Reciprocity Matters:
Shaping the Psychological Contract to Foster
Employee (Behavioural) Engagement
in Times of Austerity

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to understand how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered within LAs (local authorities) when the levers available to managers are reduced due to austerity, and how this has shaped the psychological contract in terms of the reciprocal expectations/promises between employees and their line managers.

The study was conducted because following the 2007/08 global financial crisis, the UK public sector experienced major funding cuts from 2010/11 to 2017/18, resulting in staffing reductions and a dilution in the employment deal including pay freezes, reductions in benefits, terms and conditions, and a loss of the 'job for life'. Whilst there is current political (pressure) commitment to increase spending, there was no indication of reversing these cuts within the Budget 2018 which contained an indicative spending path to 2023/24 (Zaranko, 2018; Emmerson, 2019). The study was investigated qualitatively in four teams within one English LA. Team participants included line managers and either professional or non-professional employees. Methods included 29 x one-to-one and three focus group semi-structured interviews incorporating the critical incident technique using a Heideggerian phenomenological approach.

The main contribution to knowledge made by this study is to extend Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory. Whereas they say that a less particularistic resource is not expected to be substituted by a more particularistic resource, this occurred in the teams sampled. Here, once concrete and universal resources were available to a certain level (eg. pay), the difference (eg. inflationary pay rise, external training) appeared to be substituted by more particularistic resources (eg. flexibility and task i-deals). Additionally, more particularistic resources were expected such as favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust. By examining the new reciprocations through the lens of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), this demonstrated how some employees may try to shape their psychological contract by negotiating alternative new low-cost reciprocations to increase their quality of working life in adverse economic conditions, and foster their engagement. This suggests that even in austerity, reciprocity matters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Journal:

Davis, A.S. and Van der Heijden B.I.J.M. (2018) 'Reciprocity Matters: Idiosyncratic Deals to Shape the Psychological Contract and Foster Employee Engagement in Times of Austerity'. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 329-355

The second author acted as a co-author who has gone through several versions of the article carefully, and has given more and more detailed feedback over each and every next round. We have had skype sessions to fine tune as well. In addition, she helped me to choose the journal, and helped me understand how to write cover letters and reaction to editors. She has neither interfered with my data nor with any other section of my thesis.

Conference Paper:

Davis, A.S., Rowe, A. and Alker, L. (2014) 'Reconciling the Deal - A Local Authority Employee Engagement Study During Austerity'. Paper presented at: *UFHRD Conference*. Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, 5 June

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(Awarded 2nd place in the MMU Institutional Final)

Doctoral Symposiums:

Davis, A.S. (2015) 'I-Deals and Managing Change - One Route to Acceptance and Engagement'. Paper presented at: *Manchester Metropolitan University Doctoral Symposium.* Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, Manchester, 20 March
(Awarded Best Full Paper)

Davis, A.S. (2014) 'Reconciling the Deal - A Local Authority Employee Engagement Study During Austerity'. Paper presented at: *Manchester Metropolitan University Doctoral Symposium.* Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, 13 March

Davis, A.S. (2013) 'Interdependence of the Changing Psychological Contract and Engaging Leadership within Local Authorities'. Paper presented at: *Manchester Metropolitan University Doctoral Symposium*. Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, 14 March
(Awarded Best Extended Abstract)

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GLOSSARY

CPD   Continuing Professional Development

FAQ   Frequently Asked Questions

FTE   Full Time Equivalent

JD-R   Job Demands-Resources

LA   Local Authority

PC   Psychological Contract

POS   Perceived Organisational Support

PPD   Personal Performance and Development

PSS   Perceived Supervisory Support

SET   Social Exchange Theory

VET   Voluntary Early Terminations

Introduction

1. Introduction

Following the 2007/08 global financial crisis and subsequent recession, many Western countries have been coping with austerity measures to reduce public spending (Kickert, 2012; Conway *et al.,* 2014; Cepiku *et al.,* 2016). In relation to English LAs, which are public sector organisations that are run by locally elected councillors and provide a diverse range of public services from waste and recycling to education, this presents an immense challenge given LAs had their spending power reduced in real terms by 28.6% (National Audit Office, 2018), whilst service demand has increased (Bach, 2011). Both the previous UK Labour Government and Coalition Government in power at the time of the data collection (July 2013 – August 2014), encouraged LAs (and all sectors) to deal with this radical change by leadership and employee engagement (Bach, 2011; BIS, 2011) as per the MacLeod and Clarke (2009) report.

This study seeks to understand how austerity has impacted the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement by line managers, in their role as organisational agents, and shaped the (new) psychological contract (PC) within one English Local Authority (LA). This responds to calls for qualitative studies on employee engagement (Kular *et al.*, 2008; Truss *et al.,* 2011), and requests to study the lived experiences of employee engagement taking into account the contextual constraints at the micro-level (individual) (Truss *et al.,* 2013).

The austerity context is of interest because this has led to the demise of the public sector's notion of a 'job for life', along with the diluted employment deal in terms of reduced benefits, terms and conditions, placing more emphasis on the PC (CIPD/PPMA, 2012). This has reduced the levers available to managers to foster employee engagement, thus demonstrating how contextual factors can enhance or stifle management's ability to foster engagement (Jenkins and Delbridge, 2013). Whilst there are many factors that impact engagement (such as personality), the role of the line manager and the reciprocity they generate (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a; Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018) through the PC (Akkermans *et al.,* 2019), is a way of engaging employees.

Additionally, by recognising the reciprocal nature of employee engagement, it moves away from assuming employees passively comply with management (Rich *et al.,* 2010; Cole *et al.,* 2012; Francis *et al,* 2013).

Furthermore, there is little empirical research into how employee engagement strategies are developed and implemented (Arrowsmith and Parker, 2013; Reissner and Pagan, 2013). Although MacLeod and Clarke (2009) have identified enablers/drivers to foster engagement, it is presented at a general level rather than specifically what an organisation can do to foster engagement (Guest, 2014a). This study aims to contribute towards addressing this gap by providing theoretical understanding to the current practices in use, and those expected by the sampled employees. In particular, it will explore how the reciprocations between employees and line managers within their PCs have changed due to austerity and subsequent organisational change (Chaudry *et al.,* 2009). Even though the changing PC has been examined previously within LAs (for example, Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000), the PC's dynamic nature (Schalk and Roe, 2007; Suazo, *et al.,* 2009) and the recent funding reductions make it worthy of examination again. As such, the study will be viewed through the lens of social exchange theory (SET) providing further support that this is a useful theoretical perspective to understand employee (behavioural) engagement, especially in the understanding of managerial actions to foster engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a; Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018).

This remains relevant because whilst the Government claim that Britain is on the '*road out of austerity*' (Hammond, 2019, 2:29), and the path for future public spending aims to increase by at least 1.2% in real terms per annum (HM Treasury, 2018; Hammond, 2019, 1:58), this is based on indicative plans based on a smooth Brexit and better tax receipts (Chote, 2018; Hammond, 2019; Johnson, 2019; OBR, 2019). Moreover, in response to the 2019 Spring Statement, the LGA (2019, online) announced that councils are '*still facing a funding gap of more than £3 billion in 2019/20*'.

1.1 Aim of Research:

The aim of the study is to understand the lived experiences in how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered within four teams from one LA (Local Authority), when the levers available to line managers are reduced due to austerity, and how this has shaped the PC in terms of the reciprocal expectations/promises between employees (non-management) and their managers.

1.2 Principle Research Questions:

1. How is employee (behavioural) engagement fostered and experienced during austerity?

2. How has austerity shaped the PC in terms of the reciprocal expectations/promises between employees (non-management - professional and non-professional) and their line managers given the changes to jobs, pay, benefits, terms and conditions (social and economic exchange)?

1.3 Research Objectives:

1. Investigate how line managers foster employee (behavioural) engagement using the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) four enablers/drivers of engagement as systematic frameworks.

2. Explore how line managers and employees perceive the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement when the levers available to line managers are reduced due to austerity pressures.

3. Drawing on social exchange (Blau, 1964), psychological contract (Guest and Conway, 2002) and resource (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) theories, understand how austerity has affected the perceived expectations/promises between employees (non-management - professional and non-professional) and their line managers given the changes to social and economic exchange.

1.4   Significance of the Study

The strength of this research is the examination of the lived experience of engagement through multiple voices, with the incorporation of context to gain a fuller understanding (Reissner and Pagan, 2013). This permits examination of the employment relationship within the public sector at a critical time which has previously only received limited attention (Bach, 2007; 2011). Consequently the combination of the reduced employment deal and threats to job security due to redundancies, coupled with the high workload for survivors (retained staff following redundancies) (Brockner *et al.,* 1986; Cascio, 1993; Bohle *et al.,* 2017), there is a risk that employees will reciprocate these adverse work conditions with their disengagement to balance the exchange relationship (Blau, 1964; Van Der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016; Bohle *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, the austerity context limits the levers available to line managers to foster engagement thus complicating the process further.

Despite this, there has been minimal attention to the impact this has had the process of fostering employee engagement (Arrowsmith and Parker, 2013; Francis *et al.,* 2013; Reissner and Pagan, 2013) and subsequent employee attitudes and behaviours (Kiefer *et al.,* 2014; Van der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016). This study explores this complexity to show how austerity and subsequent organisational change impacts the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement and shapes the PC (Chaudry *et al.,* 2009). The understanding gained from this study is still relevant today because:

1. During the period 2010/11 to 2017/2018, government funding reduced in real terms by 49.1%, and LA revenue spending power reduced by 28.6% (National Audit Office, 2018). Although the Government have set an indicative spending path to 2023/24 to increase public spending, most of this has gone on the NHS, so unprotected public service budgets, which includes LAs, are likely to be cut again (Emmerson, 2019).

2. Currently there is no indication that previous cuts will be reversed (Zaranko, 2018; Emmerson, 2019) leaving a significant funding gap for LAs (LGA, 2018; 2019) affected further by the growing population, ongoing welfare cuts, weak economic growth (Johnson, 2019) and uncertainty from Brexit (Johnson, 2019; OBR, 2019) which is likely to increase service demand further if this leads to another recession.

3. The Government aims to balance the public sector deficit by 2025/26, although this target may be extended for a third time to meet funding commitments (Johnson, 2019). That said, the OBR (2019) predict a deficit of £13.5 billion in 2023/24, which is £6.3 billion lower than the October 2018 forecast. However, as mentioned earlier, the indicative spending plans of the Budget 2018 and Spring Statement 2019 are informed by positive OBR forecasts which are based on a smooth Brexit and better tax receipts (Chote, 2018; Hammond, 2019; Johnson, 2019; OBR, 2019). Consequently, there is a risk that these forecasts may not be realised.

4. Current LA employees (and indeed other parts of the public sector) have had their salaries frozen and then capped at 1% for 7 years. Although cost of living pay rises have resumed since April 2018 (Unison, 2018), that does not make up for previous shortfalls (Dykes, 2017), and the adverse impact on their pensions.

1.5 **Thesis Outline**

Following this introductory chapter, the study's national context is presented to understand the LA's employment deal.

Then the relevant literature is reviewed. This includes the definition of employee engagement and disengagement, and the process for fostering engagement.

Social exchange theory (SET) is used as the theoretical perspective to understand this process, and draws on one contemporary social exchange theory, PC theory. This examines the discrepancy between what was perceived to be promised and fulfilled (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005). Then idiosyncratic deals, also known as i-deals (Rousseau, 2005), are studied as a way of providing low-cost reciprocations to shape the PC and foster employee (behavioural) engagement. Resource theory (Foa, 1971; Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) will then be introduced as this may help understand the quality of the (new) social exchange.

This will be followed with the methodology chapter which explains that the investigation was conducted qualitatively in four teams within one LA. As such the study was interpretive, constructionist and used a Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach to understand the lived experience of line managers and employees in the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement.

Findings are analysed systematically within and across these teams using the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers via template analysis (King, 2012). This helped understand the interventions available to line managers, along with both line managers and employees' experiences, and their subsequent actions. From this, four themes were identified consisting of i-deals, favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust.

The identified themes are then explored in more detail in the discussion chapter to understand the employees and line managers lived experience of the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement.

Here the reciprocations identified will be further examined by drawing on Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions, SET (Blau, 1964) and PC theory. Resource theory (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) will also be used to explore the types of resources exchanged (Gorgievski *et al.,* 2011) and the reasons why. Together, this will help understand how austerity has affected the perceived expectations/promises between employees and line managers, to shape the PC and foster employee (behavioural) engagement. This will lead to an extension of Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory, which comprises the main contribution to knowledge from this study.

Rival explanations and implications for practice and scholarship are then considered. This chapter ends with a consideration of the limitations of the study and possible future research.

The final chapter concludes the study and makes five contributions to knowledge in relation to theory and methodology.

In summary, this study explores the lived experiences of the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement during austerity when the levers available to line managers are reduced, and the employment deal is diluted. This demonstrates the impact of organisational constraints and opportunities on the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. This understanding will extend Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory. It will also provide further support that SET is a useful theoretical framework for understanding employee (behavioural) engagement, in particular managerial efforts to foster employee (behavioural) engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a). The theoretical linkages of the thesis are shown overleaf in narrative (Figure 1a) and diagrammatic (Figure 1b) formats.

<u>Figure 1a</u>

– Theoretical Linkages Across the Thesis

Research Context:
- LA during austerity where there is a dilution in the employment deal in relation to the loss of a 'job for life', pay freezes and reductions to benefits, terms and conditions

Employee Engagement and Disengagement (Kahn, 1990; 1992):
- Distinctiveness and interdependence of psychological state engagement (or psychological presence – Kahn, 1992) and behavioural engagement (Figure 2).

Fostering Engagement:-
- People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) (Figure 4)
- Enablers/Drivers to foster engagement (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009)

Theoretical base underpinning the process of fostering engagement (please see Figure 1b overleaf):
- Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964)
- Psychological Contract Theory (Guest and Conway, 2002)
- I-deals Theory (Rousseau, 2005)
- Resource Theory (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) (Figure 5)

Investigated by:
- Interpretivist Paradigm, Constructionist Epistemology
- Abductive Approach
- Heidegger's Interpretive Phenomenology using the critical incident technique (Chell, 2004)
- Analysed using Template Analysis.

Contribution:
1. Extension of Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007a) People Management-Performance Causal Chain to incorporate employee engagement and external context (Figure 8)
2. Extension of Foa and Foa (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory, where universal resources may be substituted by good quality particularistic resources when the universal resources are provided to a certain level (Figure 8)
3. Further support to show that SET is a useful theoretical framework to understand engagement, particularly in understanding managerial efforts to foster engagement
4. Engagement and disengagement may be constructive or destructive (Figure 7). Also shows the relevance and use of the term employee (behavioural) engagement.
5. Further support for exploring the lived experience via the critical incident technique using a phenomenological approach (Chell, 2004).

Source: Author's own

Figure 1b - Early Conceptual Framework

**People Management-
Performance Causal Chain**

Intended Practices → Actual Practices → Perceptions of Practices → Employee Attitudes → Employee Engagement → Unit Level Outcomes

•Social Exchange Theory
•Psychological Contract
•I-deals
•Resource Theory

Source: Adapted from Foa (1971); Rousseau (1989; 2005); Kahn (1990; 1992); Purcell and Hutchinson (2007a)
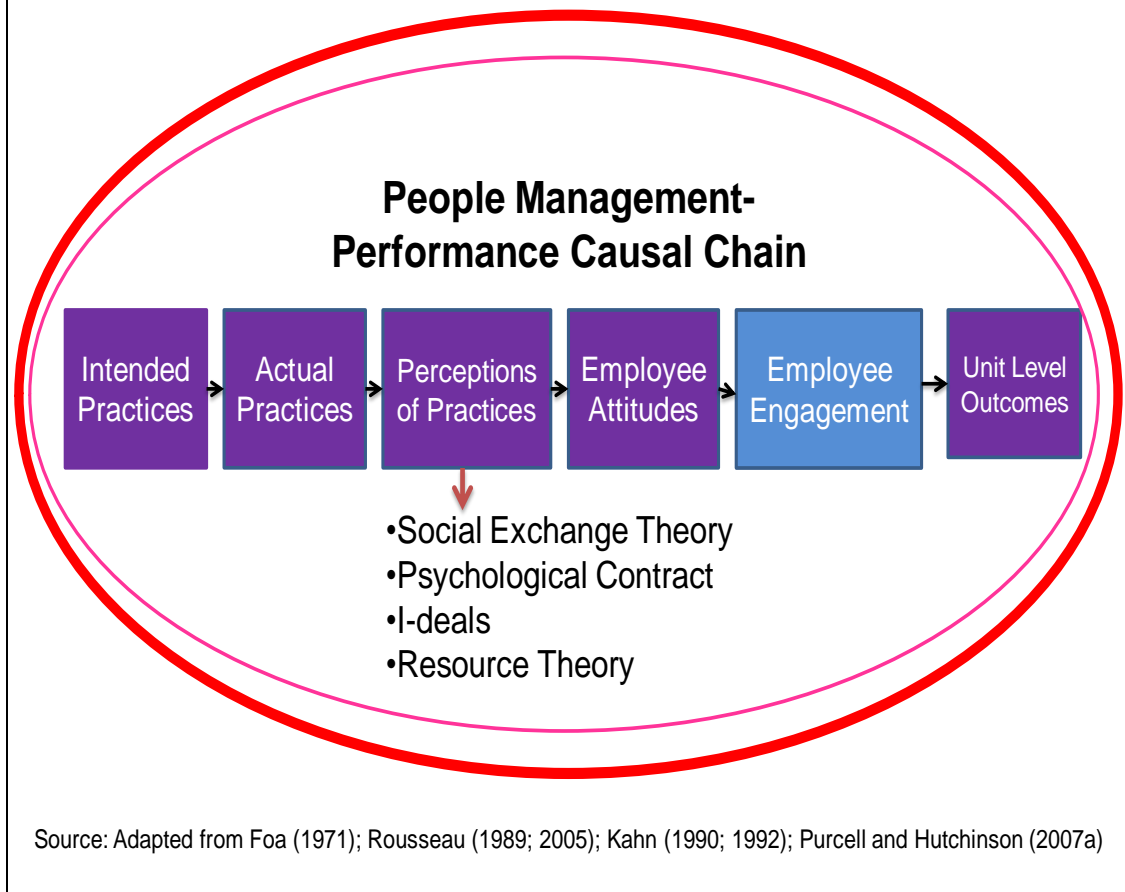
Chapter Two

Research

Context

2.   Research Context

2.1   Introduction

The local authority (LA) context across England will now be outlined given the relevance of context in fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. This will highlight that austerity and subsequent organisational change are relevant factors in the employment relationship (Chaudry *et al.,* 2009) which will have an impact the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. More specifically, this chapter will highlight how the austerity context has changed the reciprocations within the psychological contract (PC) for LA employees, thus increasing job insecurity and lowering pay, benefits, terms and conditions.

2.2   Context

To deal with the austerity funding cuts and continue to meet their statutory duties (Bach, 2011), LAs have been transforming their services. Such reorganisation has created job insecurity for LA employees due to organisational restructures, redundancies (although redeployment will normally be considered - LGA, 2013), and reduced pay, benefits, terms and conditions (CIPD/PPMA, 2012; Francis *et al.,* 2013). These are major cost reduction tactics given 70% of most LA expenditure is salary related (Worrall *et al.,* 2010). Additionally, LAs have traditionally struggled in obtaining funding in comparison to other public services such as the NHS (Bach, 2011) which has had its share of Government funding increased from 23% in 2000 to 38% in 2023. This leaves less for other public services such as LAs (Johnson, 2018).

To produce cost savings, just two-thirds of councils (67%) have outsourced at least some of the services that they formerly ran in-house (Audit Commission and LGA, 2011) for both front and back office, which has created job insecurity for LA staff. Back office is another term for support sections that facilitate/enhance the performance of the primary activities (Porter, 1985), and as such are not core to the functioning of the Council for example, HR, accountancy, IT, legal, procurement, customer service (face to face and call centres) and administrators. Whereas front office provide services direct to the service user such as social work, planning, and refuse collection. That said, although outsourcing may reduce the pay bill, savings are not quick and significant set up costs are involved (Audit Commission and LGA, 2011). There is also a drive to create mutuals or social enterprises to take over council-run services. For example, some health and social care services, are being transferred to social enterprises to facilitate more co-operation and co-ordination, and reduce duplication to give better utilisation of scarce resources (CIPD/PPMA, 2012).

