1999). Alex provides an example of this in his second EE experience (Extracts 4.4-4.6). In the South American project he feels trusted and is encouraged to offer ideas (Extract 5.5). Later, when he acts in a similar way to produce the TNA, he is penalised for challenging senior managers (Extract 4.6) and realises, too late, that his perception of trust was incorrect:

Extract 5.14: Lines 1-4

Alex: *'I thought I was trusted...I just needed somebody to give me that trust, to say, "You're the* [designation], *you know what needs to be done so make it happen",* [...] *If you haven't got that top level cover ....I now feel I was quite exposed.'*

Although misplaced, Alex's original sense of trust provided reassurance about undertaking work beyond that required by his manager. Like Dana, his perception of trust was more salient than the risks associated with breaching the no-challenge norm. Trust is therefore a key factor in Alex's original decision to undertake the TNA; work which he perceived as meaningful.   With the benefit of hindsight, he now recognises the increased risk of challenging without trust.

In relation to meaningful work, this is at the heart of participants' EE (Extracts 1.12 – 1.24). It involves a combination of short and longer term factors. The former all concern making a connection with others for the duration of the EE work, i.e. '*making a difference*' (Extracts 1.16-1.18, 1.20) or '*doing something worthwhile*' (Extracts 1.12-1.15) with the potential for positive recognition (Extracts 1.19-1.26). In contrast, the longer term 'EE referents' show greater variation between participants. The exact combination of short and longer term factors which equate to 'meaningfulness' varies between participants. Recognising the presence of those factors within the work relies upon individual perception.

Andrew's story of the review meeting (Extract 4.7) provides an additional example of perception and salience in relation to meaningful work. When he questions the accuracy of the graphic he prioritises his MyCustomer referent over the risks of speaking up. Meaningfulness is more salient than risk. After the reprimand from a senior manager he reconsiders. At future meetings he decides to put that part of himself '*...to one side...*' (Extract 4.9) and remain quiet. Risk has subsequently become the more salient perception and Andrew chooses not to engage.

This example also illustrates the complex interweaving of context and agency. Clearly influenced by contextual factors, Andrew nevertheless exercises agency in *choosing* to stay quiet. On the one hand, he is conforming to the 'no-challenge' norm yet he does it in a way which contradicts GovDep's EE strategy (People Strategy 2011b).

Other participants demonstrate agency through discretionary behaviour which exceeds GovDep requirements (Extracts 3.1-3.7 and 3.16-3.20) and/or acting in ways which expose them to potential harm (Extracts 3.21, 3.23- 3.26, 4.3-4.4). In examples of disengagement participants act against GovDep's EE strategy (People Strategy 2011b) by withdrawing cognitively, emotionally or physically from the work. Finally, there is the example of Michelle who consciously differentiates herself and her work from GovDep as a corporate entity (Extract 2.10). Rather than being constrained by organizational requirements these

participants exercise agency, even in the face of personal risk. It appears that individual agency plays a significant role in EE with participants acting in accordance with their most salient perception.   However, as illustrated by Andrew, the process is far from straightforward. The most salient perception may be of a contextual factor and may alter over time according to the situation.

Summary

This chapter has presented the findings in relation to the RQs and CIQs. For RQ1 and its associated CIQs, the findings show that participants understand and experience EE as a combination of active emotions, positive thoughts and proactive behaviours in the form of WLH and PI. Participants engage with work which is perceived as meaningful; it has utility or positively influences others and provides the opportunity to receive positive recognition. Meaningful work also connects with aspects of personal identity, people and/or values which participants identify as important. These EE referents are long lasting; existing prior to and enduring beyond the EE experience. During engagement, participants describe discretionary behaviour which includes acting beyond the requirements of GovDep. This places them at risk, particularly where their behaviour is interpreted differently by managers, and provides evidence of a 'dark side' to EE (Bakker *et al.* 2011a: 17).

For RQ2 and its CIQs, the findings show the influence of contextual factors on EE. These include trust, managers and three cultural elements specific to GovDep. Overall, EE is created and maintained through a complex interaction between participants and their environment which is mediated by perception and salience. How these findings relate to the extant literature is discussed in the final chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER 6
DRAWING TO A CLOSE

Introduction

This final chapter brings the thesis to a close. The conclusions and other insights are discussed in three sections related to the past, present and future of EE research. Looking back, Section 1 applies the study conclusions to the RQs/CIQs and discusses them in relation to the extant literature (Bryman 2004; Emerson *et al.* 1995; Saunders *et al.* 2003), including articles published since the review chapters were completed (Silverman 2005). Section 2 clarifies the contributions in relation to current theory and practice before acknowledging the study limitations. Finally, Section 3 looks to the future and identifies implications for EE research and practice.

Section 1:   Looking Back

The aim of the current study was to describe and explain the experience of individual EE within GovDep, a small UK civil service department. The review of literature identified aspects of EE which required further investigation (see Table 7). These were incorporated into the RQ Framework (below):

Table 8: RQ Framework

Research Questions (RQs)	Central Issues Questions (CIQs)
1. How do individuals understand and experience EE?	a) With what do individuals engage? b) What is the scope and focus of engaged behaviour? c) What are the potential disadvantages of EE?
2. How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?	a) What is the role of trust? b) What is the role of perception and individual agency compared with the role of contextual factors (e.g. managers, cultural norms and values)?

The framework was used to structure Chapter 5 and a number of conclusions have already been drawn about how the findings address the RQs/CIQs (Emerson *et al.* 1995).

Appendix 2 shows the relationship between the findings and conclusions. This section continues by using the RQ framework one last time to summarise and discuss the themes from the findings in relation to the literature from the review chapters (Emerson *et al.* 1995; Saunders *et al.* 2003; Silverman 2005). The section concludes with a model which illustrates the role of perception and provides a more holistic perspective on the experience of EE.

RQ1) How do individuals understand and experience EE?

Participants understood and experienced EE as a combination of positive thoughts, active emotions and changes in work behaviour. Head, heart and hands (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995) were applied simultaneously to the EE work. It follows that the absence of one aspect would equate to an absence of EE (Kahn 1990).

This multi-faceted view of EE accords with the seminal articles and other literature (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Harter *et al.* 2002; Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; Shuck *et al.* 2011; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009) yet the context for the current study is different. Previous qualitative studies (e.g. Kahn 1990; Shuck *et al.* 2011) were undertaken in private sector organizations in the U.S whereas the current study took place in the civil service in the U.K. In spite of the suggested differences between the cultures of private and public sector organizations (Boardman *et al.* 2010; Hebson *et al.* 2002; Rayner *et al.* 2010) and between different countries (Giauque *et al.* 2011*;* Hofstede 1980; Trompenaars 1993), it seems that participants experienced and understood EE in a similar way to individuals in those earlier studies.

The second and most significant conclusion for this question concerns the central role of meaningful work. During EE, participants' emotions, thoughts and behaviour were concentrated on the work they were doing. The overall experience was evaluated in terms of the significance of that work for other people. Utility, influence and opportunity for positive recognition contributed to an interpretation of the EE work as '*meaningful'* (Extract 1.25). In contrast, work

during disengagement was 'meaningless' or 'pointless' and associated with a psychological, emotional and/or physical detachment from the situation. The multi-faceted nature of EE, combined with participants' evaluations of the experience and the contrasts with disengagement, led to the conclusion that meaningful work was essential to participants' engagement experiences. It was the focus of their combined energies and integral to the overall interpretation of EE as a positive experience.