Another transformational change effort that has lowered job security is the increased use of technology to enable the public to access services electronically (Dunleavy *et al.,* 2011). Estimates suggest electronic access cost 30 times less than over the telephone (McCarthy, 2012) and savings will be even higher when compared to face to face customer contact (Bury Council, 2010). This may affect jobs by replacing employees with technology such as internet-based services, and/or may simplify jobs (and lower costs) by the use of expert systems to replace knowledge workers and monitor employees' work (Holbeche, 2014).

Other cost saving strategies include ceasing discretionary services, devising stricter eligibility criteria to lower service take-up and target scarce resources to where they are most needed, increasing charges (Bach, 2011), and/or lowering the quality of service provision (Dunleavy *et al.,* 2011).

In relation to the employment relationship, this has changed the PC for LA employees by reducing job security from downsizing, and diluting the employment deal (CIPD/PPMA, 2012). Examples of the reduced employment deal include pay freezes, adverse changes to pension schemes, the removal of market supplements, bonuses, honoraria, restricting overtime and reducing the car mileage allowance to those approved by the HMRC. Charges for staff parking have also been introduced, broadband supplements to home workers have ended and salary protection reduced. Work-life balance schemes have been developed to reduce costs. For example, about 300 staff at Sunderland City Council have agreed reduced hours and other flexible working practices saving £660,000 per year (Audit Commission and LGA, 2011).

However, these cost reduction methods are insufficient to meet the budget challenge (Bach, 2011). Consequently, both the previous UK Labour Government and Coalition Government in power at the time of the data collection (July 2013 – August 2014), encouraged LAs (and all sectors) to deal with this radical change by leadership and employee engagement (Bach, 2011; BIS, 2011) as per the MacLeod and Clarke (2009) report. This provides multiple contradictions given transformational change requires innovative, change-oriented behaviours (Vigoda-Gadot and Beeri, 2012), and yet downsizing requires a cost reduction approach, often coupled with an autocratic management style. Furthermore, these conditions and job insecurity are likely to have a negative affective impact on employees, which may also adversely affect their well-being (Worrall and Cooper, 2013).

2.3 Summary

This chapter has explained the national context for LA employees during austerity to demonstrate how this has reduced the employment deal and increased job insecurity. The next chapter will review the relevant literature which will lead to the identification of two research questions.

Theoretical Framework

3.   Theoretical Framework

3.1   Introduction:

This study explores how austerity has impacted the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement and shaped the new psychological contract (PC) given the demise of the public sector's notion of a 'job for life', along with the diluted employment deal in terms of pay freezes and reductions in benefits, terms and conditions (CIPD/PPMA, 2012). Even though the changing PC has been examined previously within LAs (for example, Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000), the austerity context makes it worthy of examination again. Studying this in austerity shows the impact of resource constraints at the micro-level (individual) which reduces the levers available to managers to foster engagement (Jenkins and Delbridge, 2013). Whilst the decline in pay/conditions has not led to disengagement (Francis *et al.,* 2013; van Wanrooy *et al.,* 2013), the sustainability of this has been questioned (Francis *et al.,* 2013).

This chapter begins by discussing the concept of employee engagement and disengagement. This will show the distinctiveness and interdependence of psychological state and employee (behavioural) engagement, and justify using the latter within this study. Then, using the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers, the process of fostering engagement will be reviewed. Social exchange theory (SET) will be used to explain this process, providing further support that this is a useful theoretical perspective to understand employee engagement. This will include the use of PC theory, which is based on an exchange process (Rousseau, 1995), to show the (new) reciprocations between employees and their line managers. As such, idiosyncratic deals, also known as i-deals, which are unique deals negotiated between an individual worker and their employer (Rousseau, 2005), will also be discussed. Then Foa (1971) and Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1976; 1980) resource theory will be considered to help understand the quality of the (new) social exchange.

3.2   Employee Engagement

3.21   Introduction

This section of the literature review will define employee engagement as this is the outcome (Purcell, 2010) that is intended from fostering reciprocal relationships. This will include a consideration of the different aspects of organisational life that employees may engage with, along with different levels of engagement. Then different types of engagement will be discussed to propose an employee engagement chain and determine that employee (behavioural) engagement will be utilised in this study. Given attempts to foster engagement may fail, disengagement will then be reviewed, followed by the common assumptions of engagement.

3.22   Definition

There is no universally agreed academic definition of employee engagement, but many academics (for example, Rich *et al.,* 2010; Shuck and Wollard, 2010; Gourlay *et al.,* 2012) refer back to Kahn's (1990, p. 694) definition of engagement:

> "... *people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances".*

Cognitive engagement is an employee's understanding of their job and organisation (Shuck and Reio, 2011), thus linking to MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) 'strategic narrative' enabler/driver where an individual understands how their job contributes to organisational goals. It also involves the attention, concentration (Shuck *et al.,* 2017a) and focus they give to their work (Saks, 2006), and in some cases being innovative/creative (Shuck, *et al.,* 2012). It is this innovation and aspirational goal of smarter working that the Coalition Government desired at the beginning of austerity, hence their support to the 'Engage for Success' movement (BIS, 2011).

Emotional engagement is the bond an individual feels towards his/her work such as pride and belief (Shuck and Reio, 2011), for example by believing in the organisation's purpose (Shuck *et al.,* 2017a). These positive emotions triggered from the cognitive appraisal of the situation (Shuck and Herd, 2012) can broaden an employee's thinking and innovativeness (Fredrickson, 2001).

Physical engagement may be operationalised as effort, performance or productivity (Shuck and Reio, 2011). To avoid overlapping with other unethical constructs such as work intensification, it is also referred to as behavioural engagement (Saks, 2006; Shuck and Reio, 2011) or social engagement (Alfes *et al.,* 2010; Soane *et al.,* 2012) which is when individuals interact with co-workers to propose and implement new ideas. As such, behavioural and social engagement are manifestations of cognitive and emotional engagement (Shuck and Reio, 2011; Shuck *et al.,* 2014a), as it is '*how individuals employ themselves in the performance of their job*' (Saks, 2006, p. 602) suggesting it can be observed. The activation (Saks, 2006) makes engagement different to other related constructs such as commitment, job involvement and satisfaction (which are satiations from work experiences), as engagement is the point that work is underway and includes the energy brought to the role (Shuck *et al.,* 2012; Shuck *et al.,* 2017a). People engage when it matters to do so, and this is maximised when there is self-interest (Kahn, 2010) highlighting the two-way nature of engagement (Robinson *et al.,* 2004; Guest, 2014a) and the relevance of aligning individual and organisational needs (Kahn, 2010). Kahn (1990) considered that engagement involved the simultaneous application of all three dimensions (physical, cognitive and emotional). In line with this, Rich *et al.,* (2010) and Shuck *et al.,* (2017a) measured the three dimensions separately, but combined them into a single measure. Although they concur with Kahn's (1990) view, this may suggest that people may be engaged on one or two dimensions, despite it being difficult to think of a job/role that does not require some level of all three.

Some authors, such as Shuck *et al.,* (2017a), view engagement as a (active) motivational state which may suggest that the engagement construct is redundant. However, other authors, such as Bakker (2011), say engagement differs from motivation as work engagement (discussed later) also includes cognition and affect in addition to dedication. So, motivation is the desire to take action and thus precedes engagement. This is supported in the definition of motivation, defined as the "*psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed*" (Mitchell, 1982, p. 81). Whereas, engagement is the actual role behaviour and self-expression (Kahn, 1990; Kahn and Heaphy, 2014) thus incorporating more dimensions than motivation. This suggests that engagement is not a "*blend of old wines*" as it has characteristics of "*new wines*" (Christian, 2011, p. 120). As such, engagement is also different to flow which is a momentary occurrence of peak experience lasting up to one hour (Bakker, 2011) where an employee is absorbed in their work, with clarity of thought, that time passes quickly (Csikzentmihalyi, 1990). Whereas, engagement is longer-term (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2002; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Also, absorption may lead to disengagement if absorption in the current task is at the expense of other required tasks (Claxton, 2013).

Subsequently, some authors (such as Macey and Schneider, 2008) consider that attendance, punctuality and working well, does not describe engagement, whilst others (such as Newman and Harrison, 2008, p. 35) believe being "*in gear*" is exactly what it means, shown by performance, adaptability, reduced sickness absence and turnover (Purcell, 2014a). The difficulty here is that these variables may be due to other factors rather than engagement, such as compliance. Similarly, reduced absence and turnover may be due to engagement, or it may be due to job insecurity due to austerity. Nevertheless, even if the cause of the behaviour is fear from job insecurity or autocratic leadership, it could be argued it is still engagement given the focus, care and effort deployed, but the motivation has come from external factors rather than from within.

That said, engagement goes beyond effort. Engaged employees are able and willing to bring their 'real self' to work and voice their opinions (self-expression). Rather than simply following routines, they care about their work and focus and apply their ideas and feelings to continually improve (Kahn, 2010). Purcell *et al.,* (2003) termed this as 'discretionary behaviour', but given the potential ethical implications of this term, later referred to it as 'helpful behaviours' (Purcell, 2013), which may be directed to in-role behaviour (Saks, 2006; Kmec and Gorman, 2010). This distinguishes it from broader constructs such as organisational citizenship behaviour, defined as behaviour that is "*not related directly to individual productivity*" (Organ, 1988, p. 548), extra-role behaviour which may be limited during austerity (Kiefer *et al.,* 2014) given the service constraints, and exploitative behaviours such as compulsory extra role behaviour (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006). Consequently, engagement is "*the way the job is done – the speed, care, innovation and style*" (CIPD, 2002, p. 2) implying it is about quality actions (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010).

Furthermore, people engage with different elements of organisational life. Engagement may be with the organisation, job (Saks, 2006; Claxton, 2013; Saks and Gruman, 2014), task (Baron, 2013), profession, or their line manager (Baron, 2013; Claxton, 2013), the latter emphasising the role of the line manager in fostering engagement. People may also be engaged to their team (Baron, 2013; Claxton, 2013; Saks and Gruman, 2014) and/or customers (Gourlay *et al.,* 2012; Claxton, 2013). This is likely in this LA study given public sector workers tend to have a strong commitment to public service (Perry, 1996; Brewer *et al.,* 2000; Rayner, *et al.,* 2011). Consequently, engagement with these different aspects may depend on how valued the individual feels within these different elements (Claxton, 2013).

Kahn (1990) recognised that workers choose how much of themselves they bring to work by some conscious and unconscious internal calculation. In other words, people choose the intensity/effort (Kahn and Heaphy, 2014) and energy (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012) which they exert.

As noted earlier in his definition, this may be cognitive, emotional or physical, and determines how well they do their job (Purcell *et al.,* 2003) thus demonstrating the personal agency employees apply to their work (Kahn, 1990; Rich *et al.,* 2010; Cole *et al.,* 2012; Francis *et al.,* 2013). This process is similar to Amabile and Kramer's (2007) inner-work life process motivation model, which shows how emotion, cognition and perception can impact performance. Within this subjective assessment, Kahn (1990) found in his two qualitative studies, that employees consider three questions. The first relates to psychological meaningfulness where individuals consider if it is worthwhile to do this task. Meaning can be gained from the task itself, role characteristics and/or work interactions. Consequently, tasks may be meaningful due to the complexity, challenge, creativity required, development or variety gained. Whereas role characteristics are influenced by the degree of person-job fit (Kahn, 1990; Saks and Gruman, 2014), and the influence/status they gain from that role - a sense of being "*valued, valuable and needed*" (Kahn, 1990, p. 706). Work interactions contribute towards meeting Alderfer's (1972) relatedness needs. Consequently, employees are more likely to engage when it is in their interests to do so, and the work they do feels good and makes a difference (Kahn, 2010).

The second question is psychological safety in terms of reputation, such as status, self-image, and career. Consequently, individuals ask themselves how people will perceive them if they do this task or express their view. This will be impacted by group and organisational norms, culture, management style, interpersonal relationships, trust, clarity of boundaries, and understanding the consequences of their behaviour. Psychological safety is when an individual feels they can voice their opinions regarding problems, processes and issues (self-expression) to improve the situation, influence others and contribute to something larger, which is critical in a learning organisation (Kahn, 2010). However, when psychological safety is low, this places an unnecessary burden on the individual which adversely impacts engagement.

The final question relates to psychological availability where the individual considers if they have the physical and emotional energy to carry out the task with that level of effort. Personal and work life may impact these energy levels (Kahn, 1990). This also differentiates engagement from burnout, work intensification or presenteeism, where physical/emotional energy is unlikely to be present (Byrne *et al.,* 2016). Similarly, engagement involves being *pulled* towards work and is thus different to workaholism which involves being *pushed* (Schaufeli, 2014) due to the compulsion/inner drive (Bakker *et al.,* 2008).

Consequently, Kahn (1990) treated the three psychological conditions as contracts where employees ask themselves whether carrying out the role provides perceived benefits (meaningfulness), perceived safety, and whether they consider that they have sufficient resources to do the role (psychological availability). This recognises the dynamic nature of engagement and as such provides more than the traditional motivation theories which tend to explain what/how to motivate which implies that people are either motivated or not (Kahn, 2010). This tacit assessment is based on multiple levels including individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup and organisational (Kahn, 1990), and is antecedent to engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2016) thus providing a psychological explanatory mechanism as to why employees engage (Albrecht *et al.,* 2018). Such an assessment will vary across people because of their different perceptions of self-in-role, confidence, perceived safety and individual development (Kahn, 1992), and is continuous (Shuck, *et al.,* 2011; Shuck and Reio, 2011; Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015) making it hard to develop and sustain (Kahn, 2010). Interestingly, it is not yet known if the strength of one psychological condition can offset another that is not adequately met, or whether they are of equal importance (Kahn, 1990). That said, whilst this mechanism is useful to explain the antecedents for engagement, they do not fully explain why individuals will respond with engagement. Social exchange theory (SET) provides a stronger theoretical base (Saks, 2006), so will be discussed later in this chapter.

To maintain clarity, Kahn (1990) only reported pure personal engagement and disengagement examples, and he excluded those examples which included a mixture of engagement and disengagement. He deliberately focused on personal engagement rather than employee or work engagement, to consider how much of themselves people bring to their work in terms of role behaviours (self-employment) and self-expression (Kahn and Heaphy, 2014). However, this ignores the characters people sometimes play in their in-role performances, such as in the case of the camp counsellors in Kahn's (1990) study, where they had to act as teacher, police, or carer, depending on the situation or student campers needs. Also, structural constraints such as rules/regulations sometimes dictate role actions rather than personal values and agency (Heugens and Lander, 2009). For example, LA employees may have to refuse cases that do not match the eligibility criteria, even if they personally feel that the person needs support. It is as if Kahn (1990) believes that if a person cannot bring their whole self to work, then they will be disengaged, which may not be the case.

As people bring different amounts of themselves to role performances (Kahn, 2010), this suggests that people can engage to different levels. Gourlay *et al.,* (2012) describes this as emotional or transactional engagement. Emotional engagement is where employees are driven to do more, and in return receive a greater PC from the organisation, thus is similar to Goldthorpe *et al.'s* (1968) career orientation to work. Whereas, transactionally engaged employees with an instrumental orientation to work (Goldthorpe *et al.,* 1968), are driven by the need to earn a living and have minimal expectations on their employer. As such, they may not feel obliged to be engaged, preferring to focus on a '*fair day's work for a fair day's pay*' (Guest, 2014a, p. 150). These different intrinsic and extrinsic needs may be reflected in professional and non-professional staff. That said, employees may be emotionally engaged to one aspect such as customers, and transactionally engaged to another such as the organisation, and this may change over time (Gourlay *et al.,* 2012).

Of further interest is that engagement levels tend to fluctuate during the working day depending on the individual's person-role fit (Kahn, 1990; Saks and Gruman, 2014) mentioned earlier, and the extent people feel comfortable in this role. Despite these fluctuations, Schaufeli *et al.,* (2002, p. 74) points out that engagement is not momentary, and that it is "*a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour*". Shuck *et al.,* (2017b) expand on this by explaining that while employee engagement may fluctuate moment to moment, there is a cumulative effect where it can either increase or decrease over time, and it is not due to a single interaction or circumstance (Xanthopoulou *et al.,* 2012). One may be drained one day and the next full of energy (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Such tiredness may also be pleasant if it is associated with personal achievement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Bakker *et al.,* 2011). Consequently, in personality theory, given 'acting out of character' would be attributed to something else such as stress or drugs (Wildermuth, 2010), and the PC (discussed later) also allows for fluctuations within acceptable limits (Schalk and Roe, 2007), it is odd that occasional disengagement does not appear to be attributed to some other factor in the same way. That said, work engagement (discussed later) reflects this by distinguishing between state work engagement, which is how someone feels at that particular point in time, and general work engagement, which is how someone feels over a period of time making it more stable (Xanthopoulou *et al.,* 2008; Kim *et al.,* 2012).

Moreover, George (2010) says that alternating levels of high and low engagement may lead to better outcomes, even if these fluctuations are on the same day (Bakker, 2011). This is because there is a need for recovery to prevent exhaustion and loss of creativity (George, 2010; Kahn, 2010). This is why there is a concern that employee engagement may lead to lack of work life balance (Purcell, 2012) or the different construct of work intensification (Welbourne and Schramm, 2017) if taken to the extreme.

As already mentioned, another widely used academic definition of engagement is referred to as work engagement, characterised by vigour, absorption and dedication (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2002). This is considered to be a positive state of mind activated towards work tasks (Bailey *et al.,* 2017), and the resulting behaviour is an outcome of engagement. However, the CIPD (2015) point out that this definition does not include awareness of business context which is central to employee engagement (Robinson *et al.,* 2004; MacLeod and Clarke, 2009), and imperative in the austerity context given the need to innovate which may provide sustainability (Kim *et al.,* 2012).

Additionally, there are doubts whether work engagement is a distinct and independent construct that differs from burnout (Cole *et al.,* 2012; Taris *et al.,* 2017). Maslach and Leiter (2008) consider that engagement and burnout are direct opposites on the same continuum measured by the MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory) consisting of: exhaustion–energy, cynicism-involvement and inefficacy-efficacy. Whereas, Schaufeli *et al.,* (2002) recognise that measuring burnout and engagement with the same instrument makes it impossible to study their relationship empirically. So, they developed the UWES (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale) self-reported questionnaire, believing that engagement and burnout are independent constructs that are negatively related rather than direct bipolar opposites (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

The shortened version of the UWES consists of three questions for each dimension of work engagement (that is vigour, absorption and dedication) and has been validated across many countries (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2006), excluding the UK and USA. However, the questions are not necessarily indicators of work engagement. For example, to not be 'bursting with energy', may simply reflect jobs requiring high mental skills where such employees are likely to dedicate energy to the task and be cognitively engaged and focused, despite not exhibiting energy outwardly (Anthony-McMann *et al.*, 2017).

Similarly, just because an individual 'does not feel like going into work', does not mean they are disengaged. They may simply have non-work responsibilities and/or interests.

Additionally, the construct validity of the scale is still being debated given some of the questions on the UWES scale represent situational factors such as 'to me, my job is challenging' demonstrating autonomy and skill variety which are potentially predictors of engagement (Saks and Gruman, 2014), or mirror related constructs such as job satisfaction, involvement, commitment or positive affect (Newman and Harrison, 2008). Plus, the questions relating to inspiration and dedication may exclude some occupational groups and may be more appropriate for professional work (Li and Frenkel, 2017). Similarly, the reference to absorption means that this definition may only apply to a minority of employees that do the type of work that enables them to become fully engrossed (Purcell, 2014b). That said, some researchers (such as Hakanen *et al.,* 2006; Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008; Li and Frenkel, 2017) have chosen not to utilise the absorption dimension which is the most distinct of the three dimensions to burnout (Saks and Gruman, 2014), arguing that absorption is a consequence of engagement (Li and Frenkel, 2017). Moreover, Crawford *et al.,* (2010) found that some challenge demands such as time urgency, were both positively related to burnout AND engagement. This suggests that engagement and burnout are distinct constructs and not polar opposites. Schaufeli and Taris (2014, p. 56) address this by re-naming positively perceived 'challenges' to 'positively valued demands', thus classifying it as a resource, and negatively perceived 'threats' to 'negatively valued resources', thus classifying it as a demand. More recently, Leiter and Maslach (2017) and Schaufeli and DeWitte (2017) advocate that burnout and engagement is neither completely opposite, and yet not completely independent. It is different and yet related. Accordingly, they recommend further research utilising all elements of MBI and UWES to resolve this debate.

Consequently, whilst the work engagement definition and UWES is frequently used within the academic literature, these concerns regarding the distinctiveness of the definition, along with the inconsistencies of application, suggest that it is unlikely to capture engagement. Subsequently, Cole *et al.,* (2012) says it may be better to utilise Kahn's (1990) definition as that recognises the connection between engagement and work role performance which is not necessarily covered explicitly by burnout theory, and it also recognises the employee's personal agency. In response, Saks and Gruman (2014) have proposed an integrated framework incorporating both the JD-R and Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions believing that certain job demands and personal resources influence Kahn's (1990) different psychological conditions, which leads to different types of engagement.