Although meaningfulness features extensively in motivation studies (Fairlie 2011) its relationship with engagement is under-represented within EE literature (Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; Fairlie 2011; May *et al.* 2004). More often it is mentioned only briefly as one of many potential antecedents to EE and with limited consideration of what constitutes 'meaningfulness' (e.g. Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Jeung 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Saks 2006; 2008). Of the seminal articles only Kahn (1990) identifies meaningfulness as *essential* to engagement. Along with safety and availability, it is one of three '...*psychological conditions...*' (*ibid*: 695) which must be met before individuals will bring their whole selves to the work. In Kahn's study, meaningfulness involves a sense of doing something worthwhile and feeling valued. It was affected by contextual factors (Hackman and Oldham 1980) including the perceived quality of interactions with colleagues or clients (Shuck *et al.* 2011) and the potential for influence (Stryker and Burke 2000). The findings for RQ1 appear consistent with these attributes.

Following Kahn (1990), May *et al.* (2004) confirmed meaningfulness as the condition with the strongest connection to engagement. Since then only a limited number of articles have discussed the relationship between the two concepts (e.g. Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; Fairlie 2011; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). In their conceptual article, Chalofsky and Krishna (*ibid.*) recognise 'making a difference to others' as an ingredient of meaningful work and argue, like Kahn (1990; 1992), that without meaningfulness individuals cannot be engaged. Research published since Chapter 2 was finalised, identifies meaningfulness as a critical mediating factor between organizational factors and engagement

(Albrecht 2013). The overall conclusion about the centrality of meaningful work to participants' engagement is consistent with these studies.

If meaningful work was essential to participants' EE then it follows that the duration of the experience was tied to the duration of that work. Participants' EE experiences varied in length from a single telephone call through to projects which took a number of months to complete. Whether participants were engaged continuously *throughout* the longer examples is uncertain yet in each case energies were invested during times when the work was meaningful. When the work stopped, e.g. when the call ended or when the project was completed, the focus for participants' energies and the opportunity to connect with others were gone and the experience of engagement ceased.

Although EE is more often recognised as a fluctuating psychological state (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Sonnentag 2003; Sonnentag *et al.* 2010) little is said about the '...time frames...' or duration of these fluctuations (Macey and Schneider 2008: 13). This may be another consequence of the predominant use of surveys (Reissner and Pagan 2013; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011) which are criticised for de-contextualizing the experience (Bakker *et al.* 2011; Demerouti *et al.* 2010; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1990). Without the interaction between the individual and organization (Kreiner *et al.* 2006) fluctuations in EE become difficult to measure. The conclusion that EE was tied to the duration of participants' meaningful work provides an additional insight which may be of interest in further research.

In sum, participants understood EE as a time-bound positive experience; one involving a combination of feelings, thoughts and behaviour concentrated on work made meaningful by its utility/influence and opportunities for positive recognition.

CIQ1a) With what do individuals engage?

Participants engaged with meaningful work. This early conclusion implied a single focus for EE and contrasts with earlier EE research (Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006). As evidence from other fields also shows individuals maintaining multiple perspectives on their employment (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Gorgievski and Hobfall 2008; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Purcell 2012), two further questions were raised to explore participants' interpretation of meaningfulness in greater depth. The findings for these questions enabled a number of more detailed conclusions to be drawn about the focus of participants' cognitive and affective engagement. These are presented in three themes: variety and variation; durability and depth; reward and recognition.

Variety and variation

Participants identified a variety of additional referents as important to their EE experiences. These included an intrinsic interest in the work (MyWork), other people (MyPeople) and a sense of duty (MyDuty). Each referent represented something personally valued. The extent to which the work connected with these referents contributed to the sense of meaningfulness.

Although participants were similar in identifying a *number* of referents there was variation in the exact combination involved in the EE experience. In addition, there was evidence that referents may vary *between* experiences. While utility/influence/recognition appeared consistent the referents differed according to what was personally valued. The individuality implied by this variety and variation added an additional layer of complexity to the content of EE.

As identified earlier, EE research is dominated by the use of surveys (Reissner and Pagan 2013; Shuck *et al.* 2011). In addition to decontextualizing the experience, these are criticised for an underlying assumption that individuals all react in the same way to their work context (Shuck and Wollard 2010; Kahn 1990; 1992). In contrast, studies using qualitative methods emphasise the individual nature of EE (Bakker and Bal 2010; Kahn 1990; Shuck *et al.* 2011; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2009). The evidence from the current study supports the

latter; participants' EE experiences were manifested in a similar way yet there were individual differences in the referents for meaningful work.

Durability and depth

The referents included factors which pre-existed and endured beyond the EE experience. Participants displayed and described deep emotions indicative of the referent's importance (Ashforth *et al.* 2008). With MyDuty referents, this was emphasised further by participants justifying and prioritising them over less valued aspects of GovDep. The combination of durability, depth of emotion and justification is indicative of deeply held values and beliefs (Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Ortner 1973).

Enduring values and beliefs are associated with both commitment (Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Meyer and Allen 1991) and identification (Ashforth 2001 in Kreiner *et al.* 2006; Augoustinos and Walker 1995; Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Edwards 2005; Kreiner *et al.* 2006; Kahn 1990) and it appears that the referents encompass these two concepts. Commitment and identification would seem to play a part in participants' engagement experiences.

The EE literature accepts a connection between commitment and engagement (Christian *et al.* 2011; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck *et al.* 2013; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). Identity and identification are also accepted as dimensions of EE (Bakker *et al.* 2008; Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006). In both cases opinions differ about whether these concepts are antecedents or consequences of EE (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Saks 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Viljevac *et al.* 2012).

The conclusion from this study accords with a third view within the literature. This proposes that both concepts pre-exist *and* play a part within engagement (Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008). In a conceptual article published since the review chapter was written, Shuck *et al.* (2013) expand this

view to speculate that commitment, satisfaction and involvement are *all* ingredients within EE.

Macey and Schneider (*ibid.*) further suggest that commitment and identification are focussed on the *organization* as a single corporate entity. This is a point of divergence for the current study. Rather than the corporate whole, referents reflected only those aspects of GovDep which were important to participants, e.g. customers, mariner safety, while other corporate aspects were actively rejected. The EE work was meaningful only insofar as it connected participants with what was personally valued.

Reward and recognition

No participant identified financial reward or instrumental factors as important to their EE experiences. Instead, positive recognition and feeling valued by others were recurring themes. Rather than being driven by extrinsic reward (Deci and Ryan 1985 in Meyer and Gagné 2008), it seems the EE experiences reflected theories of intrinsic motivation which include recognition and the work itself amongst other motivators (Chalofsky 2003; Hollyforde and Whiddett 2002). This conclusion contrasts with the sociological perspective of instrumentality (Haralambos and Heald 1985; Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968; 1969; Mills 1951). As the current study concerns only experiences of EE, there is insufficient evidence to infer a complete absence of instrumentality or extrinsic motivation amongst all participants.