Given the numerous engagement terms, it is recognised that the difference in term articulates whether engagement is with the individual as a person, or as an employee (Kahn and Heaphy, 2014). Kahn (1990) prefers the term personal engagement as it enables exploration of people's experiences (Kahn, 1992) as noted earlier. Whereas, work engagement focuses on engagement to the work and adopts the psychological states approach. Employee engagement may include both job and organisational engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). That said, Truss (2014) believes that employee (or behavioural) engagement is the organisational approach taken to manage their workforce. In other words, employee engagement is "doing" engagement, whereas work engagement is "being engaged". Alternatively, employee engagement has also been described as a psychological state in terms of the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional and behavioural energy (Shuck *et al.,* 2017b). Whilst academics may be interested in how people can bring their full "self" to their role/job/tasks, practitioners may be interested in maximising employee efforts (Guest, 2014a). Consequently, Albrecht (2010) suggests that definitions should include both the psychological state and the willingness to contribute to organisational success.

Academics are also divided on whether employee engagement is a trait (Macey and Schneider, 2008 - although they consider engagement is a trait, state and behavioural package) psychological state (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002; Albrecht, 2010; Shuck and Wollard, 2010; Soane *et al.,* 2012) or a behaviour (Saks, 2006; Welch, 2011):

> "... *an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organizational outcomes*".
> (Shuck and Wollard 2010, p. 103)

> "*A distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance".* (Saks, 2006, p. 602).

Defining engagement as a trait implies stability within individuals across time and context. However, as discussed earlier, studies have shown that engagement fluctuates (Kahn, 1990). Nevertheless, it may be that personality traits affect the employee's interpretation of the environment thus informing engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2017b). Consequently, the need to align individuals with jobs (Kahn, 1990; Saks and Gruman, 2014) makes selection as important as job design (Guest, 2014a). Wildermuth (2010) goes further in suggesting that employees with some personality characteristics such as conscientiousness, are more likely to be engaged. However, this would limit engagement to people with those traits which is unlikely. It would also question whether the job demands-resources model can explain variations in engagement (Guest, 2014a).

The state approach is advantageous as it provides conceptual clarity and encompasses both energy and involvement/dedication (Bakker *et al.,* 2011). It also helps explain what drives engagement/disengagement (Kahn, 1992). However, the measurements tend to be self-reported instruments which present problems in accurate self-assessment and social desirability issues (Northrup, 1996; Ahmad and Zafar, 2018; Griep and Vantilborgh, 2018). They also risk manipulation if managers use threats/rewards to influence employee responses (Purcell, 2014b).

Furthermore, it is questionable whether a self-reported measurement instrument would be able to capture such a fluctuating state (Kahn, 1990; Bakker *et al.,* 2011; Purcell, 2014b) which may change as situations/environments change presenting test-retest reliability issues (Fletcher and Robinson, 2014). Moreover, the state approach of work engagement is unlikely to reflect organisational life fully. For example, conflict is not discussed in the work engagement literature. The failure to consider context ignores groups of employees who may be disengaged due to valid reasons such as job insecurity, zero hours contracts, pay reductions. Whilst examining context is not the function of the positive psychologists advocating work engagement, it may have an unintended impact on the people that read their research (Purcell, 2014b).

Additionally, Shuck *et al.,* (2017b) considers that Kahn's (1990) personal engagement definition is a process definition, viewed as a motivational state, perhaps in an attempt to avoid associating engagement with unethical constructs such as work intensification. They therefore consider that engagement cannot be seen but it is experienced, and this then informs the direction and intensity of their energies (Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). However, Kahn (1992, p. 322) appears to consider this to be psychological presence:

> '*personally engaging behaviors involve the channeling of personal energies into physical, cognitive, and emotional labors. … Psychological presence is defined here as the experiential state that accompanies such personally engaging behaviors*'.

Subsequently, the physical/behavioural dimension of Kahn's (1990) definition appears to be more than '*behavioural energy*' (Shuck *et al.,* 2017b, p. 269) as it involves '*active, full role performance*' (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). Accordingly, Guest (2014b) considers that Kahn's (1990) definition is a behavioural one. This is also suggested in the examples that Kahn (2010) provides including exercising employee voice, problem-solving and taking corrective action, thus incorporating the cognitive, emotional and social/physical/behavioural dimensions.

Whilst this behavioural employee engagement definition, which Purcell (2014b) considers is better termed as employee engagement, is likely to impact performance, this may not automatically imply a rated element such as 'good' or 'superior' performance given the many variables involved in performance, and the difficulties in isolating cause and effect. For example, Cesário and Chambel's (2017) study claims to show that work engagement is the best predictor of performance by using the UWES work engagement scale and employee's reporting of their latest performance appraisal rating assessed by their line manager. However, the performance data used precedes the self-reported work engagement measurement. Similarly, Carter *et al.,* (2018) found a positive relationship between work engagement measured by the nine-item UWES and performance at two time intervals. However, given engagement levels fluctuate, the problems with the UWES instrument, and the small sample size (64 respondents), it is not conclusive. Moreover, an employee may be engaged but not have the ability or opportunity to do what is needed (Appelbaum *et al.,* 2000; Fuller and Shikaloff, 2017). Over time this may adversely impact their psychological availability and lower their engagement (Kahn, 1990). Similarly, the idea that engagement leads to performance in that linear fashion is simplistic as whilst some jobs require high engagement to perform well, other jobs only require a little engagement to perform well (Sparrow, 2014).

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, engagement may be due to fear such as being innovative to demonstrate their worth during times of job insecurity (Griffin *et al.,* 2008). This may suggest that negative psychological safety contributes to engagement which is especially relevant in austerity. This implies that the extent performance will vary in accordance with engagement will depend on the situation, time and individual, justifying the incorporation of context in engagement research.

Consequently, this review demonstrates that whilst some authors (such as Schaufeli *et al.,* 2002; Shuck *et al.,* 2017b) consider engagement to be a state, and that traits are antecedent, and behaviour is a consequence, others (such as Guest 2014b, Purcell, 2014b) consider that the activation that comes from that state (that is, behavioural engagement) to be engagement. Perhaps these debates may be reconciled by building on Macey and Schneider's (2008) and Wildermuth's (2010) integrated models, and their subsequent critique, and also incorporate Albrecht's (2010) earlier point to include state engagement and organisational success, to view engagement as a chain (Figure 2), particularly given the accompaniment of state and behavioural engagement (Kahn, 1992).

Figure 2 – Conceptual Framework - Employee Engagement Chain
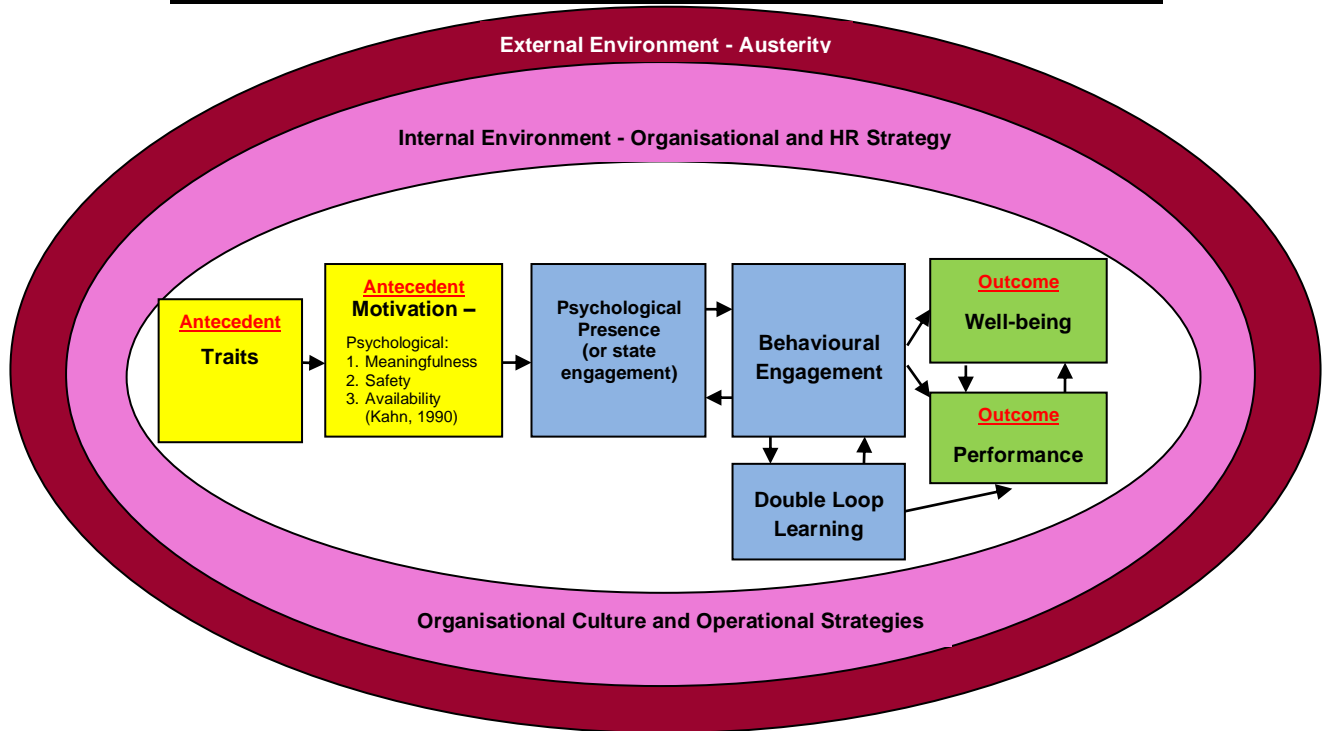
Source: Author's Own

By viewing employee engagement as a chain, it avoids the criticism that engagement is an "*umbrella term*" (Saks, 2008, p.40) by recognising that traits are antecedent to engagement. It also articulates that state engagement (or psychological presence, Kahn 1992) may occur during and/or after behavioural engagement (Saks, 2008), which potentially may foster further behavioural engagement, thus reflecting the distinctiveness and interdependence of state and behavioural engagement.

The above model also includes the internal and external environments, and indicates that varied personalities and cultures may respond differently to these factors. This may be taken further by suggesting that double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Argyris, 2002) is a form of behavioural engagement and may be what Kahn (2010) meant about people engaging their whole selves and senses to their role and challenges. That said, Saks (2006; 2008) considers double loop learning is an outcome of engagement. Nevertheless, this is essentially what the previous UK Government wanted to achieve through innovation.

To summarise, employee engagement may be viewed as a chain that includes psychological state engagement (or psychological presence, Kahn, 1992) AND behavioural engagement. As such, when studying employee engagement, it is important to be clear which aspect is the focal of the inquiry (Macey and Schneider, 2008). Consequently, this study will investigate behavioural engagement which includes the dimensions of cognitive, emotional, physical, behavioural and social engagement. This is because unlike psychological presence (usually referred to as psychological state engagement), behavioural engagement is more able to incorporate context (Purcell, 2014b) which the research questions require. This is a key consideration given the decision to engage or not is based on a subjective assessment of the work environment (Kahn, 1990), which is especially important in research like this that seeks to understand how to foster engagement. It is also more likely to be of interest to organisations (Newman and Harrison, 2008; Saks, 2008). Furthermore, it enables the incorporation of the views of both line managers and employees given behavioural engagement is easier to assess, for example, by line manager observation. This is a significant strength of the study rather than relying on employee self-report alone which is often the case with psychological state engagement studies. In particular, thinking about how to do the job better (cognitive) and sharing these ideas with co-workers/managers (behavioural/social), are pertinent to this study given the need for the LA to still meet statutory duties within the austerity funding and staffing reductions. As attempts to foster engagement may fail, disengagement will now be discussed.

3.23 Disengagement

Kahn (1990, p. 694) says that disengagement is the:

> "*uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances*".

A disengaged employee carries out their role by just doing enough to avoid any formal sanctions (Hackman and Oldham, 1980) and avoids using initiative (Lemon and Palenchar, 2018). This is possible because "*it is hard for the employer to define and then monitor and control the amount of effort, innovation and productive behaviour required*" (CIPD, 2002, p. 2). As a result, the disengaged employee will perform their role as per the rules/regulations/procedures in a robotic way, and not interpret or question assumptions. Critical thinking is reduced preventing collaboration and innovation (CIPD, 2015), and quick fixes suggested are accepted rather than thoroughly appraising problems (Pater, 2013) thus being:

> "... *physically uninvolved in tasks, cognitively unvigilant and emotionally disconnected from others in ways that hide what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connections to others*". (Kahn, 1990, p. 702).

In other words, disengaged employees withhold their physical, cognitive and emotional energies and are detached from their role performances (Kahn, 1990) thus '*going through the motions*' (Pater, 2013). In doing so, this is likely to adversely affect customer service and quality. In addition, positivity/hope is lost and cynicism increases. Tangible effects may be seen in increased absenteeism, turnover, accidents and theft (Wollard, 2011). It may also spread amongst colleagues (Menguc *et al.,* 2013).

Often an unfavourable assessment of Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions that leads to disengagement is attributed to the perception of poor workplace conditions, or work tasks which are not meaningful (Kahn, 1990; Fairlie, 2011).

It may also be due to reduced psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) from role ambiguity and/or poor co-worker relationships (Rastogi *et al.,* 2018), lack of managerial support (Shuck, *et al.,* 2011; Shuck and Herd, 2012), or the lack of leadership or poor leadership practices (Soane, 2014) which reduces trust. Line managers that do not share information may also cause anger in employees (Spector and Fox, 2010a). Peer pressure to reduce productivity in line with group norms can also lower psychological safety and engagement (Kahn, 1992; Macey and Schneider, 2008). Additionally, disengagement may occur when there is a lack of diversity and no mechanisms in place to allow functional conflict, thus stifling creativity (Kahn, 2010). Furthermore, disengagement may be due to macro factors such as financial downturns (Shuck and Herd, 2012) which impacts employees so is significant for LAs during austerity.

However, disengagement is not just due to work factors. Individual factors such as low confidence/insecurity, development and people's personal lives such as increased caring duties, divorce, bereavement, or financial worries, may also decrease energy levels at work (Kahn, 1992). Furthermore, employees may experience engagement and disengagement concurrently as they may find some aspects of their work engaging, and others disengaging (Shuck *et al.,* 2016). This highlights that individuals engage to different elements of organisational life.

Disengagement may also be used deliberately as coping mechanisms for difficult work situations (Valentin, 2014; Wollard, 2011), for example, when work is boring and not stimulating (Spector and Fox, 2010a). Similarly, if job creep occurs, where extra-role behaviour becomes *"viewed as in-role obligations by supervisors and peers"* (Van Dyne and Butler Ellis, 2004, p. 184), disengagement can be a reasonable response to unreasonable work demands/conditions, showing how employees and managers' views may differ (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017).

Disengagement may also be a way of dealing with incidents at work which conflict with their own values where employees appear engaged, but their 'heart and soul' is not invested (Valentin, 2014). Additionally, it may also be due to self-preservation, for example when working on cases that cause emotional distress such as child abuse, homelessness or terminal illness. Typical coping strategies include emotional hardening and cognitive distancing (separating themselves from the case), and leaning on procedures to depersonalise the event thus deliberately disengaging from aspects of the role (Ashman, 2013). Moreover, being psychologically present is exhausting and, as mentioned earlier, not advisable continuously (Kahn, 1992), so disengagement may be used to prevent, or in response to burnout (Maslach, *et al.,* 2001).

Furthermore, engaged employees may grant themselves a moral license to be disengaged, for example by chatting socially or stealing the stationery, considering this has been earned from previous perceived engaged behaviour (Welch and Welch, 2008; Klotz and Bolino, 2013). Once a moral license has been granted, the employee will not necessarily disengage immediately, but may await the next opportunity. For example, avoiding a task they dislike. Consequently, moral licensing may reveal a negative side to engagement and extra-role behaviour (Klotz and Bolino, 2013). Alternatively, it may simply be an opportunity for recovery and reflection (George, 2010).

Kahn (1992) also explains that whilst the literature focuses on increasing the meaningfulness of work, that attention also needs to be paid to psychological safety. Organisations have a tendency to drive engagement through alignment of the organisational values, thus viewing employees in a passive role, and not recognising that engagement is very much down to employee choice (Francis and Reddington, 2011). Additionally, line managers are advised to focus their efforts on active disengagement (Johnson, 2011), as this is where people are "*busy acting out their unhappiness*" (Purcell, 2014b, p. 243).

Conversely, Kahn (1992) also explains that organisations may encourage disengagement when they demand that individuals are not psychologically present. For example, when individuals are asking too many questions, voicing dissatisfaction or whistle blowing. This is likely to be because it is time consuming and chaotic to deal with high psychological presence. Similarly, if jobs and/or organisational systems are designed in such a way that employee autonomy is limited, people will have no choice but to be at least partially personally absent.

Wollard (2011) considers that engagement and disengagement may be represented as an engagement continuum ranging from fully engaged, to occasionally/temporarily disengaged to actively disengaged (Figure 3). This recognises that the fluctuating nature of engagement to disengagement is not a linear process. This may be because the individual may attempt to reconcile psychological safety, meaningfulness and availability, and this will be impacted by context and individual resilience (Wollard, 2011). It also suggests that 'occasional/temporary disengagement' may be due to recovery.

Figure 3 - Engagement/Disengagement Continuum

| Actively Disengaged | Disengaged (Occasionally) | Engaged |

Source: Adapted from Wollard (2011, pp. 528-529)
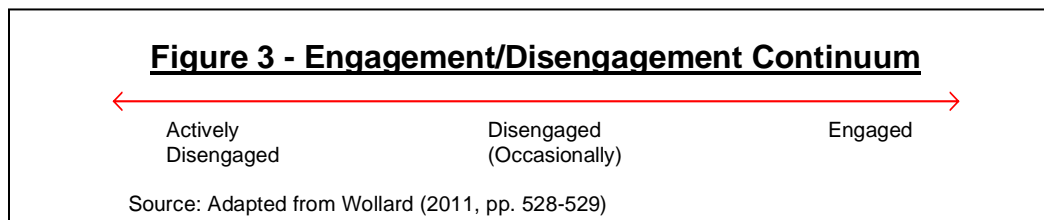
That said, Byrne *et al.,* (2016) considered that Kahn (1990) viewed engagement and disengagement as different constructs. This is because Kahn (1990) explained that the decision to engage or not was based on the answers to questions from his three psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety and availability). This suggests that the factors leading to engagement and disengagement are different. If this is the case, then the opposite to engagement would be no engagement (Claxton, 2015; 2016) in the same way as Herzberg (1968) explained that the opposite of job satisfaction is no satisfaction, and the opposite of job dissatisfaction is no job dissatisfaction. Further consideration of this issue is beyond the scope of this study, but may be worthwhile in future.

In relation to the reported engagement deficit debate, the practitioner literature and consultancy firms tend to report on the engagement deficit, but often do not provide sufficient detail about their methodologies and results to critically evaluate it. The lack of transparent measures and evidence to show that engagement results in positive outcomes for both the employee and employer (Briner, 2014; Welbourne and Schramm, 2017), makes it hard to make a case for pursuing engagement initiatives. Nevertheless, it is possible that the so-called 'disengagement deficit' is the outcome of the distribution curve if the distribution is 'cut' into groups of equal frequencies where "*there will always be 30 per cent of respondents' who could be classified as displaying either high or low levels of engagement*" (Keenoy, 2014, p. 207). This leads to the next part of this chapter to consider the assumptions of engagement.

3.24 Assumptions

Often employee engagement is considered as being good for the organisation. This assumes that engagement is driven by the organisation in a unitarist fashion, with employees adopting a passive role. However, engagement comes from the control of the employee (Kahn, 1990; Rich *et al.,* 2010; Cole *et al.,* 2012; Francis *et al.,* 2013) suggesting a pluralism of interests (Arrowsmith and Parker, 2013). There also appears to be a normative assumption that workers should be engaged and yet often organisations do not offer anything in return for the employee (Guest, 2014a). However, when there is an emphasis on psychological well-being, engagement can be good for employees due to the positive feelings, satisfaction and a sense of purpose it provides (Robertson and Cooper, 2010). In other words, people feel good when they feel they are doing something worthwhile (Kahn, 1990; Cole *et al.,* 2012). Despite this, there appears to be a lack of emphasis on such employee benefits (Guest, 2017; Welbourne and Schramm, 2017). That said, it may not be fair to expect employees to be permanently engaged as there is a need for recovery (Kahn, 1990; 1992; George, 2010).