While it seems counter-intuitive to suggest the simultaneous presence of intrinsic *and* extrinsic motivations there are at least three explanations for such a possibility found within sociological and psychological research. First, as an attitude (Goldthorpe *et al.*1968), instrumentality may fluctuate over time and in relation to the situation (Augoustinos and Walker 1995; Kahn 1990; Little and Little 2006; Mullins 2007). Consequently, although participants may work at GovDep for instrumental reasons, their EE experiences may occur when that instrumentality is less salient. Alternatively, participants might simply have been exhibiting the solidaristic orientation described by Goldthorpe *et al.* (1968) in their Luton studies.

Finally, as previously mentioned, there is evidence that individuals can simultaneously hold multiple perspectives on their employment; even when those perspectives appear contradictory (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Ashforth *et al.* 2008; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Rothbard 2001; Saks 2006). Whatever the explanation, instrumentality was not an explicit factor in participants' EE.

In sum, participants engaged with work which was meaningful. Although this implies a single focus for EE, meaningfulness involved a range of referents which endured beyond the more immediate experience of engagement. Engaging with the work enabled participants to connect with what they valued and experience an alignment between personal and work identities (Chalofsky 2003; Kahn 1990; 1992; Kreiner *et al.* 2006).

CIQ1b) What is the scope and focus of engaged behaviour?

This question refers to two limitations to EE behaviour. For the scope, the issue is whether EE behaviour involves only in-role activities, i.e. doing the day-to-day work better (Newman and Harrison 2008; Purcell 2012; Saks 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 2010; Shuck and Wollard 2010) or whether it involves only extra-role activities which go beyond the requirements of the work role (Macey and Schneider 2008).

The focus of engaged behaviour concerns its object: whether it is always and intentionally directed towards corporate objectives (Harter *et al.* 2002; Macey and Schneider 2008) or whether there are alternative goals (Halbesleben 2011). The conclusions for each aspect are presented separately.

Scope

Participants described a range of behaviours during EE. The two most common (PI and WLH) were discretionary as they were not a requirement of employment at GovDep. Both behaviours were accompanied by the positive thoughts and active emotions said to signify an experience of engagement (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Harter *et al.* 2002; Kahn 1990; 1992; Macey and Schneider 2008; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; Shuck *et al.* 2011; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009).

Two conclusions flowed from these findings. Firstly, participants' EE behaviour was not limited in scope to either in-role or extra-role, i.e. discretionary, activities. Instead, they worked better in-role (Saks 2008) *and* undertook extra-role activities (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). Secondly, WLH/PI were integral to participants' EE. Put simply, they were the physical (hands) element of the experience. This contrasts with suggestions that discretionary behaviours such as OCB and PI, are a separate consequence of emotional and psychological engagement (Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.* 2011; Macey and Schneider 2008; Saks 2008).   It is, however, consistent with the idea that EE involves individuals bringing *all* of their energies, simultaneously, to the work (Christian *et al.* 2011; Kahn 1990; Rich *et al.* 2010).

Focus

The conclusions for the focus of engaged behaviour return to the centrality of meaningful work to participants' EE experiences. Participants focussed their behaviour towards the EE work and the referents which made it meaningful. Consequently, any corporate outcome depended on an alignment between those referents and the organizational goals. The most obvious match was between MyDuty referents and GovDep's two non-commercial public tasks: safety of mariners and RN support. Those tasks, however, represented only one part of GovDep's overall strategy and some participants were openly critical of other corporate goals.

EE literature which draws on P-E fit (Maslach and Leiter 1997 in Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Saks and Gruman 2011) or psychological climate (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b) refer to the importance of a match between the individual and their work environment. In a variation, Kahn (1990; 1992) refers to the importance of congruence between behaviours required by the organization and those valued by the individual. Where the required behaviours match how an individual likes to see themselves, they are more likely to engage and vice versa (Brown and Leigh 1996; Chatman 1989; Macey and Schneider 2008; May *et al.* 2004). MyDuty referents appeared to align partially with GovDep's goals yet there were important differences related to other corporate

goals and the extent to which participants' EE behaviour adhered to GovDep's requirements.

The incidental and partial nature of participants' corporate contribution differs from the idea that EE behaviour is always '...strategically focussed in the service of organizational objectives...' (Macey and Schneider 2008:19; Shuck and Wollard 2010). Instead, participants appeared similar to NHS managers who were found to maintain contradictory perspectives towards their employment favouring some corporate aspects over others (Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Purcell 2012).

Participants openly acknowledged that they contravened GovDep's procedures and/or contradicted organizational goals during EE. They knowingly risked organizational penalties for what was personally valued about the work; meaningfulness outweighed other factors. Although this appears contrary to the psychological condition of safety (Kahn 1990; 1992; May *et al.* 2004), Kahn (1990) suggested that individuals may prioritise between the conditions and recommended further research. Other authors also speculate that individuals may select engaging activities over those with less personal allure (George 2011; Halbesleben 2011). Both of these speculations appear to be supported in the conclusions for this question.

In summary, participants' EE behaviour was not limited in scope to either in-role or extra-role. Rather than GovDep's corporate or strategic goals participants directed their behaviour towards the EE work and the referents which contributed to its meaningfulness. In some instances they also contravened GovDep's procedures/protocols. This, in turn, meant an increased risk of potential disadvantages.

CIQ1c) What are the potential disadvantages of EE?
The potential disadvantages were considered in relation to WLH and PI. The findings showed that both behaviours were related to potential disadvantages yet, where participants acted with a sense of autonomy, the EE experience was still viewed as positive. The most significant disadvantages came, instead, from

managerial or corporate attempts to control the two behaviours (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1990; 1992).

With WLH, the additional working time encroached on some personal relationships. With PI, participants risked organizational penalties by questioning the way things were done and/or working outside of GovDep procedures. What unites these examples is the element of choice. Participants *chose* to do extra hours and *chose* to speak up or contravene GovDep's procedures. Exercising choice implies a sense of autonomy which is frequently identified as a contributory factor in EE (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti *et al.* 2001*;* Kahn 1990; Maslach and Leiter 2008*;* Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli and Salanova 2007b; Xanthopoulou *et al*. 2007). Choice has also been identified as a factor in reducing the harmful effects of long working hours (Schaufeli and Salanova 2011; Taris *et al*. 2010). Overall, in spite of the potential disadvantages, participants defended their decisions and downplayed any adverse consequences. EE was viewed as a positive experience regardless of any risks.

What participants could not choose were the interpretation and actions of GovDep managers towards their EE behaviours. Corporately and managerially WLH and PI were interpreted very differently. The physical presence of WLH was interpreted as EE and viewed positively. This is a disadvantage when WLH becomes a *requirement* for all staff, all of the time and regardless of the meaningfulness of the work. Evidence for this included the interpretation of standard hours as *disengagement*, the absence of overtime payments for EE work and subtle pressure for hours to be increased beyond contractual obligations. The last two aspects appear in the literature as potential disadvantages of EE (George 2011; Maslach 2011; Rees *et al*. 2013). Participants in the current study experienced both.

Whereas WLH met with managerial approval, the 'speaking up' aspect of PI was characterised negatively as 'challenge'. It met with formal (PM Handbook 2011c) and informal disapproval. Two participants who openly questioned the

way things were done were subsequently disciplined by managers. In both cases their good intentions were interpreted negatively.