Additionally, not all jobs are designed to permit engagement such as the 'picking' jobs at Amazon, where they have their 'pick-up' routes pre-determined and timed (BBC Panorama, 2013). Here, there appears to be little need for cognitive engagement, other than accurate pick-ups, and a risk that physical engagement may become work intensification. Consequently, engagement may not be essential for organisational success (Valentin, 2014), although this does raise moral issues.

3.25 Summary

In summary, employee engagement is a distinct multi-dimensional construct which may benefit both organisations and employees. Nevertheless, the engagement literature suffers from a lack of an agreed definition (Briner, 2014; Welbourne, 2017), debates over what employees may engage with (Baron, 2013; Saks, 2006; Saks and Gruman, 2014), a lack of emphasis on employee benefits of being engaged (Guest, 2017; Welbourne and Schramm, 2017), and a risk that engagement may lead to the different construct of work intensification (Purcell, 2012; Welbourne and Schramm, 2017). Furthermore, disengagement may occur for a variety of contextual and individual reasons.

In an effort to address the definitional complexities, this study proposes that engagement may be viewed as a chain. Hence, this study will focus on the behavioural engagement part of this chain, which will include the cognitive, emotional, physical/behavioural/social dimensions. This has been chosen because behavioural engagement can be observed and incorporates multiple voices and context which is critical to this study. Behavioural engagement will be referred to as 'employee (behavioural) engagement' (Purcell, 2014b) or 'engagement' hereon to avoid confusion of the concept with the physical/behavioural dimension which is only one aspect. Additionally, using the term '(employee) engagement' articulates the interdependence of state and behavioural engagement. Whereas, 'employee (behavioural) engagement' recognises its distinctiveness with state engagement. How this may be fostered is examined next.

3.3 Fostering Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

3.31 Introduction

As previously discussed, managers cannot mandate engagement. They can only create the conditions where employee engagement may occur (Shuck *et al.,* 2016). This is difficult given employees are continuously assessing the work environment to determine whether to engage (Kahn, 2010; Shuck and Reio, 2011; Shuck, *et al.,* 2011; Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). Managers may struggle to create Kahn's (1990) psychological antecedents of engagement (that is psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability) perhaps because employee perceptions of these will vary, making the identification of interventions difficult (Shuck *et al.,* 2016). This complexity is increased when there are competing pressures for managers time, and easy to abandon when results are not immediate (Smith, 2014). Consequently, fostering engagement is not a one-off intervention, requiring ongoing and conscious effort from managers (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a), particularly middle and frontline managers, who are in closer contact with employees (Kim and Mauborgne, 2014). When achieved, both organisations and employees can benefit (Smith, 2014).

Despite this, whilst there are studies on antecedents and consequences of engagement (for example, Saks, 2006), and related literature such as the PC and high performance/commitment work systems, the process of fostering employee engagement is not often focused on explicitly within the academic discourse (Arrowsmith and Parker, 2013; Reissner and Pagan, 2013). Much of this related literature is based on managerialist needs to improve performance (Legge, 2005; Francis *et al.,* 2013), leaving a neglect of workers concerns (Guest, 1999; 2017) and employee agency (Francis *et al.,* 2013; Purcell, 2014c). Consequently, there is "*an absence of theory-based intervention studies*" (Guest, 2014a, p. 145), and yet these '*hold the greatest potential for theory, research and practice*' (Bakker and Leiter, 2010, p. 193) in understanding the processes and interrelationships.

Furthermore, the context of austerity has increased employer power, so it is questionable whether employees will reciprocate with engagement when their PC is adversely changing, and the threat of job loss is heavily perceived. Although some may consider engagement as only relevant in times of economic growth (Holbeche, 2014), others recognise that it is even more important in an unstable, uncertain business environment (Shuck and Reio, 2011) as employees may be able to identify and propose new and better ways of working. Such focus on the job (Saks, 2006), cognitive and emotional engagement (Kahn, 1990), and social engagement (Alfes *et al.,* 2010) are critical to ongoing service provision within fewer resources.

That said, organisational efforts to foster engagement often fail. In addition to the complexity and dynamic nature discussed earlier, this may be because the strategies are aimed at the organisational level along with the emphasis on organisational benefits of expected increased performance, and yet the decision to engage is made at the individual level. Consequently, focus needs to be given to the micro-level (individual) (Shuck and Wollard, 2010) in making employees feel valued and that their work is worthwhile (Claxton, 2013; 2014; Shuck *et al.,* 2014b). This highlights the importance of the line manager's role in fostering engagement (Alfes *et al.,* 2010; Lewis *et al.,* 2011; 2012; Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2013; Holland *et al.,* 2017). Furthermore, to be effective, interventions need to have a dual process of promoting well-being and a positive employment relationship (Guest, 2017). To explore this, the people management-performance causal chain will be used as a systematic framework to demonstrate how austerity has reduced the levers available to line managers to foster engagement, and how this is perceived by both line managers and employees. The aim is to demonstrate via multiple viewpoints, the difficulties of fostering engagement at the individual level, within an austerity context which has been affected by external macro economic and political factors. The literature on this model will now be reviewed.

3.32 People Management-Performance Causal Chain

The people management-performance causal chain (Figure 4) was originally developed by Wright and Nishii (2005), and further developed by Purcell and Hutchinson (2007a), explained next.

Figure 4 - The People Management-Performance Causal Chain

| Intended Practices | → | Actual Practices | → | Perceptions of Practices | → | Employee Attitudes | → | Employee Behaviour | → | Unit Level Outcomes |

Source: Purcell and Hutchinson (2007a)
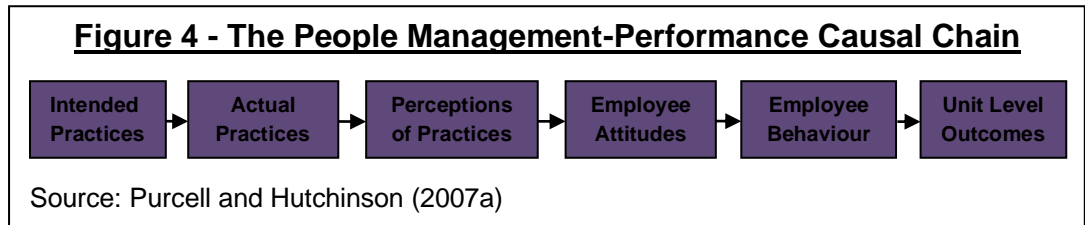
In summarising this work, a similar model was later produced by Marchington and Wilkinson (2012), and they branded it the HRM-performance link. Their title is advantageous as it avoids reference to causality given performance may be affected by other variables outside of the model. However, the people management-performance causal chain does not claim causality (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a), or aim to show all interconnections (Purcell and Kinnie, 2007). Rather it highlights the critical steps if people management practices are to impact employee behaviour and performance (Purcell and Kinnie, 2007) thus making it appropriate for a Heideggerian phenomenological study. Additionally, Schular's (1992) 5 P's model [HR philosophy (culture), policies, programs (strategy), practice and processes] was also considered but rejected given the focus of this study is in relation to the implementation of practices and experiences at the micro-level (individual), and does not review organisational level variables such as HR philosophy and strategy, other than acknowledging the levers available to managers. This is because scholars (such as Shuck and Wollard, 2010; Shuck *et al.,* 2016) have suggested that engagement is predominantly formed at the individual level (Shuck *et al.,* 2017b). Although organisational and external and factors can also impact this, it may not be to the same degree given their distal nature (Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). As such, it is recognised that HR practice can affect performance independently of strategy (Wright and Gardner, 2003), and by the same reasoning, impact engagement.

Intended Practices

These are the policies designed by the organisation's decision makers to contribute to the achievement of the business strategy (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). In other words, they are the levers/interventions available to line managers to manage people. The policies and practices will be influenced by the external and internal environment (Dunlop and Weil, 1996; Ichniowski *et al.,* 1996) including organisational values and operational requirements (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a).

These levers will be examined under MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/driver of strategic narrative, engaging managers, integrity and employee voice which have been chosen given the previous Coalition Government supported the Employee Engagement Task Force which builds on the MacLeod and Clarke (2009) report (BIS, 2011). Although explained separately, these enablers/drivers are mutually reinforcing. However, they are not explicit practices and require further detail in order to inform action (Guest, 2014b). Nevertheless, they place the manager in the centre stage of the process of fostering engagement (Jenkins and Delbridge, 2013), making them appropriate for this study.

> **Strategic narrative** is where employees have an understanding about the organisation's purpose and how they are contributing towards it. This may be facilitated by downward communication to foster psychological meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990) by enabling employees to understand how their role contributes to the bigger picture (Daymon, 2000; Holland *et al.,* 2017; Albrecht *et al.,* 2018). It can also generate excitement and interest which fosters psychological availability (Kahn, 1990). This may also influence perceptions of feeling valued and involved (Robinson *et al.,* 2004; 2007; Reissner and Pagan, 2013), supported (Karanges *et al.,* 2014; Holland *et al.,* 2017) and enhance their self-identity (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006) thus potentially generating psychological safety (Kahn, 1990).

Communicating the strategic narrative is particularly important in times of economic uncertainty as the employees' need for organisational communication is higher (Ruck and Welch, 2012) given the risk to job security. Informational justice may lower cognitive resistance to change and PC breach (De Ruiter *et al.,* 2017). Whereas, failure to provide information may cause anger (Spector and Fox, 2010a), lower trust and make employees feel that information is being deliberately withheld (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2009), potentially leading to PC breach and disengagement.

When communicating the strategic narrative, managers may use mitigating, exonerating or reframing accounts. Mitigating accounts are when the manager explains that they had no other alternative. For example, the austerity measures meant that there was no other alternative but to make redundancies. Exonerating accounts may be made by linking their request to higher order norms/values, such as asking an employee to work extra hours by emphasising their importance. Similarly, exonerating accounts can encourage employees to accept unintended consequences of well intentioned actions. For example, a line manager explaining the intentions behind his/her action, and acknowledging and expressing regret for the negative consequences, thus showing concern for the employee and encouraging the employee to forgive them (Eisenberger *et al.,* 2004; Tomprou *et al.,* 2015). Whereas, reframing can be used to place a current negative outcome in a positive light, for example, by comparing their action with less favourable action either elsewhere, or from the past. Alternatively, it may be suggested that the future is more positive, thus using inspirational appeal (Yukl and Falbe, 1990) to foster Kahn's (1990) psychological meaningfulness (Reina *et al.,* 2018) and availability. These techniques intend to legitimise the manager's actions and shape the employee's PC by '*attention switching*' (Sitkin and Bies, 1993, p. 357).

Engaging managers motivate, coach, support and stretch their employees (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009) and treat them as individuals (Lemon and Palenchar, 2018). Truss *et al.,* (2006) reported that a third of employees say that their manager does not discuss their training and development needs, or give them feedback on their performance. Yet these techniques can boost psychological meaningfulness and safety, and generate excitement to foster psychological availability (Kahn, 1990).

Integrity is where the organisation's values are reflected in everyday behaviours. This can enhance trust which is:

> "... *about accepting a certain amount of uncertainty but being willing to take risks and go into the unknown because you trust the other party that they will act in a positive way towards you*". (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012, p. 5).

This shows that trust involves both parties accepting the risk of non-reciprocation within the exchange relationship (Guerrero *et al.,* 2014) so is integral to the PC (Guest, 2004). Consequently, Purcell (2012; 2014c) pointed out that trust, organisational justice and perceptions of fairness, are vital for fostering engagement and are thus major antecedents as trust influences psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). Managers are more likely to be considered trustworthy when they are authentic (Claxton, 2013), communication is accurate and forthcoming, when they allocate time to communicate, when explanations are adequate and timely (Iyer and Israel, 2012), and where employees are able to share their views (Alfes *et al.,* 2010) discussed next.

Employee voice are mechanisms for employees' views to be sought and listened to, thus challenging the status quo and enabling employees to be involved with decision-making to foster their engagement (Rees *et al.,* 2013; Ruck *et al.,* 2017).

Such two-way communication, or conversational practice (Francis *et al.,* 2013), is likely to make employees feel valued (Reissner and Pagan, 2013) and develop trust (Rees *et al.,* 2013; Holland *et al.,* 2017). This enables line managers to foster a more reciprocal relationship with employees via a mutuality of gains and interests (Francis *et al.,* 2013; Rees *et al.,* 2013), thus strengthening the PC to foster engagement (Biswas *et al.,* 2013). It may also buffer the negative effects of organisational change and PC breach (De Ruiter *et al.,* 2017) to maintain engagement (Holland *et al.,* 2017).

Conversational practice may be categorised into 4 types. 'Initiative conversations' are where line managers openly discuss options for change with employees. Shared meaning is gained from 'conversations for understanding'. 'Conversations for mutual outcomes' aim to support employee needs in the pursuit for improved performance, leading to a fairer social exchange. Finally, 'generative conversations' are non-episodic, non-prescriptive and never-ending. This provides challenge/critique to gain both innovation and an improved long-term employment relationship. Whilst these are described separately, in practice they are likely to be interwoven (Francis *et al.,* 2013).

That said, exercising employee voice is only one side of the '*employee voice coin*' (Ruck *et al.,* 2017, p. 907). Commitment to listening and responding to employee voice is also required. Where employee views cannot be implemented, feedback should be provided to foster psychological safety (Kahn, 1990), show that the individual is valued, and aid employee understanding (Claxton, 2013) to foster learning which may lead to better suggestions in future (Rapp and Eklund 2002; IDS, 2005). That said, employees must also choose to participate in engagement interventions, thus showing how the decision to engage firmly rests with the employee (Reissner and Pagan, 2013).

Actual/Implemented Practices

Mintzberg (1978) noted the differences between planned and realised strategy, and Wright and Nishii (2005) brought this into the strategic HR literature to acknowledge the difference between intended and actual HR practices. This recognises that not all intended HR practices are implemented in ways that were originally intended, and indeed not all intended HR practices are actually implemented at all (Wright and Nishii, 2005; Li and Frenkel, 2017). Additionally, all eventualities cannot be provided for within a HR policy, so line managers apply these differently in different contexts (Li and Frenkel, 2017). This will be affected by the line manager's skills and style (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a), access to resources, and creativity in suggesting alternatives. Consequently, the austerity pressures may reduce engagement interventions implemented, as has been done with involvement/participation practices during financial difficulties (Drago, 1988). Managers may also treat employees differently due to their own biases, or their perceptions of the employee's ability/willingness to engage (Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Brown and Leigh, 1996). Such inconsistency in application across managers, and large rhetoric-reality gaps, may lower the effectiveness of engagement interventions.

Another difficulty in fostering engagement in austerity is that many managers in LAs will be going through downsizing exercises. Consequently, line managers are acting as envoys, the term given to agents or messengers tasked with having redeployment/ redundancy talks with staff which can take many months. Many envoys interviewed by Ashman (2013, p. 21) described the envoy role "*as the worst job they had ever had to do*" demonstrating the high emotional demands on all affected. At the same time, the line managers themselves may also be at risk of redundancy. Ashman's (2013) research showed that where this is the case, redundant employees showed genuine empathy with the 'at risk' envoy.

Perceptions of (Engagement) Practice

Employee perceptions may contribute towards attitudes, engagement and behaviour (Holland *et al.,* 2017) so may be viewed through a lens of fairness and organisational justice (Purcell and Kinnie, 2007). Individual differences and past experiences will influence the way that current experiences are interpreted (Rousseau, 2001a). Employee perceptions will also vary as engagement interventions are implemented differently (Wright and Nishii, 2005). Consequently, employees conclude meanings from engagement practices deployed which shapes their PC (Rousseau and Greller, 1994; Rousseau, 1995; Guest, 2007; Conway and Briner, 2009; Muratbekova-Touron and Galindo, 2018) discussed later, and this impacts their attitude and behaviour (Nishii *et al.,* 2008; Sanders *et al.,* 2014). This may in part be socially constructed thus showing the impact of peers, group norms and the overall strength of the HR climate/culture (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Additionally, engagement is not static (Nielsen and Gonzalez, 2010), and it can be affected negatively and positively by moods (Sy *et al.,* 2005; Bledow *et al.,* 2011). Subsequently, feeling valued is likely to encourage employees to voluntarily engage (Claxton, 2013; 2014), suggesting the reciprocal nature of engagement (Arrowsmith and Parker, 2013; Holland *et al.,* 2017).

Employee Attitudes and Subsequent Reaction/Behaviour

Purcell and Hutchinson (2007a) extended Wright and Nishii's (2005) model by separating employee reactions into employee attitudes and the subsequent behavioural outcomes. This recognises that the employee perceptions will inform the employee's reactions be that cognitive, affective and/or behavioural.

Performance/Unit Level Outcomes

Dyer and Reeves (1995) classify performance outcomes into employee, organisational, financial and market value outcomes. Employee outcomes are HR metrics such as absenteeism and turnover.

Organisational outcomes are performance measures such as quality, productivity and customer satisfaction. Financial outcomes may be profits or sales, although in a LA context, more likely to relate to costs. These were deliberately not used in this study as the interpretive nature of the study, and the focus on employee (behavioural) engagement, meant that it was more important to ascertain multiple viewpoints.

3.33 Assumptions of the People Management-Performance Causal Chain

The People Management-Performance Causal Chain assumes that when an organisation creates the conditions for engagement, employees will then engage more and consequently perform better (Shuck *et al.,* 2016). It also assumes that the behaviour that follows engagement interventions will be based on conscious and deliberate thoughts, demonstrating the employees' personal agency (Kahn, 1990; Rich *et al.,* 2010; Cole *et al.,* 2012; Francis *et al.,* 2013; Purcell, 2014c). This is not always the case as other aspects of context may also impact behaviour (George, 2009; Bailey *et al.,* 2017) such as autocratic management, fear or group norms. Another problem with the People Management-Performance Causal Chain is identifying whether the line manager interventions cause engagement, or if there is reverse causation, or even if there are bi-directional influences (Harter *et al.,* 2010; Sparrow, 2014). However, this Heideggerian phenomenological study is designed to explore experiences rather than evidencing causations. Furthermore, employees may engage in less desirable activities such as sabotage, so the engagement fostered is not always good for the organisation.

3.34 Summary

The people-management performance causal chain and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers will be used as frameworks to systematically explore the line managers and employees' views on the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement in austerity. The theoretical base underpinning this process will now be discussed.

3.4   Social Exchange Theory (SET)

3.41   Introduction

Various theoretical perspectives have been used to examine engagement such as the needs-satisfying approach (Kahn, 1990), broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), affective shift model (Bledow *et al.,* 2011), and social comparison theory (Guerrero and Challiol-Jeanblanc, 2016). However, social exchange theory (SET) is the dominant theoretical framework used to examine the employment relationship (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004; Karanges *et al.,* 2014), along with research on the psychological contract (PC) (Rousseau, 1995; Conway and Briner, 2009; Quratulain *et al.,* 2018). More recently, research (such as Saks, 2006; Biswas *et al.,* 2013; Rees *et al.,* 2013) have used SET as a theoretical base for explaining engagement, and why individuals respond to Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions with engagement (Saks, 2006; Rees *et al.,* 2013). Such reciprocal interdependence (Saks, 2006; Biswas *et al.,* 2013) may apply to people with different orientations to work (Goldthorpe *et al.,* 1968) as it considers employee incentives in addition to organisational gains (Guest, 2014a).

That said, much of the work engagement research (such as Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010) is grounded in the JD-R model which claims that job resources activate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and buffer the adverse effect of job demands on job strain and burnout (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). However, Crawford *et al.,* (2010) says this is limited as a theoretical framework, as it only categorises working conditions as demands or resources, and does not explain why some resources are better than others for fostering engagement (Saks and Gruman, 2014; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). As such, it does not consider the impact of traits (Macey and Schneider, 2008), or more importantly, it does not consider Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions (Crawford *et al.,* 2010) making it unsuitable for the process type research questions in this study.

Furthermore, the austerity context in this LA study means that demands are higher, and resources are less, which contradicts the premise of the JD-R model if engagement is present (Saks and Gruman, 2014). Nevertheless, SET lacks theoretical precision (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017), some key assumptions are still untested, and although the number of empirical studies on social exchange is large, most assess exchanges quantitatively through correlations (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004). This study seeks to contribute to social exchange and engagement theory by demonstrating qualitatively the importance of reciprocity in shaping the PC when fostering employee (behavioural) engagement in austerity. Purcell (2014a) considers this provides the best explanation for the link between employee attitudes, engagement and behaviour. Moreover, it helps understand the effect of managerial actions in the process of fostering engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a; Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018).