Kahn (1990) suggests that engaged individuals are more likely to question organizational processes and may be disciplined by managers who interpret the behaviour as threatening the status quo (Kahn 1992; Kahn 2010; Shorris 1981 in Kahn 1992). More recently, Kassing *et al.* (2012) found that employees and managers viewed challenge very differently. Employees raised issues with their bosses as a reflection of their commitment/identification with the organization. In contrast, managers saw all forms of dissent as disloyalty and stayed quiet about any concerns (*ibid.*). The findings from the current study reflect similar differences.

The final conclusion for CIQ1c is speculative and makes a connection with broader sociological debates beyond the immediate focus of the study. GovDep was trying to increase EE (People Strategy 2011b) while managers attempted to control WLH/PI to suit corporate intentions (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Robertson and Cooper 2010). These combined actions echo historical concerns about attempts to turn employees into 'willing slaves' (Scott 1994 in Rees *et al.* 2013: 2793) or '...cheerful robots' (Mills 1951: 233). Reassuringly, the findings also show participants' made conscious choices about their engagement. Rather than the head, heart *and* hands, GovDep may be left with employees who are physically present but emotionally and cognitively *'away with the fairies'* (Extract 1.32). Additionally, when penalised for PI, individuals may simply choose not to repeat a negative experience (Crawford *et al.* 2010; Kahn 1990; 1992; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009) leaving GovDep without important EE behaviours (Macey and Schneider 2008; Kahn 1990; 1992; 2010; Kassing *et al.* 2012).

RQ2) How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?
This question concerns the process of EE; how contextual and other factors influenced participants' EE. The overall conclusion is that the creation and maintenance of EE resulted from a complex interweaving of contextual factors mediated by participants' perception. A simplified model of the process (Fig. 3)

is included towards the end of this section as an illustrative summary for both RQ1 and 2 and as an additional contribution to the field.

CIQ2a) What is the role of trust?

Trust played an implicit and explicit role in the creation and maintenance of EE through supporting participants' autonomy. Managers' trust provided opportunities to undertake challenging one-off projects and/or the freedom to act within the bounds of that trust. Trust also reduced the risks associated with PI behaviours through the expectation of support if things went wrong.

The EE literature contains references to both aspects. Managerial trust was identified by Macey and Schneider (2008) as an essential antecedent to behavioural engagement. Reychav and Sharkie (2010) found strong correlations between trust in management and extra-role behaviours in a process similar to that found in exchange theories (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Finally, Saks (2006) also refers to exchange theories with managerial trust a resource which individuals repay through engagement.

Although managerial trust featured strongly in some EE experiences there were also examples of trust in team colleagues. Additionally, participants withheld information from managers and/or knowingly contravened GovDep's requirements. These behaviours appear to undermine notions of EE as an exchange for managerial trust (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Macey and Schneider 2008; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002; Saks 2006). It would seem perverse to repay a manager's trust by behaving in a way which is likely to meet with their disapproval and, consequently, increase the level of personal risk.

Trust as support features as a factor within the psychological condition of safety (Kahn 1990; May *et al*. 2004). Although all three conditions are a requirement for engagement, Kahn (*ibid*.) speculated that engagement may still occur if one condition compensates for a relative lack in the others. For participants who contravened GovDep's procedures, the risk they faced was either not sufficient to prevent EE or the work's meaningfulness was simply prioritised. Additionally,

two participants seemingly acted on the basis of *misplaced* trust; believing they had support but discovering, too late, that this was untrue. These findings support the conclusion that participants acted in accordance with the most salient factor; an issue returned to in the final question.

CIQ2b) What is the role of perception and individual agency compared with the role of contextual factors?

Contextual factors influenced participants both towards and away from EE. The extent of that influence was mediated by perception. Where influencing factors pulled in opposite directions, participants appeared to act in accordance with the most salient perception (Ashforth 2001; Ashforth *et al.* 2008). In addition, participants were active agents in engagement making conscious and unconscious choices about how much of their energies to apply to the work.

Managers

GovDep managers played both a positive and negative role in influencing participants' EE. They supported it through trust and positive recognition for the EE work and undermined it through their attempts to control WLH and PI.

Harter *et al.* (2002) intimate that line managers are *the* most important factor in creating and maintaining individual EE. This is also the stance found within much of the practitioner literature (Delbridge and Jenkins 2013; Schaufeli and Bakker 2011; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009), including the civil service EE strategy (Cabinet Office 2007). If true, it might be expected that managers would appear more frequently as referents for EE. However, only two participants identified their boss as a referent. While manager's trust was an important factor it was also clear that its influence varied between participants and that other contextual factors were similarly important.

Cultural norms and values

Three cultural elements played a role in the creation and maintenance of participants' EE. The no-challenge norm influenced participants away from EE while the hydrographic values had the opposite effect. The values reflected part

of GovDep's organizational role providing a match between the MyDuty referent and some corporate goals.

A number of articles identify norms and values influencing EE (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Kahn 1990; 1992). In particular, where organizational and personal values match, EE is more likely to occur (Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach and Leiter 2008). The current study provides evidence in support of this suggestion and also identifies the nature of those values; an insight largely absent elsewhere. Further, the hydrographic values reflected only GovDep's public sector tasks rather than its commercial responsibilities (GovDep 2013b). Though specific to GovDep, these values may also reflect cultural differences between public and private sector organizations (Boardman *et al.* 2010; Hebson *et al.* 2002; Rayner *et al.* 2010). So, although participants' understood and experienced EE similarly to individuals' within private sector organizations (e.g. Kahn 1990; Shuck *et al.* 2010) its creation and maintenance may be indirectly affected by cultural elements beyond organizational boundaries (James *et al.* 2008; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Maslach *et al.* 2001).

Perception and individual agency

Perception mediated between contextual factors and EE and participants were active agents in the process. First, and foremost, the meaningfulness of the EE work depended upon participants' perception of its ability to connect with others and/or the EE referents. Where there was no meaning, participants distanced themselves from the work. If meaningful work was at the heart of participants' EE experiences, perception was the process which put it there. Second, participants' sense of trust supported EE by providing reassurance about the risks associated with PI behaviours.