3.42 **Principles of Social Exchange**

Earlier SET researchers include Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1925). However, recent SET authors such as Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2004), tend to refer to Homans (1958), Gouldner (1960) and Blau (1964) as the starting point and authorities on social exchange. SET is not a single theory but rather a frame of reference that some micro and macro theories are able to be understood (Emerson, 1976). Social exchange implies "*a two-sided, mutually contingent, and mutually rewarding process involving 'transactions' or simply 'exchange*" (Emerson, 1976, p. 336). In other words, SET considers that people are motivated by the expectation of receiving benefits from another party in exchange for something. These benefits and exchanges are unspecified and therefore differ from economic exchange which stipulates in advance the exact quantity and type of exchanges through a formal contract (Blau, 1964).

As such, economic exchanges involve less trust and more active monitoring (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017). Whereas, social exchange is underpinned by the norm of reciprocity which obligates individuals to respond positively once they have received the benefit (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964), so are more open-ended (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017):

> "*An individual who supplies rewarding services to another obligates him. To discharge this obligation, the second must furnish benefits to the first in turn*" (Blau, 1964, p. 89).

Such unspecified exchanges require feelings of gratitude, obligation and trust that benefits will be reciprocated (Blau, 1964). This helps build and maintain interpersonal relationships (Eisenberger *et al.,* 2001). Ongoing reciprocation is more likely to occur if both parties value what they receive from the other (Blau, 1964), as the strength of the obligation to repay is dependent on the value of the benefit received. Benefits are valued higher when the recipient is in greater need, the donor gives the benefit even if they cannot really afford to, or if they were not required to give the benefit. The norm of reciprocity strengthens the feeling of indebtedness thus encouraging the ongoing fulfilment of obligations (Gouldner 1960). A major difference between Gouldner's (1960) and Blau's (1964) view is that Gouldner (1960) endorses a content approach where he views the starting mechanism of social exchange (that is, the felt obligation) as contingent upon the value of prior benefits. Whereas, Blau (1964) takes a process approach, which considers the unwillingness to be indebted to another for a period of time as key to the type of exchange that develops (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004).

For ongoing reciprocity to occur it requires the norm of reciprocity to engender guilt if obligations are not reciprocated (Gouldner, 1960; Perugini *et al.,* 2003). However, other factors may also affect this such as group sanctions or other needs such as helping a colleague to meet their own social needs (Blau, 1964), self-esteem (Spector and Fox, 2002) or gain perceived prestige (Blau, 1955).

This makes it hard to identify whether the exchange actually led to engagement (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004). Alternatively, the reciprocation hoped for may be from a third party such as helping a colleague in order to gain supervisory approval/rewards (Blau, 1964). Then again, an employee may engage with their work due to supervisory demands reflecting the unequal distribution of power in the employment relationship. Consequently, exchanges can be direct, indirect and interdependent (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004). Additionally, exchange relationships may develop gradually, fail to develop at all (Molm *et al.,* 2000), or only occur some of the time (Gouldner, 1960; Reissner and Pagan, 2013).

Moreover, the process may provide mutual benefits. For example, training is often used as an inducement/reward towards employees, but this learning may lead to improved performance thus benefiting the organisation too. Conversely, the training may be viewed as a cost rather than a reward, particularly if these new skills lead to role expansion and higher performance expectations, or if this interferes with their planned work, or if it publicises the individual's performance difficulties thus undermining their self-esteem. Consequently, inducements from manager's actual practices may be perceived differently by employees and yet must be valued by the receiver to be reciprocated back (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004). However, for those employees that wish to reciprocate good organisational treatment, they may choose to do so with engagement as unlike job performance, engagement cannot be mandated (Saks, 2006).

Additionally, it is not clear if the exchange is due to the inducement received, or the anticipation of future obligations (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002). If reciprocity is based on inducements received, once the inducement is repaid, the reciprocity relationship would end. However, if the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) applies, then reciprocity becomes an ongoing repetitive cycle.

Consequently, Blau (1964) considers that individuals take action to avoid feeling indebted to the exchange partner, and will take steps to create a positive imbalance by reciprocating future benefits such as tenure. Additionally, the ongoing nature of social exchange makes it difficult to identify the start of the process (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Furthermore, Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002) found that employees reconcile anticipated future benefits with present contributions thus trusting that the organisation will provide the benefits in future whilst also maximising them. Their research which was conducted in the public sector shows the bi-directionality of the norm of reciprocity where both parties feel obligations following perceived receipt of benefits thus maintaining ongoing exchange. Consequently, they consider that it is the accumulation of numerous events that influence an employee's 'global reciprocity' rather than specific events (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002). That said, whilst this was a well designed longitudinal study, it was conducted over a 3 year time period, and as the authors noted, this did not take into account changes that may have occurred during that period which may also have affected the reciprocity relationship. Additionally, an individual's cognitive ability, memory capacity and reflection time available is likely to impact this process, although individuals are more likely to remember salient issues rather than less important ones (McFarlane and Shore, 1995). This suggests exchanges are transactional chains rather than one-off dyads (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017). Nevertheless, the impact of perception is key (Eisenberger et al., 2001) as there may be an imbalance if the employee and employer perceptions of obligations are different (Shuck and Rose, 2013).

Conversely, Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2004) later suggested people are not capable of strategising and monitoring complex exchanges and instead are making automated habit choices without considering the intentions behind the behaviour. That said, unrewarded exchanges could become extinct over time (Pavlov, 1927).

Additionally, obligations such as job security and training, may be perceived as ongoing and not fully discharged until the relationship is terminated (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002). Consequently, it may not be possible to make direct linkages between specific contributions and inducements in long-term relationships as neither party remembers who initially initiated the exchange process (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012), making it hard to determine exchange equality/inequality (Molm *et al.,* 2006).

Moreover, not all people adhere to the norm of reciprocity to the same degree (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017). People can have different orientations to exchange, influenced by their acceptance of the norm of reciprocity (Eisenberger *et al.,* 2001), culture and reciprocity preferences (Perugini *et al.,* 2003). Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) suggest that those with a strong exchange orientation are more likely to reciprocate good treatment. Of further interest, Eisenberger *et al.,* (2001) also found that when employees felt well supported, employees with a strong exchange orientation expressed the same level of felt obligation as those with a weak exchange orientation. This may suggest that employees with weak exchange orientations have other values/norms, such as a strong work ethic, that affects their efforts (Eisenberger, *et al.,* 2001; Perugini *et al.,* 2003), or that they accept the reciprocity norm to some degree.

Orientations to exchange may be categorised as 'entitleds', 'equity sensitives' and 'benevolents' (Huseman *et al.,* 1987; Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman, 2004). A similar framework was proposed earlier by Sahlins (1972) based on immediacy of returns, equivalence of returns and interest thus yielding reciprocal exchanges along a continuum from 'negative', then 'balanced' to 'generalised' reciprocity (Sahlins, 1972; Wu *et al.,* 2006). Entitleds or those adhering to negative reciprocity, generally expect to receive more than they give in the exchange. Equity sensitives or balanced reciprocal exchange partners seek to achieve balance within the exchange.

With Sahlins (1972) negative and balanced reciprocity, immediacy of returns is pertinent, ideally immediately, or within a narrow timeframe. Benevolents or generalised reciprocal exchange parties are happy to give positively more than they receive. Additionally, those with a positive reciprocity orientation are likely to return positive treatment with positive reciprocations. Whereas, those with a negative reciprocity orientation, are likely to return perceived negative treatment with negative treatment (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

These different orientations to exchange are likely to shape perceptions of the employment deal and employee reactions to it. Cultural norms may affect this, for example, if unconditional generosity is the cultural norm (Gouldner, 1960; Wu *et al.,* 2006). Similarly, a German study found that females are more likely to have stronger positive reciprocal tendencies (Dohmen *et al.,* 2008). Additionally, the norm only imposes an obligation to reciprocate when the individual is able to do so (Gouldner, 1960).

Consequently, reciprocity is influenced by personality, reciprocal behaviour and important situational features (Perugini *et al.,* 2003). As such, it may be worthwhile for managers to ascertain individual orientations towards exchange in addition to individual needs/preferences. Employees with a strong exchange orientation may also be especially attentive to management communications regarding the organisation's objectives (Eisenberger *et al.,* 2001) supporting MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) strategic narrative enabler/driver discussed earlier. This may also foster readiness and acceptance of organisational change (Amiot *et al.,* 2006; Holt *et al.,* 2007; Oreg *et al.,* 2011) required during austerity.

Nevertheless, there is a risk in LAs that as pay, benefits, terms and conditions decline, employee engagement may also decline (Homans, 1958; Van der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016).

Drawing on Kahn's (1990) personal engagement definition, this means that the amount of physical, cognitive and emotional resources an individual will bring to their performance, depends on the economic and socioemotional resources received from the organisation (Saks, 2006). However, people cannot be obliged to reciprocate with more engagement, as that is part of their discretionary behaviour (Purcell 2012; Shuck and Rose, 2013). Consequently, social exchange relationships may be fostered by organisations/line managers taking "care of employees" (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, p. 882). Accordingly, Guest (2014a) advises to avoid a unitarist approach where it is assumed that individual goals are aligned to organisational ones, and instead emphasise the mutual exchanges with employees. This means that organisations that provide a climate of fairness and trust, and maintain their PC promises, are more likely to have engagement reciprocated (Purcell, 2012; Cheese, 2014). These exchanges need to be at least balanced as disengagement would be difficult to absorb in times of downsizing (Kiefer *et al.,* 2014).

3.43 **Assumptions of SET**

SET assumes that a person's treatment towards another individual (initiating action) will foster a reciprocal response, and this will form some kind of a relationship (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017). This assumes that employees will feel a need to reciprocate, but as demonstrated from the above discussion, reciprocity is not guaranteed, and relies on the parties' investment to the relationship (Rousseau, 1995; Shore *et al.,* 2006; Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017). The ongoing nature of social exchange makes it long-term (Blau 1964; Shore *et al.,* 2006).

Trust is critical in social exchange because both parties invest in the other party, and this may be repaid minimally or not at all (Blau, 1964), thus risking exploitatation (Molm *et al.,* 2000).

Reciprocity may also be viewed as folk belief where people get what they deserve, or a moral norm (Gouldner, 1960) where reciprocity is an obligation that should be enacted (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Although power differentials exist within the employment relationship, rarely is there zero power (Simpson, 1976) as employees may be less co-operative and do the least work possible to avoid sanction (Hackman and Oldham, 1980).

SET also assumes that employees are capable and willing of strategising and monitoring all exchanges, and ignores other reasons for employee behaviour.

3.44 Summary

Whilst this study acknowledges that engagement can come from other factors, for example, the personality traits of employees (Kahn, 1990; Wildermuth, 2010), social exchange is a useful theoretical framework for this LA study given the research questions explore how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered, and how austerity has affected those reciprocations and shaped the PC. Consequently, whilst SET does not explain employee engagement in its entirety, it does help understand the effect of managerial actions in the process of fostering engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a; Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018). As the PC examines the discrepancy between what was perceived to be promised and fulfilled (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005), this will be discussed next.

3.5   **Psychological Contract (PC)**

3.51   This section will show how the definition of the psychological contract
        (PC) has evolved over time, justify the use of Guest and Conway's
        (2002) definition for this particular study, and explain why the PC is
        useful in answering the research questions.

3.52   The term psychological contract (PC) was first used by Argyris (1960, p.
        96) and was later popularised by Schein (1980):

> "*The employee will maintain the high production, low grievances,
> etc., if the foremen guarantee and respect the norms of the
> employee informal culture"*. (Argyris, 1960, p. 96).

It therefore consists of the employer and employee's expectations of
each other, driven by employee and employer needs and mutuality
(Guest, 1998). This highlights the dependency on reciprocity and the
parties' knowledge of each other's needs. Reciprocations may consist of
both explicit and implicit obligations, including pay, development, status,
and job security from the organisation (Conway and Briner, 2009), in
return for contributions from employees including their engagement
(Biswas *et al.,* 2013). This suggests that the PC is based on exchange
(Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005; Conway and Briner, 2009) and has
been used to understand the employment relationship and workplace
behaviour in two ways. First by understanding how reciprocal promises
obligate employees to do things for their employer (for example,
Rousseau, 1990). Secondly, how employees react when they perceive
that the promises have not been met (for example, Robinson and
Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, 1996; Conway and Briner, 2002). As such,
reciprocity is considered central to the PC (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro,
2012) expanding the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) to include
employees' beliefs about these reciprocations (Rousseau, 1995; De Vos
et al., 2003). The PC also helps understand how macro and micro
changes affect HR policies and the experience of work highlighting its
dynamic nature (Conway and Briner, 2009) and relevance to this study.

From the late eighties, PC definitions such as Rousseau (1989) and Robinson (1996) tended to use the terms 'promises' and 'obligations' rather than 'expectations' to articulate that the exchange is influenced from 'promises' of the other party, rather than solely shaped by the "*beliefs, values, imagination, and desires, of one party*" which typically is the case with 'expectations' (Taylor and Tekleab, 2004, p. 260). In other words, the PC is more than a social norm as a consideration/contribution has been offered and accepted, and future benefits are obliged (Rousseau, 1989, p. 121):

> "*Psychological contracts are individual beliefs in a reciprocal obligation between the individual and the organisation*".

These definitions suggest that employees believe there is more to their job than just the economic exchange of work for remuneration. However, the PC is highly subjective (Rousseau, 1989) so two people receiving the same information about the employment deal may form two different perceptions of their PC as their understanding will be modified by their existing knowledge and what they want from the employment deal (Shore and Tetrick, 1994; Suazo *et al.,* 2009). Moreover, the parties to the PC may not necessarily agree, meaning that the individual understanding about reciprocity within the PC provides opportunities for both breach and generosity (Herriot *et al.,* 1997), thus demonstrating the pluralist nature of the employment relationship (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006).

More recently, Rousseau *et al.,* (2018) recognises that promises are a potential antecedent of perceived obligations, and that the PC cognitive schema may be influenced by normative expectations, especially those external from the organisation such as previous experiences and societal norms. Consequently, Rousseau *et al.,* (2018) now incorporates all three operationalisations ('expectations' and 'promises' as potential antecedents of 'perceived obligations') into their new dynamic model of PC phases (creation, maintenance, disruption and repair/renegotiation). Here, goals are of key importance to the PC across all phases and may change over time, thus affecting which obligations are remembered.

This is likely to be affected too by social context (Akkermans *et al.,* 2019) and recognises that the salience of key variables vary over time. For example, employer promises may be more important to a new employee where the PC is still in the creation phase, rather than during the maintenance phase once the PC has stabilised. Additionally, accepted promises motivate employees to form further obligations thus amending their prior expectations (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018).

Both Rousseau (1989) and Rousseau *et al.'s* (2018) definitions advocate a solo conceptualisation considering that the PC just exists in the eyes of the employee (Hannah and Iverson, 2004) as organisations cannot perceive, thus responding to concerns about anthropomorphising organisations (Muratbekova-Touron and Galindo, 2018). Additionally, the numerous organisational agents make it difficult to operationalise and capture the two-way nature of the PC (Schalk and Roe, 2007; Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). That said, Rousseau (1989) acknowledges that organisational agents such as managers may perceive a PC with employees. Consequently, she differentiates the PC from dyadic implied contracts which are mutual obligations developed over time from the interactions between individuals and organisations at the relationship level. As such, they are commonly understood (Morrison and Robinson, 1997) and are easily identified by observers with no self-serving bias (Rousseau, 1995). In contrast, Guest and Conway's (2002, p. 22) definition is dyadic:

> "*perceptions of both parties to the employment relationship - obligations implied in that relationship*".

This dyadic conceptualisation considers that the two-way focus is built from a related series of events over time, that are experienced and interpreted by the employee and agents of the organisation (Conway and Briner, 2002; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004). This emphasises the role of reciprocity in understanding the exchanges within the employment relationship (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012), and builds on the earlier two-way definitions proposed by Argyris (1960) and Schein (1980).

That said, Rousseau's (1989) solo-conceptualisation agrees that the individual's perception of the implied contract leads to individuals perceiving a PC. Nevertheless, the explicit two-way nature of Guest and Conway's (2002) definition makes it more suitable for this LA study to understand the reciprocal obligations between line managers and employees during austerity.

There are four reasons why the PC will be utilised in this study. First, as noted earlier, both HR practices and perceptions may be affected by changes in the macro environment such as austerity (Baruch and Rousseau, 2019), and the experience of HR practices shape employees' perceptions of the exchange relationship with their employer (Rousseau and Greller, 1994; Rousseau, 1995; Guest, 2007; Conway and Briner, 2009; Muratbekova-Touron and Galindo, 2018), and subsequent, attitudes and behaviour (Wright and Boswell, 2002). Small changes to the PC may be accepted with little cognitive effort or affective response (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018) due to PC drift (Rousseau, 1995). As maintenance continues, it is likely that actual experiences form the exchange evaluation, rather than the initial perception of promises (De Vos *et al.,* 2003; Rousseau, *et al.,* 2018). As such, extra employee effort may be perceived as increasing employer obligations. Likewise, additional inducements may trigger employees to reciprocate with extra effort (Gouldner, 1960; Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). This emphasises employee power and agency as employees can choose how much of themselves they bring to work in terms of their cognitive, emotional and physical effort (Kahn, 1990). Consequently, this study will explore how HR interventions implemented by line managers within the austerity context, shape the PC and foster employee (behavioural) engagement.

The second reason is to see how employees respond to the change from the old PC of job security and good benefits, terms and conditions, to the new PC which includes job insecurity and a reduced employment deal (Hiltrop, 1995; Rousseau, 1995), which is likely to trigger negative affect.

The speed that disruptions to the PC are addressed and fulfilled is key to managing this type of change (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). As such, the discrepancy duration may have a larger impact on affect than the actual size of the discrepancy (Chang *et al.,* 2010; Rousseau *et al.,* 2018) showing the impact of goals, time, speed and affect on the PC's dynamic process (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018).

This leads to the third reason where organisational change and a reduced employment deal may lead to PC breach/violation requiring repair/renegotiation (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). PC breach is the cognitive assessment where an employee believes that the organisation has not fulfilled its obligations towards them, and yet they consider that they have fulfilled their obligations to the organisation (Morrison and Robinson, 1997), potentially adversely impacting attitudes and behaviours (Conway *et al.,* 2011). Whereas violation is the intense feelings of anger and betrayal from these broken promises (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Morrison and Robinson, 1997) and subsequent reduced trust and respect which cannot be easily restored (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). PC breach/violation may be due to reneging and incongruence. Reneging is where the agent(s) of an organisation knowingly breaks a promise to an employee either due to inability (for example, austerity), or due to unwillingness (for example, if it is perceived that the employee has not fulfilled their obligations). Whereas, incongruence is where the employee and organisational agent(s) have different understandings about the promise (Morrison and Robinson, 1997), regardless of whether a breach has actually occurred (Robinson, 1996). It is anticipated that PC breach/violation due to reneging will be perceived within the austerity context, and potentially incongruence too given the organisational transformation efforts which may result in misunderstanding and/or contradictory assessments of the organisational change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; 2008).

This may lead to negative reciprocity norms (Quratulain *et al.,* 2018) where distrust and self-interest is paramount (Sahlins, 1972) thus decreasing contributions from employees (Robinson, 1996), for example by disengagement (Saks, 2006), in an attempt to restore perceived balance (Blau, 1964; Van der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016) and reciprocate negative treatment (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Consequently, engagement is more likely to occur when employees perceive that organisations have met their obligations to them (Biswas et *al.,* 2013; Rayton and Yalabik, 2014), making the management of the organisational changes and dilution of the employment deal pertinent.

That said, perceptions and subsequent reactions of breach tend to vary, and may be affected by individual differences (Rousseau, 1995; Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Perugini *et al.,* 2003; Bal *et al.,* 2010), equity sensitivity (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Kickul and Lester 2001), organisational culture (Rousseau, 1995), and the nature of the relationship (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Social exchanges may provide either a desensitizing/buffering or sensitizing/intensifying effect. For example, employees with high levels of trust in their employer may attribute PC breaches to circumstances rather than to the organisation (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Bal *et al.,* 2010). Conversely, employees with high social exchanges may experience an intensifying effect to PC breaches given the importance they attribute to the employment relationship which intensifies the feelings of betrayal (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Bal *et al.,* 2010; Bohle *et al.*, 2017). Whereas, employees with low social exchanges may react more strongly as they are unable to buffer the negative feelings from the PC breach (Bal *et al.,* 2010), considering it another signal that the organisation does not care for them (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003). Also, employees with a history of PC breaches are more likely to have intensified feelings from this breach in comparison to someone that has experienced fewer breaches (Griep and Vantilborgh, 2018).

The increased job insecurity from the LA redundancies increases the risk that PC breach will be perceived and adversely reciprocated (Bohle *et al.,* 2017). That said, benevolent employees tend to react less to breach (Conway and Briner, 2009), and the communal perspective may lead to employees offering contributions without inducements due to concern for the organisation (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2003). Additionally, public sector workers tend to value the intrinsic rather than the extrinsic rewards (Georgellis *et al.,* 2010) and have a high concern for their customers (Bach, 2011; Gourlay *et al.,* 2012; Bal *et al.,* 2013; Francis *et al.,* 2013). Consequently, their commitment to public service (Perry, 1996; Brewer *et al.,* 2000; Rayner, *et al.,* 2011) may moderate employee behaviours following PC breach (Conway *et al.,* 2014). Similarly, employee contributions may be maintained from affective trust which may continue after cognitive trust is lost (Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007), although over time this may dissipate (Yang and Kassekert, 2009).

Furthermore, if the line manager tries to be supportive during and after redundancies, employees may perceive a discrepancy between these two actions and lower their engagement (Bal *et al.,* 2010; Bohle *et al.,* 2017). It may also be problematic if the employee considers that the PC breach is an indicator that future promises cannot be relied upon (Ng and Feldman, 2012). Again, the speed of repair and corrective action will dictate the transition speed back to maintenance (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). This highlights the dynamic nature of PCs, and how some effects are enduring (Robinson, 1996) and long term, whereas others are temporary. Similarly, some effects are immediate, whilst others seem to take a long time to manifest (Hansen and Griep, 2016; Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). Furthermore, failure to consider time ignores major aspects of SET (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) within the mechanisms of the PC which consider reflections on the past, in addition to anticipations of future benefits (Griep and Vantilborgh, 2018), thus acknowledging the importance of fairness, trust and delivery of the 'deal' (Guest, 1998).

To maintain a positive PC and avoid PC breach, or help employees '*bounce back*' from breach (Solinger *et al.,* 2016, p. 494), managers may wish to repair the PC by emphasising the other benefits of working in LAs that still exist despite the austerity pressures (CIPD/PPMA, 2010). This would align to Tomprou *et al.'s* (2015) thriving stage where a new and improved PC contract is agreed, and Krause and Moore's (2018) reconstruction stage where new needs are identified and met to revise the PC. These changes would need to be articulated and agreed faster or equally as fast as the employee's assessment of the PC breach (Griep and Vantilborgh, 2018). Rousseau (1995) says that this can be achieved by articulating the reasons for the changes and making efforts to offset resultant employee costs, such as alternative incentives (Hiltrop, 1995). This information sharing and understanding gives employees a sense of control (Devine *et al.,* 2003), thus suggesting the value of conversational practice between managers and employees (Francis *et al.,* 2013). This may also be supplemented by the extensive discussion of austerity in the media (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006). However, breach resolution is a non-linear process which may include delayed or premature recovery (Solinger *et al.,* 2016). This is similar to Kübler-Ross's (1969) coping cycle model which has various affective stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) experienced in negative situations such as organisational change. These affective stages may be experienced in any order, omitted, or by regressing to earlier stages.

That said, employees experiencing PC breach/violation may continue to meet previous obligations due to habit, but the inequity perceived may lead to impairment (Tomprou *et al.,* 2015) where the PC will reduce from a relational (social) open ended one, to a more transactional (economic) contract thus re-entering maintenance (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). It may even lead to dissolution (Tomprou *et al.,* 2015) where the employee continues to perceive violation and closely monitors exchanges to justify disengagement thus amending the PC intra-individually. Alternatively, the employee(s) may leave the organisation (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018).

However, this may not be detrimental to the LA given the need to downsize, unless this risks the loss of key skills/knowledge thus triggering the need for repair and/or renegotiation discussed next.

The fourth reason for utilising the PC in this study is because there is a trend for more ongoing individual deals negotiated between employees and their direct line manager, referred to as idiosyncratic deals or i-deals (Rousseau, 2005) (discussed in section 3.6). This renegotiation phase (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018) is useful following PC breach (Ng and Feldman, 2012; Guerrero *et al.,* 2014; Tomprou *et al.,* 2015) and whilst it may done intra-individually by the employee modifying their PC to reflect the perceived situation as just discussed, it may be more positively achieved interpersonally via i-deals (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018).
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3.53 PC Assumptions

PCs are based on perception, meaning they are subjective and dynamic (Schalk and Roe, 2007; Suazo, *et al.,* 2009). It includes an exchange of unspecified obligations thus requiring trust and fairness in reciprocation (Blau, 1964; Guest, 1998), as well as delivery of the 'deal' (Guest, 1998). This two-way reciprocal agreement (Guest, 1998) is formed from a series of events (Conway and Briner, 2002; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004). Consequently, the PC is the understanding of an interaction between two parties, and this understanding between them may differ (Guest, 1998). If breach/violation is perceived, the social exchange relationship may end through the loss of trust (Robinson, 1996).

That said, Hekman *et al.,* (2009) explains that reciprocity following PC violation is more complex than like for like exchanges, as other non-dispositional factors may influence the response. Accordingly, they found that positive and negative reciprocity was affected by professional employees' levels of organisational and professional identification.

This may demonstrate the buffering and intensifying effect discussed earlier. It may also show how individuals engage with other aspects of organisational life, in this case, professional bodies. Consequently, whilst other factors may have influenced the performance measurements in the study such as personal professional judgement (for example, endorsement of statins) and time available to discuss preventative drugs, this may suggest that there are other factors outside of Gouldner's (1960) reciprocity norms influencing employee responses. Furthermore, the PC also assumes that there is an increasing individualisation of the employment relationship, which may not be the case in all contexts (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006).

3.54 **Summary**

Utilising the PC within this LA study will help understand how austerity has affected the reciprocations between line managers and employees. Consequently, i-deals will now be examined as a way of providing low-cost reciprocations to shape the PC and foster employee (behavioural) engagement.

3.6   Idiosyncratic Deals (I-Deals)

3.61   Rousseau (2005, p. 7) explained that '*I-deals are special conditions of employment negotiated between an individual worker and his or her employer*', that benefit both individuals and the organisation. As such, their scope can vary from a single feature such as working on a different task/project to co-workers, to making every aspect of the employment deal unique (Rousseau, 2005; Vidyarthi *et al.,* 2014). I-deals include a full range of work-related resources including money, hours, duties, equipment and intangible resources such as training, support and visibility opportunities (Vidyarthi *et al.,* 2016). I-deals are occupational-specific (Hornung *et al.,* 2009; Rosen *et al.,* 2013) as some benefits are not available for some jobs, such as location/distancing flexibility for frontline staff. I-deals have also been used in some bureaucratic organisations where employment practices are normally standardised (Hornung *et al.,* 2008), perhaps due to the increasing individualisation of the employment relationship, coupled with the drive to be leaner and more agile (Bach, 2011; CIPD/PPMA, 2012). Consequently, i-deals are relevant to this LA study as they can be used as a way of providing low-cost reciprocations outside of intended strategy. This is particularly useful if PC breach/violation is perceived regarding the reduced employment deal (Tomprou *et al.,* 2015). This study focuses on ex post i-deals made during employment where both parties have more information about each other (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). Exploring ex post i-deals will help understand how i-deals can be tailored to meet an individual's subjective continuous appraisal of Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions, thus contributing to MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) 'engaging managers' and 'employee voice' enablers/drivers. As such, this study does not examine ex ante i-deals which are made when employees are hired (Anand *et al.,* 2010), as these are less likely to trigger reciprocity as the i-deal is likely to be attributed to their market value/skills rather than the organisation's appreciation, kindness or generosity as with ex post i-deals (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016).

In order for a change to an employment term and condition to be an i-deal, Rousseau *et al.,* (2006) states it must meet 4 criteria. It must be individually negotiated and authorised, have mutual benefits to the employee and employer, be varied in scope (discussed above) and be distinct (heterogeneity of treatment of employees doing similar jobs). Despite this, the bounds of the i-deal's definition still remain blurred. For example, if an employee on fixed hours requests to finish work early one day, is that a micro i-deal? Such discretionary 'single short-term requests' may be more appropriately classed as a 'favour' to the employee, given the 'single short-term nature' and lack of mutual benefits. Employers may grant such favours to demonstrate commitment to the relationship (Blau, 1964), which is important in the fostering of engagement, and as such may be examined if identified in the data analysis. However, this chapter just examines social exchange via i-deals to focus the literature review. Nevertheless, the distinction between favours and i-deals demonstrates that the definition of i-deals may benefit from incorporating some element of 'duration/longevity' to more clearly preclude favours from the i-deal's discourse.

I-deals theory postulates that i-deal recipients will reciprocate with constructive behaviours (Hornung *et al.,* 2008; Anand *et al.,* 2010; Vidyarthi *et al.,* 2014). The function of reciprocity is explained by SET (Social Exchange Theory) (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) discussed earlier. Attributions of why the organisation has approved the i-deal, is likely to shape the i-deal recipient's attitude (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016). Moreover, managers may also gain credibility by considering their employees' needs (Liao *et al.,* 2014), in addition to it being a way to communicate that employees are valued (Liu *et al.,* 2013; Rosen *et al.,* 2013). These 'conversations for mutual outcomes' can support employee needs and foster a fairer social exchange (Francis *et al.,* 2013). Often it is the immediate line manager that represents the organisation during the i-deal negotiation, but it can also include senior managers, HR and mentors (Bal, 2017).

Organisations typically do not bargain the exact nature of reciprocity that they expect in return (Vidyarthi *et al.,* 2014) relying on the employee's sense of obligation (Blau, 1964). As such, whilst the employee inducements are explicit, the obligations for employees to reciprocate in return are often implicit. However, the gain of an i-deal may support high-quality exchange between the employee and employer (Rousseau, 2005). Having said that, not everyone is motivated by SET, and there are other frameworks that can explain i-deals theory such as employee goals (Liao *et al.,* 2014), social comparison theory (Guerrero and Challiol-Jeanblanc, 2016), and social cognitive theory. The latter in particular focuses on the development of self-efficacy (Wang *et al.,* 2018) which has been found to predict work engagement (Xanthopoulou *et al.,* 2009a; Xanthopoulou *et al.,* 2009b). However, as discussed earlier, SET will be used in this study as it helps understand the effect of managerial actions in the process of fostering engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a), in this case by the authorisation or denial of an i-deal, thus responding to the research questions. As such, ex post i-deals may be used in good times to aid motivation and retention, or in poor economic times to substitute rewards (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016) which may help the LA in this study given the austerity conditions.

I-deals are related to, yet different from, PCs (Anand *et al.,* 2010; Liao *et al.,* 2014) as i-deals are individually negotiated actual treatment/ resources (Rousseau, 2005) based on a specific formal arrangement (Guerrero *et al.,* 2014) rather than perceptions. The pursuit of an i-deal may depend on an employee's PC in whether he/she believes that the organisation is obliged to offer something in return for their efforts (Rousseau, 2005; Liao *et al.,* 2014), or following perceptions that others are treated better (Bal, 2017). They may also be used for motivation such as career-development i-deals (Bal, 2017). Moreover, they may be requested as part of problem solving be that flexibility i-deals to lower work-family conflict (Hornung *et al.,* 2008; Bal, 2017), or work issues such as meeting deadlines.

Genuine i-deals should benefit both the employee and the organisation, and be considered fair by third parties such as co-workers in terms of procedural (processes concerning decisions), distributive (fair allocation of rewards), and interactional justice (interpersonal treatment during the process) (Rousseau, 2005). Informational justice provided by honest communications with co-workers (De Ruiter *et al.,* 2017), can lower/ prevent feelings of unfairness amongst peers especially if they consider that the i-deal helps the i-deal recipient cope with any difficulties they are experiencing (Marescaux *et al.,* 2019), along with the ability to request i-deals themselves (Collins *et al.,* 2013; Marescaux *et al.,* 2019). This differentiates i-deals from other arrangements such as favouritism/ cronyism (Rousseau *et al.,* 2006) which create injustice and resentment (Rousseau, 2004). Consequently, it is advisable to consider the impact on all parties prior to approval. At the very least, this will include the organisation/manager, individual and co-workers, and involve anticipating and preventing unintended consequences and perceptions of unfairness, which is more likely if there is high interdependence between the i-deal recipient and co-worker. Financial i-deals have a higher potential to cause issues of distributive injustice given money is able to meet multiple needs ranging from purchasing power to contributing to self-esteem/ status (Rynes *et al.,* 2004), and is a finite resource (Marescaux *et al.,* 2019). Adverse consequences are more likely in austerity when resources are scarce, or when the i-deal creates extra work for co-workers (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016). Consequently, reactions from co-workers may affect the success of an i-deal (Singh and Vidyarthi, 2018; Marescaux *et al.,* 2019). Accordingly, co-workers are more likely to support i-deals for colleagues that they care about (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016; Marescaux *et al.,* 2019). This suggests that whilst i-deals provide flexibility, they also present challenges regarding fairness (Rousseau, 2001b) which will involve comparisons with others (Adams, 1965; Guest, 2004). This places more responsibility onto line managers along with the scope for misunderstanding or disagreement, and the need for ongoing trust to continue to deliver the deal (Guest, 2007).

This means that the i-deal (approved or denied) will form part of the PC (Guerrero *et al.,* 2014) and may shape it, thus having the potential to strengthen the employment relationship and fostering engagement (Biswas *et al.,* 2013). Whilst the i-deal dimensions prohibit secrecy (Rousseau *et al.,* 2006), in practice, it is often present from managerial attempts to prevent multiple i-deal requests (Bal, 2017; Marescaux *et al.,* 2019) or co-worker resentment, and enable withdrawal at management discretion (Giga *et al.,* 2018). Furthermore, some i-deals such as flexibility or workload reduction, may give the impression that the i-deal recipient is less focused on the organisation and/or their career, leading to others perceiving that they are less creative/engaged (Wang *et al.,* 2018). This may make them vulnerable in times of downsizing (Bal, 2017). Consequently, i-deal recipients may be advised to communicate their achievements to prevent this (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016).

I-deals may also be negotiated following PC breach in an attempt to rebuild the relationship (Guerrero *et al.,* 2014), making them relevant during austerity as an active form of coping (Hornung, *et al.,* 2010). For example, Guerrero *et al.,* (2014) found that i-deals may act as substitutes for trust as the negotiation may maintain the bond short-term once trust is lost. This increases justice perceptions thus buffering the negative effects of loss of trust and maintaining affective commitment to the organisation. The increased self-value that the i-deal recipient receives, perhaps from the sense of control gained from negotiating the i-deal, more fairly balances the power within the social exchange relationship. That said, as the authors' explain, this study was carried out on high/star performers working in high-level positions that are likely to have the self-efficacy to negotiate appropriate i-deals and marketable skills which lowers continuance commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Moreover, it may be that whilst cognitive trust was lost, affective trust was maintained (Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007), although this was not mentioned by Guerrero *et al.,* (2014). Moreover, i-deals may be used as a pilot (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016) thus informing HR innovation (Rousseau, 2004).

As with any negotiation, there is always the risk that i-deals will not be agreed. Context limits i-deal availability (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau *et al.,* 2006; Hornung *et al.,* 2008; Anand *et al.,* 2010; Rosen *et al.,* 2013), and negotiation success is dependent on the employee's need for control (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), self-efficacy, positive social interaction (Bandura, 1977; Hornung *et al.,* 2010), proactivity (Hornung *et al.,* 2009), confidence and business awareness to propose a mutually beneficial i-deal (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau *et al.,* 2006). The organisation's structure, HR policies and culture may facilitate or hinder i-deal negotiation (Bal, 2017). I-deals may also be denied if the authorising party does not sufficiently understand the individual's value to the organisation (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016), potentially leading to disengagement. Consequently, high quality relationships between the employee and line managers and co-workers may facilitate i-deal negotiation (Bal, 2017). Frustrations may be felt by one or both negotiating parties if agreement is not gained, the negotiation process is considered unduly lengthy and/or difficult. Other disadvantages include the costs of the i-deal to the organisation and risks of perceived injustice amongst co-workers (Lemmon *et al.,* 2016) just discussed. Despite these risks and complexity, much of the research so far (such as Anand *et al.,* 2010; Rosen *et al.,* 2013; Vidyarthi *et al.,* 2014; Bal, 2017) focuses on agreed i-deals [see Lee *et al.,* (2015) for an exception].

When i-deals are denied, it is postulated that the reasons for refusal must be clearly explained to employees to prevent PC breach/violation which may result in disengagement. Support for this may be drawn from the justice and PC breach/violation literatures discussed earlier. That said, as already highlighted, PC breach may not occur if the breach is due to circumstances beyond the organisation's control (Rousseau, 1995), and/or the public sectors commitment to public service (Perry, 1996; Brewer *et al.,* 2000; Rayner, *et al.,* 2011). This may maintain affective trust, which can continue after cognitive trust has been lost (Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007).

Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile considering lessons from the employee involvement research on suggestion schemes, such as Klotz (1988), Rapp and Eklund (2002) and IDS (2005), and applying it to cases of denied i-deals so that feedback on the reasons for denial are explained to employees. This may prevent disengagement by respecting employee voice, and provide the opportunity for learning via feedback, potentially leading to a future i-deal being proposed with mutual benefits.

3.62 I-Deal Assumptions

I-deals claim to be mutually beneficial and provide strategic value which implies a unitarist approach. However, as they are negotiated and agreement is not guaranteed, this suggests a pluralist approach. I-deals are idiosyncratic and therefore it is assumed that not everyone will have one, and i-deals between peers will vary. I-deals assume fairness by compliance with organisational justice and co-workers being content with the arrangements. Consequently, i-deals are only functional when all parties consider them distinct from unauthorised or preferential treatment (Rousseau, 2004). Whilst it is assumed that i-deals will be raised by employees, they can be suggested by the employer too. Managers may find some i-deals easier to grant than others depending on their access to resources, opportunities and level of control (Hornung *et al.,* 2009).

3.63 Summary

I-deals are a low-cost way of providing reciprocations which are mutually beneficial, shaping the PC to foster engagement. This may make them especially useful for LAs given the financial constraints imposed by austerity. Additionally, they may provide employees with an active form of coping to deal with these perceived negative factors (Hornung *et al.,* 2010). To understand the exchange relationship formed from i-deals, resource theory will now be introduced.

3.7   Resource Theory

3.71   Perceived organisational support (POS), which is the individual's perception of the extent that the organisation values his/her contribution/performance and cares about his/her well-being (Eisenberger *et al.,* 1986), indicates the quality of the individual's exchange relationship with the organisation. However, this was not used in this study because Conway and Coyle-Shapiro (2012) found that POS moderates reciprocal links between performance and PC fulfilment initially, but not later. This is because at first, strong supportive relationships allow leeway around delivery of obligations, and high trust levels may also mean that ongoing exchanges are less likely to be monitored closely, meaning that breaches may not be detected (Conway and Briner, 2009). Over time, the buffering effect of POS reduces as both parties focus more on the actual exchanges and whether the perceived deal has been met (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012).

Consequently, Foa (1971) and Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory was referred to instead in order to examine the types of resources exchanged (Gorgievski *et al.,* 2011) and the reasons why. A resource is anything that can be transmitted from one person to another, including facial cues and body language (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 2012). Foa (1971) and Foa and Foa (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) consider that resources may be classified into 6 types: money, goods, services (termed effort by Seers *et al.,* 2006), information, status and love (termed affiliation by Wilson *et al.,* 2010).

Figure 5 shows the resources plotted against two axes consisting of, first, symbolic to concrete which represents the extent of tangibility and observability of the resource (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004), and, second, universal to particularistic which represents the extent to which the parties in the exchange affect the value of the specific resource.