When faced with a contradiction between influencing factors participants appeared to act in accordance with the most salient perception. Sometimes this led to actions which matched organizational goals. Where the hydrographic values were referents for EE, it could be argued that participants were merely conforming to GovDep's strategy and the organizational influence.
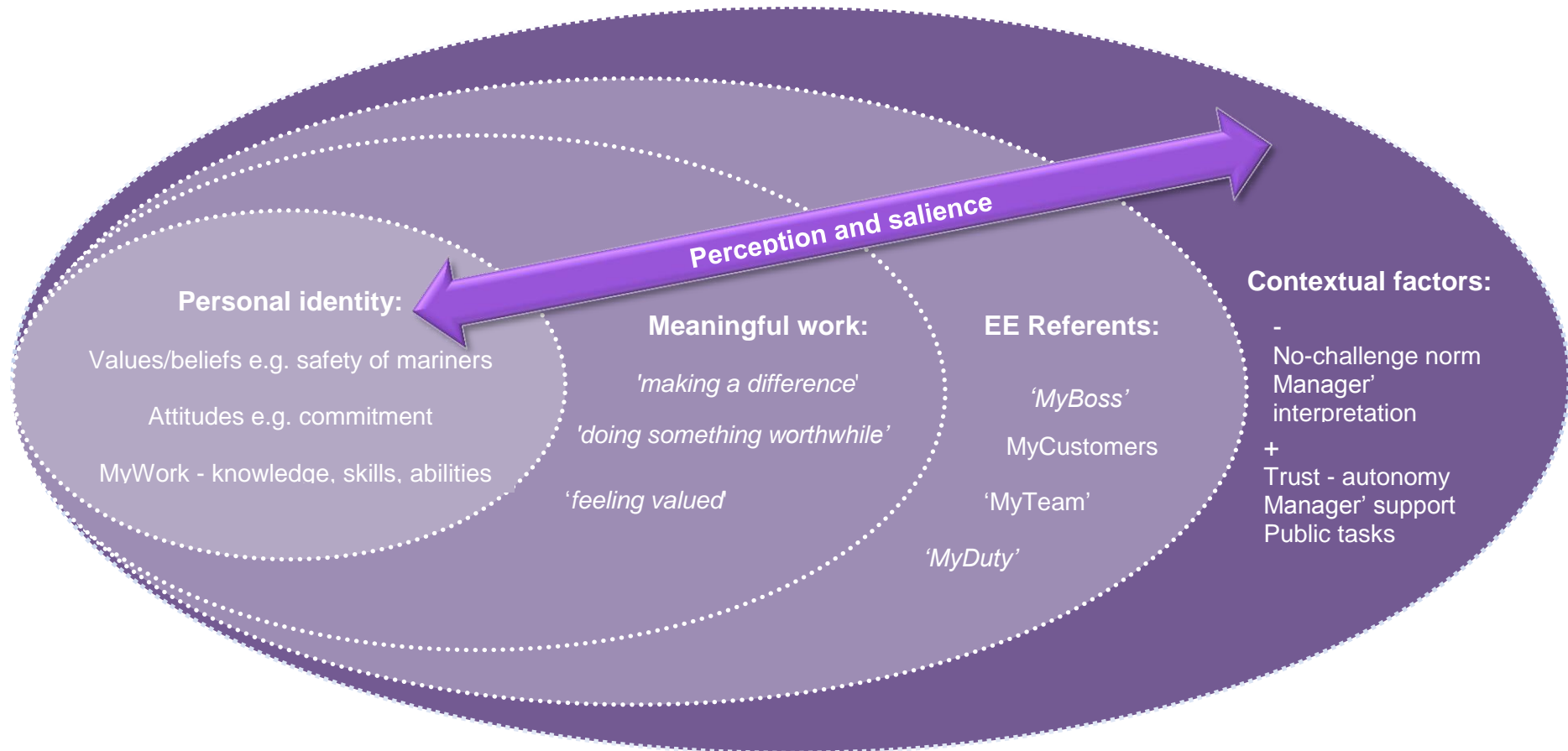
However, countering this is evidence of individual agency with some participants deliberately behaving in ways contrary to GovDep's processes and/or beyond the requirements of their role. In other words, though participants' values matched GovDep's goals they chose alternative ways to achieve those goals. Additionally, the 'MyWork' referent; a longstanding interest in the subject of the work, was not entirely dependent on employment at GovDep. These examples of agency are balanced by other evidence (e.g. Andrew and Alex) which illustrates a complex interaction between organizational and individual factors.

EE literature rarely refers to the role of perception and agency (Christian *et al*. 2010). The most direct references occur within conceptual articles drawing on theories from the field of work psychology. Psychological climate (PC) (Bakker *et al*. 2011a; 2011b; Shuck *et al*. 2010) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura 1989 in Zigarmi *et al.* 2009) both emphasise that individuals act in accordance with their perception of contextual factors (Bandura 1989 in Zigarmi *et al.* 2009; Brown and Leigh 1996; James and James 1989; James *et al*. 2008).

Research into PC suggests that individuals interpret organizational attributes as positive or negative in the light of what is personally valued. For some occupations these attributes include 'service to others' and the extent to which the organization meets those requirements (Burke *et al.* 1992 in James *et al*. 2008). Participants' prioritisation of the hydrographic values and other EE referents appears to reflect the process in PC. Although the connection between PC and EE has so far been speculative (Bakker *et al*. 2011a; 2011b), the current study provides evidence to support its role in the EE process.

By way of a summary for this section, Figure 3 (overleaf) draws on Ashforth *et al.*'s (2008) model of identification to illustrate the process of EE. The model synthesises the findings and conclusions from this study with the extant literature and clarifies the role of perception and salience within participants' EE.

Figure 3: EE and the role of perception

Perception and salience

Personal identity:

Values/beliefs e.g. safety of mariners

Attitudes e.g. commitment

MyWork - knowledge, skills, abilities

Meaningful work:

'making a difference'

'doing something worthwhile'

'feeling valued'

EE Referents:

'MyBoss'

MyCustomers

'MyTeam'

'MyDuty'

Contextual factors:

-
No-challenge norm
Manager'
interpretation

+
Trust - autonomy
Manager' support
Public tasks

The model shows the factors which influenced participants' EE experiences; from the proximal personal identity through to the more distal contextual factors. While reflecting EE only in the context of GovDep, it provides a more holistic perspective than the linear models presented elsewhere (e.g. Bakker and Demerouti 2008; Macey and Schneider 2008; Bakker and Leiter 2010).

The inner ring or core contains relatively stable aspects of participants' identity, including the MyWork referent and the hydrographic values which appear to be part of some participants' personal identity (Ashforth *et al.* 2008). As a '...whole person...' concept (Kahn 1992:331) individual bring their whole selves e.g. knowledge, skills, beliefs and values into the EE work (Christian *et al.* 2011; Demerouti and Bakker 2008 in Bakker *et al.* 2008; Maslach 2011; Maslach *et al.* 2001; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Zigarmi *et al.* 2010; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002).

The second ring is 'meaningful work' and includes the short-term connections which made it so. Engagement with this work involved the positive thoughts, active emotions and discretionary behaviours identified in the findings for RQ1. The third ring contains the more enduring EE referents. The use of the same colour signifies that meaningfulness more often (but not always) involved a combination of short and longer term attributes. For example, for someone with a MyCustomers referent, the work may be meaningful where it is perceived to 'make a difference' to those customers. It is the combination of the two factors which makes the work meaningful.

The final outer ring contains contextual factors which influenced participants towards or away from EE. This allows for the examples within the findings where participants exercise agency in choosing not to engage due to the salience of risk or negative consequences. The use of dotted lines throughout the model acknowledges the variability of individual EE, e.g. trust was also a factor within the 'MyBoss' and 'MyTeam' referents.

Perception and salience span all of the rings and go in both directions. When the work was perceived to connect with what was personally valued it was meaningful and participants applied all of their energies to it. In other words, engagement was the manifestation of the sense of meaningfulness (Chalofsky 2003). Finally, as participants' engagement was shown to fluctuate (Bakker and Bal 2010; Saks 2006; Sonnentag *et al.* 2010; Xanthopoulou *et al.* 2009), it follows that this process was continuous. Engagement ended when the work stopped or when it was no longer seen to be meaningful.

Section 2:   Looking to Now

The current study contributes to the field of EE research through both its conclusions and conduct. Judged by the extent to which they differ from the extant literature (Hammersley 1990) the most significant contributions are summarised in Table 12 (below):

Table 12:   Research contributions

Area	Contribution Aspect	Contribution Towards:
Theory	Centrality of meaningful work.	Debates concerning the content and process of EE.
	Role of perception and salience in the EE process.	
Methodology	Ethnographic design.	Understanding the role of cultural elements in influencing EE.
Analysis	Thematic analysis combined with narrative analysis techniques.	An alternative approach and perspective on studying the emic experience of EE.
Setting	GovDep – UK civil service trading fund	Understanding EE within an under-researched sector

Theory

Few EE studies have considered the role of meaningful work or how meaningfulness is determined within a specific organizational context (Chalofsky and Krishna 2009; Fairlie 2011; May *et al.* 2004; Rees *et al.* 2013). This study contributes to both aspects. The centrality of meaningful work and the identification of enduring EE referents contribute to questions concerning the focus of EE (Purcell 2012; Reissner and Pagan 2013; Saks 2006), its duration (Macey and Schneider 2008) and potential disadvantages (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; Bakker and Leiter 2010; George 2011; Halbesleben 2011; Maslach 2011; Rees *et al.* 2013; Sonnentag 2011). Specifically, the study provides evidence to support Kahn's (1990) speculation that individuals prioritise between the psychological conditions of engagement. Finally, Fig. 3 provides a new perspective on the EE process through the depiction of perception and salience mediating between identity and contextual factors.

Methodology and analysis

The literature refers to the need for greater attention to EE within specific organizational contexts (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rees *et al.* 2013; Shuck 2011). As an ethnographic study based in one organization the current study addresses that need and contributes towards a greater understanding of the role of cultural elements in EE.

In addition, EE research is dominated by the use of surveys (Pagan and Reissner 2013; Schaufeli and Salanova 2011) while the practitioner literature more often reflects a managerial perspective (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Maslach 2011; Robertson and Cooper 2010). Consequently, the voices of those experiencing EE are rarely heard (Shuck *et al.* 2011). The current study addresses these concerns through the use of interviews and a combination of thematic and narrative analysis techniques. No other studies were found to use this combination and the current study contributes an alternative approach to investigating the individual perspective on EE.

Setting

Chapter 2 identified two previous qualitative studies which explore the individual experience of EE in context (Kahn 1990; 1992; Shuck *et al.* 2011). Both use private sector organizations in the U.S. In contrast, the current study is based on a small U.K. government department. Moreover, GovDep is a trading fund; an organization staffed by civil servants yet required to fund itself through commercial activities (Cabinet Office 2012a). To date, no other academic study has considered individual EE within such a hybrid organization or, specifically, in GovDep. Given the evidence that organizational cultures vary between sectors and organizations (Hebson *et al.* 2002; James *et al.* 2008; Johns 2006; Rayner *et al.* 2010), the current study contributes a unique insight into the influence of contextual factors.

In summary, this study contributes towards a number of the debates within the EE field through its conclusions, methodology and unique research context. These contributions must also be seen in the light of the study limitations (Silverman 2005) and these are discussed next.

Limitations

It is acknowledged that the current study has a number of limitations. These began from the point at which choices were made about what and where to research and continued through to decisions about the presentation of the dissertation. The following paragraphs provide a brief reflexive account of these limitations (Brewer 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

Firstly, and particularly for those of a naive realist or positivist inclination (Brewer 2000), there are limitations associated with a UK civil servant researching other UK civil servants. Over thirty years' of working in various departments and agencies meant that I carried the knowledge and personal perceptions from those experiences with me into the field. No matter that GovDep was previously unknown to me; those earlier experiences influenced many aspects of the fieldwork including the interviews, analysis and interpretation. I cannot, therefore, claim to be an impartial observer (Brewer

2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Riessman 1993) and it follows that the findings and conclusions from the study are partial and selective.

Secondly, the overall design and conduct of the study also created limitations on generalizability. The literature reviews in Chapters 2 and 3 identified a need for research which takes account of the particularities of context (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Kahn 1992; Maslach *et al.* 2001; Rees *et al.* 2013; Shuck 2011). I chose to meet this need by conducting an in-depth study of EE within a small civil service department; an organizational setting which is neglected in the academic literature. An ethnographic case study using a small sample of participants limits the generalizability of the findings (Bryman 2004) and I make no claims beyond the bounds of the case. Nevertheless, the study contributes new perspectives on the extant literature and identifies implications for further EE research and practice (Silverman 2005).

The use of semi-structured interviews to elicit individual stories of engagement and disengagement also has limitations. There is the possibility that participants constructed artificial narratives to put themselves in the best possible light or that they were disingenuous or selective about their real feelings/beliefs or simply misremembered their experiences (Cortazzi 2007; Goffman 1959; Saunders *et al.* 2003). I took actions to mitigate these effects; building rapport with participants over the duration of the fieldwork, using multiple interviews and alternative data sources (Roulston 2010). There is, however, no fool-proof way to avoid these issues when using narratives as a source of data (Riessman 1993).

Finally, there is a practical limitation to the amount of evidence presented here. During the twelve month fieldwork I amassed a great deal of data: interview recordings, observational fieldnotes, official documents and my research journal; all seemingly relevant to the current study. When it came to writing the thesis I had to make difficult choices about what to include and what to leave out (Brewer 2000). Some of those choices were guided by relevance to the RQs/CIQs and the need to illustrate the themes from the analysis. Some were

undoubtedly guided by my personal background and experience. Regardless of objectivity or subjectivity, the evidence which appears here is a comparatively small amount of the total; yet again, a partial representation of the whole (Emerson *et al.* 1995). The unmined data remains a potential source for further research; a subject considered in the final section of this chapter.

This section has set out the contributions and limitations of the current study. In spite of the limitations, the study has addressed under-researched aspects of EE and made a number of important incremental contributions to the field. The final section considers the implications of the study for further research and for practice.

Section 3: Looking to the Future

This thesis has so far drawn on both practitioner and academic literature to illustrate the differences and similarities between the two. This dual perspective is continued in this final section with implications identified for both scholars and practitioners.

Future research

The limitations associated with an ethnographic case study (Bryman 2004) also provide a number of opportunities to extend the research into other organizations and business sectors. For example, the MyDuty referent incorporated two of GovDep's public tasks as values. This raises questions about a possible relationship between organizational sector and EE referents which could be explored further.

In contrast, the MyWork referent reflected participants' longstanding interest in the subject of their work. This appears to be context free as participants could find similar employment elsewhere. Drawing on the organizational identity field (Ashforth *et al.* 2008), future research could consider whether individuals with this referent are more likely to experience engagement and the extent to which they actively seek work in an environment which reflects that interest. Additionally, future research could address the possibility of a relationship

between EE referents and the social characteristics of individuals, e.g. age, gender, education, family status or seniority.

In relation to the process of EE, participants appeared to prioritise meaningfulness above the two other psychological conditions (Kahn 1990; 1992). For some, this meant risking managerial displeasure or disciplinary action. Again, future research could explore how the conditions apply within different contexts e.g. other sectors or other countries.