Figure 5 - Resource Theory

Source: [Foa, U.G. (1971) 'Interpersonal and Economic Resources', in *Science*. 171 (3969), pp. 345-351]. Reprinted with permission from AAAS.
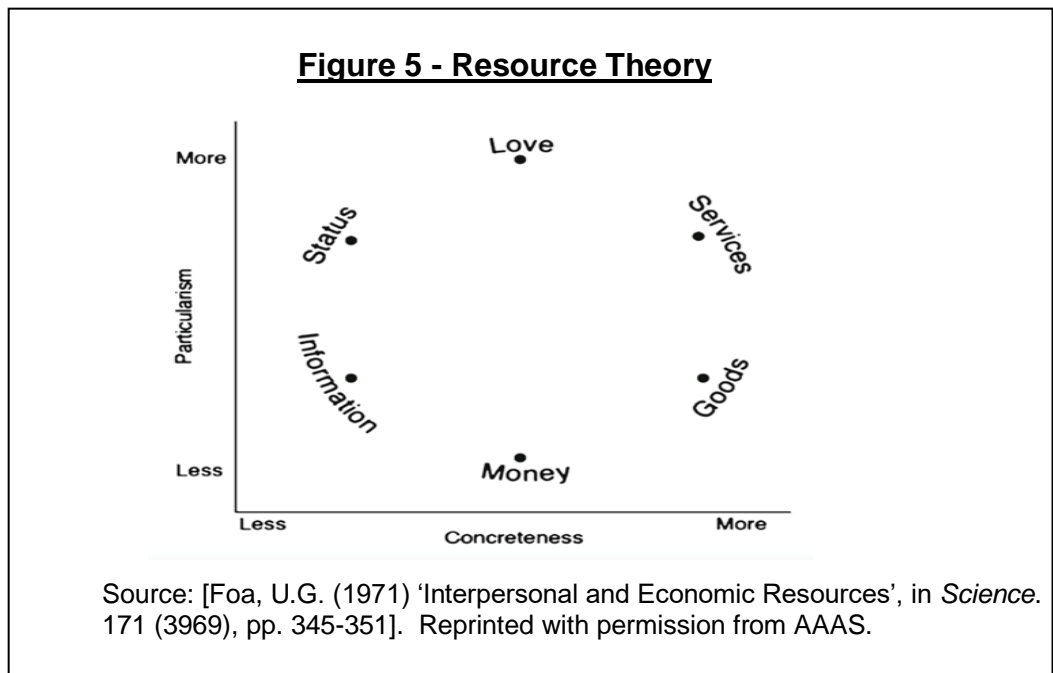
The resource classes do overlap and are related within the structure. These classifications represent meanings to actions rather than the actions itself (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 2012), making it useful for this study to understand how the reciprocations between line managers and employees are affected during the austerity budget reductions and LA institutional setting, which also impacts the exchange given it is publically funded. Consequently, a resource perspective highlights that the availability and authorisation of resources will impact the i-deal negotiation success (Rosen *et al.,* 2013), which is particularly pertinent during austerity.

There are other resource frameworks that could have been used such as Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) Job-Demands (JD-R) model (discussed and rejected earlier), Graen and Scandura's (1987) information, influence, tasks, attitude, support and attention framework and Tsui *et al.'s* (1997) employee-organisation relationship. However, Foa (1971) and Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) model was selected given it is theory driven and empirically tested. Also, in comparison to Graen and Scandura (1987), it has a broader range of resources, as it includes money and goods which are relevant given the reductions to pay, benefits, terms and conditions, thus aligning to the research questions.

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Foa (1971) and Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) model also explains not only what resources are exchanged, but also how they are exchanged (Wilson *et al.,* 2010) and the meanings that underpin the exchanges along with the resulting quality of the social exchange (Gorgievski *et al.,* 2011). Consequently, it incorporates employee expectations and idiosyncratic arrangements too, unlike Tsui *et al.'s* (1997) model which purposefully focuses on the employer's perspective. It has also received support across a variety of cultures and contexts and organisational studies (Wilson *et al.,* 2010). Additionally, it aligns well with Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability to explain the antecedents of engagement (Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018). Moreover, it has been applied to i-deals.

Accordingly, Hornung *et al.* (2008) stated that hard i-deals are concrete, objective and measurable agreements (Bal *et al.,* 2012) and appear to reflect economic exchange (Rousseau *et al.,* 2009), such as flexibility i-deals. Conversely, Rosen *et al.,* (2013) explains that flexibility i-deals are particularistic as the extent of flexibility will depend on the parties understanding of the reasons for the flexibility request, such as family commitments. Soft i-deals are more symbolic, subjective and particularistic, and thus more relational in nature, such as developmental i-deals, resulting in a social exchange (Bal *et al.,* 2012). These developmental and particularistic resources may increase both psychological meaningfulness and availability (Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018) to foster engagement (Kahn, 1990).

3.72 **Summary**

Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource framework will be used to analyse i-deals identified in the study, along with any other reciprocations expected by employees.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has defined employee engagement as this is the outcome intended from fostering reciprocal relationships. Then the people management-performance causal chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers were explained as these will be used as frameworks to systematically examine managerial interventions for fostering engagement. SET was then discussed given this will be the theoretical base for understanding how these mechanisms work, along with PC theory which evaluates the exchanges. This was followed with a discussion on i-deals given they are a low-cost way of providing reciprocations between employees and their line managers. Finally, resource theory was considered as a way to better understand these new reciprocations. Consistent with a Heideggerian phenomenological approach (discussed in chapter 4), this leads to the following research questions to understand how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered in one LA during austerity.

3.9 Research Questions

The aim of the study is to understand the lived experiences in how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered within four teams from one LA (Local Authority), when the levers available to line managers are reduced due to austerity, and how this has shaped the PC between employees (non-management) and their line managers.

1. How is employee (behavioural) engagement fostered and experienced during austerity?

2. How has austerity shaped the PC in terms of the reciprocal expectations/promises between employees (non-management – professional and non-professional) and their line managers given the changes to jobs, pay, benefits, terms and conditions (social and economic exchange)?

The methodology to address these research questions will be discussed next, followed by the data analysis, discussion and conclusion chapters.

Chapter Four

Methodology

4.   Methodology

4.1   Introduction

This chapter justifies the research design to address the research questions. The study is located in the interpretivist paradigm, and as such is constructionist (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The research methodology was informed by a Heideggerian phenomenological approach, which provides insights into individual experiences which may then be explored in relation to the extant literature and is therefore theoretically bounded (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In other words, it tries to explain why people have different experiences (reasons) rather than searching for fundamental laws (causes) (Ashleigh and Mansi, 2012). The study aims to highlight good practice, difficulties and problems, but does not intend to criticise individuals (Marshall, 1999). Rather this study seeks to understand from the lived experience how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered within LAs (local authorities) when the levers available to managers are reduced due to austerity, and how this has shaped the psychological contract (PC) between employees and their line managers. It does this by interviewing participants within four teams in one LA.

This chapter will demonstrate that the research design has been informed by the research questions, and the procedures adopted were rigorous and clear. The chapter begins by outlining the philosophical foundations of the study to identify the implications that need to be considered in the research methodology. The research questions are then presented which have been drawn from the literature review, and have taken into account the researcher's philosophical position. The research design is then discussed including sampling, methods used, data analysis, quality, ethical considerations and reflexivity. This demonstrates that whilst, as with all research, this study has limitations, it was well designed and implemented, and the understanding gained has produced a credible contribution to knowledge.

4.2   Philosophical Foundations of the Study

This section explains and justifies why a constructionist epistemology with an interpretivist, phenomenological approach was appropriate to produce a rigorous and defensible understanding from this study. First the researcher's philosophical view of reality and knowledge will be explained. This will identify implications for the research methodology and enable a consideration of the epistemological issues to ensure alignment between the topic to be investigated and the methodology used.

4.21   Researcher's Philosophical Position – Ontological View

Burrell and Morgan (1979) explain that researchers should understand the assumptions that their own perspectives are based on. Ontological issues concern the assumptions about the nature of reality in terms of whether it is real or illusory. In other words, it questions whether phenomena exist independent of our knowledge and perception of it (Duberley *et al.,* 2012). In the social sciences, this ranges from realism to relativism and nominalism (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012).

Realism assumes a single reality that is external to individual cognition and therefore exists whether or not they are perceived. Such a view does not suit the subjective nature of the research questions which aims to understand how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered and experienced during austerity. This question seeks to understand peoples' perceptions and sense making of the external world, making their reality a product of their individual consciousness. This is closer to a nominalist position where reality 'out there' has no real independent status. The social world is created when it is perceived, although we are not aware of this creative process (Duberley *et al.,* 2012).

Consequently, the social world external to individual cognition consists of names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality. Nominalist positions consider there are no truths and that all facts are constructed by people (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

A less extreme ontology to nominalism is relativism which considers that the world exists but it is only when objects enter our consciousness that meaning is gained (Crotty, 1998). In relation to this study, relativism would recognise the contextual constraints presented by austerity, although the impact may be perceived differently. The variation of views means so there is no absolute truth (Warburton, 2004), and people tend to select the evidence that supports their own views, and acceptance is gained by discussion which is influenced by a person's status and past reputation (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012). Consequently, with the relativist subjectivist position (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005), no single piece of evidence is accepted by all, and interpretations are affected historically and culturally (Crotty, 1998). This means that not only will engagement and austerity be experienced differently by people, but it will vary across different places and time periods. Such recognition of how time and context can affect peoples' judgements and sense-making of events (Pritchard, 2006) is pertinent to this study. Additionally, this aligns to the researcher's world view that peoples' experience and understanding of the context of austerity will vary in accordance with their individual needs and past experience (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007). How this is best investigated will be discussed next.

4.22 Epistemology

Epistemology considerations help ensure the research design is appropriate to investigate the research questions so that knowledge claimed is possible and legitimate (Blaikie, 2007).

Given the researcher's relativist ontological view of reality in relation to the research questions (discussed above), positivist approaches were not considered useful. This is because the research questions are process type questions and require the views of individuals (employees and managers), rather than the researcher pre-selecting variables to hypothesise and test from the extant literature (Hines, 2000), which is particularly problematic given there is no universally agreed definition of employee engagement. Accordingly, constructionism will be used to study these subjective views within the specific context of austerity, defined by Crotty (1998, p. 42) as:

> "*A view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context*".

In other words, meaning is constructed rather than discovered. This occurs by directing consciousness towards an object, and interpreting the engagement with it to gain meaning. This means that constructionists recognise there are objects in the world thus bringing together objectivity and subjectivity (Crotty, 1998). However, meaning is gained from the objects "*only when meaning-making beings' make sense of it*" (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). Such an approach is a 'normal' version of constructionism and aligns with a relativist ontology which believes there is no absolute truth, and the researcher needs to illuminate many 'truths' formed from peoples' different experiences. Whereas 'strong' versions of constructionism assume that there is no difference between individual and social knowledge and would be more aligned to nominalism. However, relativism is considered more appropriate for this study given the incorporation of context (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012). The relativist position also incorporates an experiential world to the research process by utilising the researcher's values, opinions and prior knowledge to interpret and understand phenomena, in this case the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement, in a reflexive process (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005).

Additionally, constructionism is voluntarist in relation to human nature thus recognises free will, which is important given the personal agency exercised in employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Rich *et al.,* 2010; Cole *et al.,* 2012), and favours idiographic (detailed subjective accounts rather than hypotheses testing) methods (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

There are two branches of constructionism – constructivism and social constructionism, and both will be utilised in this study. Constructivism is the meaning-giving within individuals (Blaikie, 2007) which is exclusive to that individual (Crotty, 1998). This applies to this study given the perceptual nature of the PC (Shore and Tetrick, 1994; Suazo, *et al.,* 2009), and the individual assessment as to whether and how much to engage (Kahn, 1990). Whereas, social constructionism involves the '*collective generation [and transmission] of meaning*' (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). This means that knowledge is created by people making sense of their experiences with the physical world and other people (Blaikie, 2007). Consequently, it recognises we are '*born into a world of meaning*' (Crotty, 1998, p. 54). In other words, we are brought up in a world that has already been interpreted and taught to us, and this culture and language used impacts how we see the world (Crotty, 1998). This is relevant to this study as this will contribute to expectations within the PC (Rousseau, *et al.,* 2018), which are also likely to be impacted by social context (Akkermans *et al.,* 2019), and employees' views of managerial actions to foster employee (behavioural) engagement.

Consequently, the research will use a normal constructionist epistemology to focus on what people individually and collectively are thinking and feeling (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012). The goal being to access participants ideas and feelings (Wilson, 2014) to discover the participants' view of the situation being studied (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Creswell, 2009). Gathering rich data which incorporates these stakeholder perspectives and whole situations is likely to increase general understanding of the situation (Anderson, 2017).

This is particularly useful for this piece of research as line manager efforts to foster employee (behavioural) engagement are likely to be informally judged by their employees. Within this subjective judgement, employees are likely to consider how contextual factors of austerity impact the line manager's actions. In addition, a constructionist approach will enable the different 'truths' experienced by the participants to be identified, and demonstrate how contextual factors affect the nature of the PC, and the impact this has on the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement given employees perceive and react differently to HR practices (Nishii *et al.,* 2008).

This aligns to the interpretive paradigm which gains multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon to reveal 'multiple truths' so is appropriate for this study. Interpretivism aims to understand the world from individual consciousness and subjective experience, from the participant's point of view rather than from the researcher's view (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), so is based on relativist and nominalist ontologies just discussed. Interpretivism believes that an understanding of peoples' actions can only be gained from participant viewpoints, a principle which Max Weber referred to as '*verstehen*' in his theory of knowledge in the social sciences developed in the beginning of the twentieth century (Bell and Thorpe, 2013, p. 47). He argued that peoples' behaviour is guided by their values, informed from culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of social life, making law-like regularities impossible. People make sense of phenomena which forms their own meaningful reality. So whereas scientific experiments seek to know and explain, social science seeks to understand (Crotty, 1998). Interpretivism therefore aims to understand the world as it is from subjective experience (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) by understanding reasons, which as stated earlier, is needed for the research questions, as opposed to positivism which aims to explain human behaviour by explaining causes. These interpretations are based on a particular moment, where context and time are relevant (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

Consequently, interpretivism is regulatory which means it aims to describe what happens in organisations, potentially suggesting minor improvements, but does not make fundamental judgements of what is right or wrong (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Burrell and Thorpe, 2013). The subjective and regulatory perspectives are appropriate for four reasons. First, the research questions are based on managers and employees' perceptions. Second, individuals continuously make subjective assessments of whether and how much to engage (Kahn, 1990; Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). Third, individuals have different needs/preferences, and are unpredictable. Finally, employer/employee relationships and indeed work today are dynamic which impacts the PC.

That said, all epistemologies have strengths and weaknesses. Constructionism has strengths in its ability to look at processes over time, to understand the meanings people attribute to events, to adjust to new findings as they emerge and contribute to the evolution of new theories. Disadvantages include the inability to identify the 'one single Truth' which presents reliability issues as there can be multiple and valid claims to knowledge (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Given the aim of this study was to understand different viewpoints, reliability issues were not deemed problematic. The interpretivist nature of this study meant that reflexivity, consideration of different perspectives and richness of description was more important than reliability which relates more to quantitative studies (King, 2012).

Despite this, academic journal reviewers and decision-makers in organisations may consider interpretivist studies low credibility perceiving the conclusions to consist of 'subjective' opinions (Denzin, 2017). However, given the dominance of quantitative studies on employee engagement, there have been calls for more qualitative studies (for example, Kular *et al.,* 2008; Truss *et al.,* 2011) in order to increase understanding, and reflect the unfolding exchange process of PC changes and subsequent behaviour (Conway and Briner, 2009).

Additionally, there have been calls for studies to capture the effect of context (Bakker *et al.,* 2011). Furthermore, recent trends for studying HR strategies focus on employee experiences or perceptions of HR (Truss *et al.,* 2012) due to the rhetoric/reality gap (Legge, 2005) and HRM-performance link difficulties (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). Consequently, the interpretive paradigm which reveals multiple truths and pluralist perspectives (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006) is appropriate. This will be achieved via a Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach discussed next.

4.23   Phenomenological Research Approach

The term 'phenomenon' comes from a Greek expression meaning '*to show itself*'. Phenomenology comes from the two components 'phenomenon' and 'logos' (knowledge) and means '*the science of phenomena*' (Heidegger, [1926] 2010, p. 27). Phenomenology may be described as a philosophy, research method or an overarching perspective for qualitative research (Ehrich, 2005). As a philosophy, there are different views (explained below), but all rest on the common ground of phenomenology being the study of lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Langdridge, 2007) and intentionality (also explained below) (Langdridge, 2007). That is, phenomenology aims to gain an understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990), and understand how these perceptions appear to individuals (Langdridge, 2007; Wilson, 2014) so does not seek one 'Truth'. This involves expressing (Tappan, 1997) or describing the experience, reflecting on it and interpreting the meanings (Moustakas, 1994) to discover the essences which are the fundamental structures of experience (Creswell, 2007), and gain reinterpretations and new or fuller meanings (Crotty, 1998) to gain new understanding (Tappan, 1997).

As such it is located within the interpretive paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), and aligns with a relativist ontology and a constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998) which as mentioned earlier, are appropriate for this study.

Two major phenomenological philosophies will now be introduced and justify why Heidegger's (1962) interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology was the most appropriate for this study to explore the phenomena of the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement during austerity, and is aligned with the author's own world view.

Husserl's ([1931] 1962) Descriptive Phenomenology

Husserl ([1931] 1962), the founder of phenomenology, believed that the only knowledge we can have of anything, is gained from our consciousness as that is how we encounter the world. This means that phenomenologists consider that reality is not divided into subjects and objects. Rather it is how they both appear in consciousness (Langdridge, 2007). This may be experienced, that is a person-world relationship that results from consciousness (Polkinghorne, 1989), or imagined. Accordingly, objects enter our reality only when they are presented to our consciousness. In other words, when we perceive it. This is affected by our mood, emotions and context including history and culture (Langdridge, 2007). Husserl believed that '*lifeworld*' is the pre-reflective experience of life entering consciousness without interpretations, hence why he advocated the importance of descriptions. As such, understanding the phenomenon is attempted by setting aside the cultural context, and explanations are not sought until it has been described (Dowling, 2007, p. 132). Although Husserl ([1931] 1962) believed the essence could be discerned from individual experiences, most phenomenologists achieve this from multiple descriptions (Langdridge, 2007).

Husserl ([1931] 1962) considered intentionality, that is the object or event that we are aware of, is a key feature of consciousness. Intentionality is the correlation between the noema, which is what is experienced, and noesis which is the way or manner it is experienced. Intentionality of consciousness therefore considers that consciousness is always directed towards an object (noema). Noesis refers to the act of perceiving, thinking, feeling, judging or remembering, in order to draw out embedded meanings (Moustakas, 1994). This highlights the interaction between subject and object (Crotty, 1998).

Husserl believed that we can be reflexive and stand outside ourselves "*to view the world from above*" (Langdridge, 2007, p. 15). He referred to this as transcendental, to see it as another person might see it. This may suggest that Husserl considered that it was possible to take what Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1962) referred to as a '*God's eye view*' (Langdridge, 2007, p. 16). To achieve this, Husserl ([1931] 1962) advocated epoché (also referred to as bracketing or reduction) whereby all knowledge and experiences of the phenomena are bracketed and our presuppositions set aside to allow a new exploration of the phenomena, thus freeing one-self of relativist social and historical pre-understanding (Blaikie, 2007). Whilst some authors, such as Crotty (1998) suggest that doubt of the biases and everyday knowledge is the core of epoché, questioning what we take for granted, others, such as Larkin *et al.,* (2011) say it is more about open-mindedness. Husserl ([1921] 2001, p. 178) believed that epoché enables the researcher to overcome personal biases (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007) to describe *the* '*things themselves*' as if they appear in our consciousness for the first time thus uncovering the essence (fundamental underlying structure) of the experience (Creswell, 2007; Langdridge, 2007). Here the focus is objectivity (Moran, 2000), 'leading back' to the phenomena rather than 'reducing down' (Larkin *et al.,* 2011, p. 322). This is used because presuppositions may distort our views. However, they need suspending rather than eradicating (Larkin *et al.,* 2011) as they can also aid understanding.

This is because many actions are done with little critical thinking and without considering all the available possibilities (Langdridge, 2007), so illuminating these may provide further insight. This was further considered by Heidegger ([1926] 2010), discussed next.

Heidegger's ([1926] 2010) Interpretive Phenomenology

Following Husserl's ([1931] 1962) transcendental descriptive phenomenology, one of his assistants, Heidegger (1962), critiqued the '*Gods eye view*' and focused on lived existentialism to understand existence and interpretation, rather than just description. Existential philosophy disagrees with Husserl's ([1931] 1962) transcendental view because of our '*Dasein*' which is '*being*' as in '*being-in-the-world*' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 120). This implies that understanding ourselves cannot be done in isolation (Bailey *et al.,* 2019). Humankind is brought into existence by engaging with others (being-with) and our perception is grounded in relation to the environment in which we live. In other words, even when we are alone, we are still interdependent on others such as wearing clothes made by others (Langdridge, 2007). As such, the social world is more than just background. The personal and social worlds are essential parts of 'being-in-the-world' (Larkin *et al.,* 2011). With this approach, 'Lifeworld' consists of the everyday experiences within their situations and relations (Van Manen, 1990). Consequently, existential phenomenology describes the experience in context, that is how it is lived. This means that the world view is contextual where experience is viewed as emerging from a context.

This recognises that different people experience different meanings of the same context, and the same person may perceive different meanings of the same phenomena in different contexts (Langdridge, 2007). Within this process, some points stand out, whilst other points stay in the background, but both are present. This means that experience within a situation cannot be considered to be 'inside' a person thus completely subjective, nor considered 'outside' a person as totally objective.