The corporate and managerial role in the disadvantages of EE raises concerns about the balance of power and authority between individuals and employers who seek to 'drive' increased engagement (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; George 2011). These concerns provide openings to break the sociological silence and explore EE through the lens of a more traditional sociological perspective (e.g. Braverman 1974 in Haralambos and Heald 1985; Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968; Mills 1951; Mullins 2007; Weber 1968 in Giddens 1971).

Finally, there is potential for further research to draw on the unmined data of the current study. Word-count limitations mean that a considerable amount of fieldwork data is available for future analysis.

Implications for practice
These implications are considered at three levels: corporate, managerial and individual and address the dominant practitioner perspective of the need to increase individual EE (Macey and Schneider 2008; Schaufeli and Bakker 201o).

Corporately, there is a need for greater congruity between attempts to increase EE and existing corporate policies. At GovDep the contradiction between the EE strategy and the performance management guidance (PM Handbook 2011c) created increased risk of disadvantage for anyone displaying PI behaviours. On the one hand, participants were encouraged to engage and, on the other, they were punished for doing so. Given that this study shows perceptions of trust and safety to be positive influences towards EE, it seems important for there to

be consistency between declared corporate intentions and practice (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013). One option would be for organizations to review existing policies in the light of their EE strategy.

At the managerial level, there is a need for a more sophisticated understanding of EE. Some GovDep managers supported EE through trust, recognition and support. Unfortunately, managers were also implicated in the darkside of EE (Bakker *et al.* 2011a; 2011b; George 2011; Rees *et al.* 2013). Managers at all levels need an understanding of the complex and fluctuating EE experience. One approach would be to train managers in the 'soft' approach to EE (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013) which takes greater account of individual wellbeing (Robertson and Cooper 2010).

At the individual level, there is a need to recognise the subjectivity of engagement and devise EE strategies to reflect this. Although all participants engaged with meaningful work, the ingredients varied between individuals and may also vary *between* situations. Cultural elements influenced participants towards or away from EE but the extent of that influence was mediated by perception and salience. Regardless of organizational efforts, individuals exercised agency in EE and may choose *not* to bring themselves fully into their role (Kahn 1992; Saks 2006; Zigarmi *et al.* 2009). For EE, it seems 'one size *does not* fit all'. Attempts to influence it should apply a range of approaches to increase the positive influencing factors while reducing the negative. Chief among these is providing work which incorporates the core aspects of meaningfulness: utility/influence and opportunities for positive recognition.

The final implication for practice spans all three levels and concerns the potential disadvantages of EE. Participants experienced disadvantages related to WLH and PI while managers were 'worked around' and corporate procedures contravened as meaningful work was prioritised over less valued factors. The role of perception makes a 'magic bullet' solution impossible to identify (Shuck *et al.* 2011). Instead, practitioners should remain alert to the complexity of EE and exercise caution in their attempts to encourage individuals to apply head, heart and hands to their work (Ashforth *et al.* 1995; Bakker 2011; Christian *et al.*

2011; Harter *et al.* 2002; Kahn 1990; 1992; Maslach 2011; May *et al.* 2004; Rich *et al.* 2010; Saks 2006; Schaufeli *et al.* 2002; Shuck *et al.* 2011).

Closing Remarks

This chapter concludes the thesis. Kahn's (1990) seminal work on engagement took place over twenty years ago yet academic interest continues to be led by quantitative methodologies (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Reissner and Pagan 2013). Meanwhile, practitioners embrace EE wholeheartedly as *the* means to improve organizational performance (Schaufeli and Bakker 2010). Somewhere between the academic numbers and the corporate zeal, the individual *experience* of EE has got lost (Shuck *et al.* 2011). The contribution made by this thesis is a small and modest step towards redressing the balance.

Appendix 1: Informed consent letter

Date:

Name:

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Hi [Name]

Thanks for your interest in taking part in the employee engagement study.

This note tells you more about what's involved and what will happen to the information that you share with me.

The study
This study is part of a Doctorate degree which I am studying with University of Leicester. The aim of the project is to explore how employee engagement is experienced and how it is affected by factors within [GovDep]. The starting point for this exploration is talking to people about their experiences of work.

Your Contribution
The conversation will last about an hour. I will ask about two different experiences of your work: one of being engaged and one of not being engaged. You will also have the opportunity to ask me any questions about the study. So that I can concentrate on the conversation, and to make sure that I can remember accurately what you tell me, I'd like to digitally record our meeting. You can ask me to switch off the recorder at any time.

As a Doctoral research student, I am bound by the ethical codes set out by the university, civil service and the British Sociological Association. This means that what you tell me during the interview will be treated in the strictest of confidence and used only for my thesis. It will be anonymous and I will do everything I can to ensure that you cannot be identified. Transcription may be carried out by a professional transcriber but records of your interview, both paper and digital will be kept securely in a locked location and/or a password protected laptop, inaccessible to anyone employed by [GovDep]. My thesis will be seen only by my university supervisor and examiners. I will be requesting a limitation on its availability following examination.

What happens next?
If, after reading this letter and the accompanying information, you are still happy to take part in the project please sign and complete the attached consent form and return it to me.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, before or after signing the form.

Once again, thank you very much for your interest.

If I do not hear from you by [date] I will assume that you no longer wish to take part.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact me.

Regards

Ruth

Information Note

This note tells you more about what we will talk about. Read it carefully and then decide if you still want to take part. **If yes, please complete and return the consent form by [date]** and then do some thinking to identify your two examples. That way we are more likely to keep to the agreed duration.

Meeting Structure
To get to know you a little better and set the scene for the conversation I will ask you a few questions about your work at [GovDep]. For example:

How do you come to be working at here?
What did you do before?
How long have you worked at [GovDep]?
What is your current job?
What do you most like about [GovDep]?
What don't you like about it?

This will be followed by a more focused conversation about two examples of your experience of work at [GovDep].

Please identify an example for each situation. They may be times when you were working alone or when you were working with others. You can use the questions in each situation to help tell the story of your experience.

Situation 1
Think about a time when you have been really interested and absorbed in your work perhaps becoming fascinated or wrapped up in what you were doing. For example, it may be that you didn't notice time passing or that you suddenly realised how much time had gone by. What were you doing? What was it like to be so interested in your work?

Situation 2
Think about a time when you were uninterested or disenchanted with what you were doing. You might have been watching the clock, aware of how slowly time was passing or you may have felt uninvolved, bored or alienated. What were you doing at the time? What was it like to be so uninterested in your work?

I will ask you some additional questions about these examples and generally about working at [GovDep].

Please remember that you are free to withdraw from the interview or project at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact me:

[Email and telephone contact details]

Ruth Barnes
c/o Organizational Development Team
[Location and extension]

If, after reading the above please:

- **Sign and complete the form below (electronic signature is fine)**
- **Return it to me via internal post or email.**

Ruth

I have read and understood the contents of the Informed Consent letter and Information Note and would like to contribute to the employee engagement study.

Signed: Date:

Please ✓ or ✗ one box and complete as appropriate

☐   I am available to meet you on the following dates, times and locations:

Dates	Times	Location/s

☐   Please contact me to arrange a time to meet

☐   I also recommend that you speak with: (Print name)

Yours sincerely

Name: (Printed)

Location:

Tel:

Appendix 2: Key findings and conclusions

Key findings (in relation to RQs/CIQs)	Conclusions: Judgements about the findings in relation to RQs/CIQs
RQ1: How do individuals understanding and experience EE?	
Multi-faceted • Participants described active emotions, positive thoughts and altered behaviour during EE experiences. • Participants described a cognitive/emotional/physical disconnection from the work and/or context during disengagement.	• Participants understood and experienced EE as positive and involving a combination of head, heart and hands. • Participants applied all of their energies simultaneously. • Absence of one aspect meant an absence of engagement.
Meaningful work • Participants' associated their emotions, thoughts and behaviour with the EE work. • The work was evaluated as 'doing something useful' and/or 'making a difference' to others. • Participants felt valued and/or received positive recognition for the EE work. • Work during disengagement was evaluated as 'meaningless or 'pointless'.	• Head, heart and hands were focussed on the EE work. • The work was evaluated in terms of its significance for other people. • Participants made a connection with others *through* the EE work; its utility, influence and/or opportunity for positive recognition. • The above combination contributed to a sense that the EE work was 'meaningful'. • Participants understood EE to involve meaningful work. • Participants engaged with meaningful work.
Duration • Participants described EE experiences of varying lengths. • The duration of EE experiences matched the duration of the work.	• Participants understood and experienced EE as time-bound. • Duration of EE was tied to the duration of the meaningful work. • When the work ceased so did participants' EE.

Key findings (in relation to RQs/CIQs)	Conclusions: Judgements about the findings in relation to RQs/CIQs
CIQ1a) With what do individuals engage?	
Variety and variation • Participants identified a range of additional referents as important to their EE experiences. • Referents included MyWork, MyPeople and MyDuty. • Referents varied between participants and may have varied between EE experiences.	• Each referent represented something valued by participants. • The EE work was meaningful where it connected with what participants' valued. • Referents were integral to participants' EE experiences. • The variety and variation of referents added to the complexity of participants' EE.
Durability and depth • Referents were longer lasting than EE experiences. • Participants expressed and displayed strong emotions when talking about these referents. • MyDuty referents were defended against less valued aspects of GovDep.	• Referents pre-existed and endured beyond EE experiences. • The durability and depth of emotion were indicative of strongly held values or beliefs. • Strongly held values or beliefs are indicative of commitment and identification. • Commitment and identification were part of participants' EE experiences.
Reward and recognition • No participant identified financial reward as important. • Recognition and feeling valued were more important.	• Neither extrinsic rewards nor instrumental factors were referents for participants' EE.

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Key findings (in relation to RQs/CIQs)	Conclusions: Judgements about the findings in relation to RQs/CIQs
CIQ1b) What is the scope and focus of engaged behaviour?	
Scope • Participants described a range of behaviours during EE. • The two most common were WLH and PI. • WLH and PI were not a requirement of employment at GovDep. • Participants did not differentiate between in-role and extra-role behaviours. • PI behaviours were applied to in-role tasks. • Participants experienced positive thoughts and active emotions during WLH/PI.	• WLH and PI were associated with EE experiences. • Discretionary behaviours were part of participants' EE. • The scope of EE behaviour was not restricted to either in-role or extra-role (discretionary) behaviours. • Participants were engaged during WLH/PI. • WLH/PI were the physical (hands) dimension of participants' EE.
Focus • Participants referred to their work and referents as the focus of their EE experiences. • Participants prioritised these over less valued aspects of GovDep. • Some participants knowingly contravened organizational requirements during EE.	• Participants focussed their behaviour towards meaningful work including the EE referents. • Any contribution to corporate goals relied on a match between those goals and participants' EE referents. • Some participants prioritised the meaningfulness of the work over GovDep requirements and personal risk. • EE behaviour was not always an advantage for GovDep.

Key findings (in relation to RQs/CIQs)	Conclusions: Judgements about the findings in relation to RQs/CIQs
CIQ1c) *What are the potential disadvantages of EE?*	
Direct disadvantages • WLH encroached on personal time and social relationships. • Some participants knowingly acted against GovDep's requirements during EE. • Participants defended their choices and actions. • Participants described EE as positive in spite of potential disadvantages.	• The EE work was prioritised over non-work activities. • Where participants acted with a sense of autonomy these disadvantages of EE were disregarded. • EE was experienced as positive even when personal choices led to potential disadvantages.
Managers/corporate disadvantages • Managers interpreted WLH as EE. • Some managers expected hours to be increased without reward or recognition. • Physical presence was prioritised over the cognitive and emotional elements of EE. • Speaking up was portrayed negatively as 'challenge' within GovDep's behavioural descriptors. • Some participants were disciplined for PI behaviours.	• Participants experienced pressure to WLH regardless of the meaningfulness of the work and without reward or recognition. • Managerial attempts to control PI/WLH created potential disadvantages for participants. • Attempts to control WLH/PI may have undermined efforts to increase EE.

Key findings (in relation to RQs/CIQs)	Conclusions: Judgements about the findings in relation to RQs/CIQs
RQ2) How is the individual experience of EE created and maintained?	
CIQ2a) What is the role of trust?	
• Participants referred to interpersonal trust rather than trust in GovDep as an employer or organization. • Most often, trust during EE was related to line managers. • Some participants experienced reciprocal trust with their manager. • Some managers asked participants to contribute to special projects. • The extent of a manager's trust varied between participants.	• Trust played an implicit and explicit role in supporting EE. • Trust reduced the risks involved in PI behaviours through the expectation of support should things go wrong. • Managers' trust provided opportunities for participants to undertake challenging work/one off projects. • Manager's trust supported the exercise of autonomy within certain bounds.
CIQ2b) What is the role of perception and individual agency compared with the influence of contextual factors (e.g. managers, culture, norms and values)?	
Managers • Two managers were referents for EE. • In addition to trust, managers provided positive recognition for EE work. • Managers penalised PI behaviours and pressured staff to work WLH.	• Managers contributed to participants' sense of meaningful work. • Attempts to control EE increased the associated risks. • Managers played a positive *and* negative role in influencing participants' EE.

Key findings (in relation to RQs/CIQs)	Conclusions: Judgements about the findings in relation to RQs/CIQs
Cultural norms and values • GovDep had an established 'no-challenge' norm. • GovDep's EE strategy encouraged speaking up. • The EE strategy contradicted the established norm. • MyDuty referents included two 'hydrographic' values. • These values featured as public sector objectives within GovDep's corporate plan and public tasks.	 • The norm carried risks which influenced participants *away* from EE. • Participants had to decide between contradictory factors. • As referents, the hydrographic values influenced participants *towards* EE. • The norm and values were cultural elements specific to GovDep. • Participants' EE may be indirectly influenced by factors beyond GovDep.
Perception • Meaningfulness involved a perception that the work connected with others and/or EE referents. • A sense of trust provided reassurance about the risks associated with PI behaviours and acting autonomously. • When influencing factors were contradictory, participants acted in accordance with the most important at the time.	 • Perceptions of meaningfulness and trust supported EE. • Perception mediated between contextual factors and participants' EE. • Participants acted in accordance with the most salient perception.
Individual agency • Participants demonstrated discretionary behaviours during EE. • Some participants knowingly contravened GovDep processes and procedures. • Participants' EE was also influenced by contextual factors.	 • Participants demonstrated individual agency during EE. • Contextual factors may be the salient perception which influences EE. • The creation and maintenance of EE was influenced by a complex interweaving of contextual factors and perception.

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