Consequently, Heidegger (1962) believed that people are an inclusive part of reality - embedded and intertwined in the world. As such, the "*experience is understood in the context of person-in-the-world*" (Thompson *et al.,* 1989, p. 136), rather than parallel to the world (McConnell-Henry *et al.,* 2009). To ignore context would distort the experience that the researcher is trying to understand (Tappan, 1997). Thus Heidegger (1962) considered that intentionality needed to be reconsidered (Moran, 2000). He believed that you can never truly bracket off all your presuppositions and gain a '*Gods eye view*' due to our '*Dasein*'. History, culture and context must be considered, and these experiences and essences be interpreted rather than just described. In other words, people make sense of events within their existence and background, and not by detaching from it (Annells, 1996). This is appropriate for this study given context is a key part of the inquiry.

To understand human experience in relation to their '*Dasein*' and context, Heidegger (1962) developed interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology. This aims to understand how the people living through these experiences, and the researcher studying them, understand the experience (Annells, 1996; Wojnar and Swanson, 2007). Interpretive phenomenology moves beyond Husserl's descriptive phenomenology and believes that our understanding and meaning of our experiences are developed through our interpretations (Reiners, 2012). Van Manen (1990) explains that describing a lived experience makes it a retrospective activity as it is a reflection on prior lived experience. In the process of expressing events (Tappan, 1997), it becomes transformed (Van Manen, 1990). Consequently, it is never identical to the original lived experience, so every perception is able to be extended (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, it may be difficult or impossible to capture the pre-reflective '*lifeworld*' (Wilson, 2014). Nevertheless, it is these distorted views that inform employees' behaviour making it useful for this study which aims to understand different views of managerial efforts to foster employee (behavioural) engagement during the context of austerity.

The participants may not be aware of these meanings, but they can be interpreted from their narratives (Lopez and Willis, 2004). Sharing and constructing our experiences through language leads to co-constructions to understand meanings (Van Manen, 1990; Wilson, 2014) thus constructing our reality (McConnell-Henry *et al.,* 2009). Consequently, Heideggerian phenomenology considers that pre-understanding is useful and necessary (Hasselkus, 1997; Lopez and Willis, 2004; Wilding and Whiteford, 2005), although making presuppositions explicit and explaining how they are used is also required (Lopez and Willis, 2004; McConnell-Henry *et al.,* 2009). This was met in this study by presenting the previous literature review chapter and by exercising reflexivity (explained later in this chapter). Such interpretation based on prior knowledge is a legitimate component of good research (McConnell-Henry *et al.,* 2009).

Interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology was therefore used in the study to examine how these meanings influence the choices participants made within their context (Lopez and Willis, 2004). Such examination did not intend to highlight causal relations. Rather, the intention was to reveal the nature of the phenomena as experienced by people (McConnell-Henry *et al.,* 2009). Existential hermeneutic phenomenology also made the 'lived experience' explicit. This allowed reflection to question assumptions about how the context of austerity has impacted the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement from different perspectives, and in doing so provided new possibilities. Following Rolfe *et al.'s,* (2017) example, this was achieved by acknowledging unnamed doubts, feelings and anxiety, naming the sensed feeling to understand it better, questioning assumptions, habits and routines, and using this to provide new understanding. As, Heidegger's (1962) interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology was used in this study, epoché was not utilised as the researcher's knowledge of both the academic literature on the topic and practical experience of working in a LA, enabled participants' descriptions to be interpreted.

The aim was to understand peoples' experience of the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement within a context of austerity where the levers available to managers are reduced, from both line managers' and employees' (non-management) perspectives. This goes beyond a traditional focus on managerial perspectives (Reissner and Pagan, 2013). This was aligned with the researcher's world view which recognised that individuals have different needs and past experiences, and will therefore perceive the context of austerity differently. Consequently, Heidegger's (1962, p. 120) interest in '*Dasein*', or the everyday being-in-the-world, was aligned with the study's focus (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005) on the everyday process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. Accordingly, interpretive phenomenology enabled the contextualised experiences to be interpreted (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007).

4.24 Abductive Approach

The research adopts an abductive approach given participants' descriptions were obtained and presented, and then technical concepts were generated from this description. This is a bottom-up approach where the '*insider*' view (Blaikie, 2007, p. 90) elicits the meanings, interpretations, motives and intentions that people use in their everyday lives which direct their behaviour (Blaikie, 2007). The aim was to understand the participants 'constructions' of how employee (behavioural) engagement was fostered and experienced within the austerity context, by exploring reasons rather than causes. The abductive approach is able to answer 'what' and 'why' questions (Blaikie, 2010) which precede 'how' questions to '*develop a theory and elaborate it iteratively*' (Blaikie, 2007, p. 68) or understand existing theory (Blaikie, 2007).

4.25 Summary

In summary, the study is located in the interpretivist paradigm using a constructionist and Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. To manage epistemological openness, this study includes research questions, data collection methods and analysis suitably designed to investigate these questions using an abductive approach to produce contextualised findings (Larkin *et al,* 2006). These will be discussed next.

4.3   Research Aim, Questions and Objectives

This section will outline the research questions and objectives. Interest in this study arose as the researcher had 20 years local authority (LA) work experience, so was aware of the pressures of austerity and the Coalition Government's (in power when this research was proposed) desire to address this problem with employee engagement. This experience was considered useful for the Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach. As shown in chapter 3, a literature review was performed on employee engagement, the process of fostering engagement, social exchange theory, including the PC, idiosyncratic deals and resource theory. This enabled the research questions to be devised and the research designed. These questions were revised slightly following the data collection and analysis which is permitted within qualitative research (Creswell, 2009).

Aim of Research:

The aim of the study is to understand the lived experiences in how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered within four teams from one LA (Local Authority) when the levers available to line managers are reduced due to austerity, and how this has shaped the PC in terms of the reciprocal expectations/promises between employees (non-management) and their line managers. This is in response to recent calls for qualitative studies on engagement (Kular *et al*., 2008; Truss *et al.,* 2011), and also requests to study the lived experiences of engagement taking into account the contextual constraints at the micro-level (individual) (Truss *et al.,* 2013). The Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach was used to illuminate the contextual effects (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005).

As there is no universally agreed definition of employee engagement, the dimensions of cognitive, emotional and physical/behavioural/social referred to in many of the definitions (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Alfes *et al.,* 2010), will be utilised to identify employee (behavioural) engagement.

Principle Research Questions:

1. How is employee (behavioural) engagement fostered and experienced during austerity?

2. How has austerity shaped the PC in terms of the reciprocal expectations/promises between employees (non-management - professional and non-professional) and their line managers given the changes to jobs, pay, benefits, terms and conditions (social and economic exchange)?

Research Objectives:

1. Investigate how line managers foster employee (behavioural) engagement using the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) four enablers/drivers of engagement as systematic frameworks.

2. Explore how line managers and employees perceive the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement when the levers available to line managers are reduced due to austerity pressures.

3. Drawing on social exchange (Blau, 1964), psychological contract (Guest and Conway, 2002) and resource (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) theories, understand how austerity has affected the perceived expectations/promises between employees (non-management - professional and non-professional) and their line managers given the changes to social and economic exchange.

The research design will now be explained and justified.

4.4   Research Design

This section of the chapter will describe the research strategy and justify the methods used ensuring the whole process is aligned with the researcher's philosophical view and research questions (Bell and Thorpe, 2013). This is summarised below in Table 1:

Table 1 – Research Design Summary
[adapted from Easterby-Smith *et al.,* (2012, p. 18)]

Research Philosophy	Interpretivist paradigm – Heidegger's Interpretive phenomenology Constructionist epistemology
Research Approach	Abductive
Research Strategy	Heidegger's (1962) Interpretive Phenomenology 4 x teams within one local authority (2 x professional and 2 x non-professional teams)
Time Horizon	Cross sectional

Data Collection Methods	• Semi structured interviews using the critical incident technique with:-
	  ➢ A HR Manager
	  ➢ All levels of line managers (senior/middle/first line)
	  ➢ Employees (non-management)
	• Where possible employee (non-management) focus group interviews
	• Field notes

Analysis	• Template analysis

As stated earlier, a qualitative approach was suitable as the research questions are process type questions that will be affected by participants' perceptions (Li and Frenkel, 2017) and require the incorporation and consideration of context. Consequently, a phenomenological approach was used to understand the participants' subjective descriptions of their experiences and understand how they experienced efforts to foster their engagement (Lemon and Palenchar, 2018), and their social construction of reality through their PCs which are perception based and idiosyncratic (Rousseau, 1995).

A pilot study was conducted first which informed amendments to the research methods used, and minor amendments to the interview questions (discussed later). The flexibility to add data collection methods is permissible providing it is controlled opportunism and is likely to reveal relevant data and theoretical insight (Eisenhardt, 1989).

4.5   Research Strategy

Heidegger's (1962) interpretive phenomenological approach was selected as the research questions need to explore how the context of austerity affects the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement from the viewpoint of line managers and employees. Consequently, a quantitative study was not considered rich enough. In addition, it may be that previous research has been constrained by the methods and samples used so far (Reissner and Pagan, 2013). For example, Francis *et al.,* (2013) interviewed HR Directors, but are HR Directors the best data source for examining employee engagement? Although in Francis *et al.'s,* (2013) study employees were also surveyed by FTR (free text responses), which are web based open questions, this may not be as revealing as semi-structured interviews with employees which allow more in-depth responses.

Consequently, Heidegger's (1962) interpretive phenomenology enabled intensive examination of employee (behavioural) engagement in a particular context, in this case a LA during austerity, whilst allowing the use of interpretive methods to understand the different perceptions and experiences of the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. As engagement is affected by multiple factors, the study's ability to reveal these contextual factors was important (Kahn, 1992; Rees *et al.,* 2013), especially given much of the engagement research does not take context into account (Purcell, 2014b). This showed the impact of the changing PC on engagement, given the levers available to managers to foster employee (behavioural) engagement had reduced, in particular the demise of a 'job for life'. Phenomenology is also able to answer 'how' questions, in this case understanding how austerity has affected the perceived expectations or promises between line managers and employees. Additionally, the empirical data obtained from different people in different positions/roles provided authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). This also showed the plurality of the engagement phenomenon (Blaikie, 2010) helping to move the debate to a more pluralist discourse (Bailey *et al.,* 2017).

Data was analysed within teams (two professional teams and two non-professional teams), to keep the data sources proximal (Purcell *et al.,* 2003) to understand both managerial and employee points of view of the same critical incident regarding the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement during austerity, thus responding to the research questions. This also enabled context to be preserved (Atkinson, 2007). Supplementing employee self-report in this way was a significant strength of the study because when only one data source is used, as with much of the PC research (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012), findings are limited and one sided as certain phenomena may be magnified or ignored (Daymon, 2000). Such management intervention studies have the potential for developing theory and practice from the richness of data collected (Bakker and Leiter, 2010; Purcell, 2014b).

Analysing data within teams also enabled a comparison of managers, professionals, and non-professional employees given their likely different orientations to work (Goldthorpe *et al.,* 1968). Professionals were defined as those who needed externally certified education/training to do their job (Purcell *et al.,* 2003). Non-professionals were included as much of the engagement literature suggests meaningfulness, development and involvement as ways to foster engagement (for example, Alfes *et al.,* 2010; Reissner and Pagan, 2013), so it implies that employees with an instrumental orientation are excluded from this discourse (O'Brien *et al.,* 2004). However, these non-professional roles are customer facing making engagement pertinent. Additionally, having employees and managers as data sources addressed methodological issues seen in some engagement research (such as Francis *et al.,* 2013 mentioned earlier) and with previous HRM-performance research (such as Huselid, 1995; West *et al.,* 2002) where the data sources and/or methods used may not be the most informative. For example, collecting data from one senior respondent tends to produce findings based on intended policies rather than actual implementation (Truss, 2001; Purcell *et al.,* 2003; Wright and Gardner, 2003; Khilji and Wang, 2006; Nishii *et al.,* 2008).

Each team had a reasonable proportion of individuals to be sampled in relation to the team size (Purcell *et al.,* 2003), in this case 34% overall, in order to understand the impact of such interventions. It was not necessary to examine data at a larger unit of analysis, that is the LA, as the research questions only required an examination at the micro-level (individual). This is because whilst managers may seek to foster engagement, it is the employees' decision as to whether and how much to engage (Kahn, 1990; Rich *et al.,* 2010; Cole *et al.,* 2012). Consequently, the LA was considered as the internal context (Yin, 2009), and as discussed in the literature review, this included the organisational and HR strategy. Locating the teams in one LA made data analysis much more straightforward (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Boselie *et al.,* 2005) as all teams were experiencing the same macro and internal context issues. This enabled comparisons between the teams to identify the factors facilitating practice/improvement (Baker, 2012), and provided trustworthiness/authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

In summary, 4 teams were sampled within one LA, and used the following data sources and methods:

1. Thirteen one-to-one semi-structured interviews with line managers (senior/middle/first) incorporating the critical incident technique. One of these senior managers was also the HR manager so answered questions in both capacities.

2. Sixteen one-to-one semi-structured interviews with employees (non-management) incorporating the critical incident technique.

3. Three focus group interviews with staff (non-management - one with a professional team and another two within one non-professional team) incorporating the critical incident technique.

The sampling strategy and research methods will now be explained.

4.6   Sampling

Sampling was as follows and explained below:

1. The LA was selected by purposive sampling
2. Teams within the LA were selected by theoretical sampling
3. Individual participants were nominated by their line managers.

Theoretical sampling of the LA was problematic as little is known academically about the 'lived experiences of engagement' (Reissner and Pagan, 2013; Truss *et al.,* 2013). Consequently, as in Purcell *et al.'s* (2003) study, purposive sampling was used to select a LA that was deliberately seeking to behaviourally engage their employees, thus providing the features to answer the research questions. This was obtained from a previous quantitative survey conducted by the author. The LA sampled did not have an engagement policy, but they expected the pursuit of engagement to be embedded in the line manager-employee relationship. The researcher was also unknown to the LA which reduced the likelihood of participants providing socially desirable answers. The LA requested anonymity, and so is referred to as the "LA".

The four teams were selected by theoretical sampling, and therefore driven by a conceptual question (Miles *et al.,* 2014) in order to see if there was a difference in the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement between professionals (8 employees) and non-professionals (24 employees). Teams were not named or their job titles stated to prevent inadvertently revealing their identity. Teams 1 (professional) and 3 (non-professional) were described by Senior Management as engaged, but Teams 2 (professional) and 4 (non-professional) were described as "*difficult to engage staff in the development of the service*" suggesting social disengagement. This provided an opportunity to learn from what is perceived by Senior Management as working well, and then comparing it with what was perceived to be not working well. No new codes were created in the third and fourth teams, suggesting theme replication thus making further team sampling unnecessary for this qualitative study.

All levels of line management were sampled to build on previous research such as Francis *et al.,* (2013), which only included senior management participants and employees, and to respond to Hutchinson and Purcell (2003) and Nielsen and González's (2010) claims regarding the important role of first line and middle managers respectively. Employees were included given they are the intended recipients of engagement (Guest, 1999; Paul and Anantharaman, 2003). These additional perspectives are more likely to offset the risk of the rhetoric/reality gap (Legge, 2005) from manager reports, as well as being necessary given the interdependent nature of the PC (Schein, 1980).

Employee respondents were selected by their managers given time away from their normal duties in order to participate in this study needed to be authorised. Whilst this risks that their views were not representative of their non-participating colleagues (Fern, 2001), this was not problematic given this constructionist study aimed to obtain multiple views rather than 'one truth' to understand how these perceptions appear to individuals (Wilson, 2014) and are understood (Larkin *et al.,* 2006). Employees had a minimum of one year's service (Purcell *et al.,* 2003) to avoid findings being affected by the '*first day at work*' feeling (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009, p. 7). In all teams, Managers were interviewed prior to employees to ensure that employee confidentiality was not inadvertently breached. For this reason, it was also decided not to interview managers for a second time after interviewing employees, because whilst this would have enhanced credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) further, it would have been at an unacceptable risk to the employee participants. All 45 participants were permanent full/part-time contracts and represented an average of 34% sample size from the four teams (Table 2). 32 participants were female and 13 participants were male (Table 3). Participation was voluntary, individual written consent was gained (Appendix 1), and anonymity promised in all publications. Unlike most of the earlier studies on i-deals (such as Hornung *et al.,* 2008) participants included those that had i-deals denied, and sought co-worker views.

Table 2 - Sample Size:

Team	Line Managers	Employees One-to-One Interviews	Employees Focus Group Interviews	Total Employees	Total Participants	Total Team Headcount	% Sampled
Professional 1	3	0	5	5	8	63	13%
Professional 2	4	3	0	3	7	10	70%
Non-Professional 3	4	5	6 + 5 = 11	16	20	34	59%
Non-Professional 4	2	8	0	8	10	25	40%
Total	**13**	**16**	**16**	**32**	**45**	**132**	**34%**

Table 3 – Participant Profile:

Team 1 – Professional:	Age	Gender	Service with this LA (Yrs)	LA Service (Yrs)	Highest Level Qualification	Interview Method
Senior Manager	Not declared	F	3	3	Not declared	One-to-One
Middle Manager	50-64	F	9	9	Masters Degree	One-to-One
First Line Manager	50-64	M	7	7	Professional Qualifications	One-to-One
Employee 1	40-49	F	3	3	Masters Degree	Focus Group
Employee 2	40-49	F	8	8	Professional Qualifications	Focus Group
Employee 3	40-49	F	12	12	Undergraduate Degree	Focus Group
Employee 4	40-49	F	5	23	Professional Qualifications	Focus Group
Employee 5	25-39	F	9	9	Professional Qualifications	Focus Group

Team 2 - Professional:	Age	Gender	Service with this LA (Yrs)	LA Service (Yrs)	Highest Level Qualification	Interview Method
Senior Manager	50-64	M	33	33	Professional Qualifications	One-to-One
Middle Manager A *	50-64	F	33	33	Masters Degree	One-to-One
Middle Manager B *	50-64	F	38	38	Undergraduate Degree	One-to-One
First Line Manager & Middle Manager of Team 4	40-49	F	24	24	Masters Degree	One-to-One
Employee 1	50-64	M	45	45	Undergraduate Degree	One-to-One
Employee 2	50-64	M	40	41	Professional Qualifications	One-to-One
Employee 3	50-64	F	19	19	Professional Qualifications	One-to-One

Team 3 – Non-Professional:	Age	Gender	Service with this LA (Yrs)	LA Service (Yrs)	Highest Level Qualification	Interview Method
Senior Manager	40-49	F	30	30	Masters Degree	One-to-One
Middle Manager	40-49	M	25	25	Level 4	One-to-One
First Line Manager	40-49	F	18	18	Masters Degree	One-to-One
First Line Manager	50-64	F	33	33	NVQ 3	One-to-One
Employee 1	40-49	F	2	2	Level 3	One-to-One
Employee 2	16-24	F	3	3	Level 2	One-to-One
Employee 3	50-64	M	33	33	Level 4	One-to-One
Employee 4	40-49	M	3	3	Level 2	One-to-One
Employee 5	40-49	M	7	7	Level 4	One-to-One
Employee 6	50-64	M	8	8	Level 4	Focus Group 1
Employee 7	40-49	F	19	19	Level 3	Focus Group 1
Employee 8	40-49	F	13	13	Level 3	Focus Group 1
Employee 9	40-49	M	5.5	5.5	Undergraduate Degree	Focus Group 1
Employee 10	50-64	F	15	15	Level 3	Focus Group 1
Employee 11	50-64	F	12	12	Level 3	Focus Group 1
Employee 12	25-39	F	16	16	Level 3	Focus Group 2
Employee 13	50-64	F	18	18	Level 3	Focus Group 2
Employee 14	25-39	M	4	4	Level 2	Focus Group 2
Employee 15	16-24	F	4.5	4.5	Level 3	Focus Group 2
Employee 16	16-24	M	1	1	Level 3	Focus Group 2

Team 4 – Non-Professional:	Age	Gender	Service with this LA (Yrs)	LA Service (Yrs)	Highest Level Qualification	Interview Method
Middle Manager	40-49	F	26	26	Level 4	One-to-One
First Line Manager	16-24	F	6.5	6.5	Level 3	One-to-One
Employee 1	50-64	F	14	14	Level 3	One-to-One
Employee 2	16-24	F	5	5	Level 2	One-to-One
Employee 3	25-39	F	3	3	Undergraduate Degree	One-to-One
Employee 4	16-24	F	8	8	Level 3	One-to-One
Employee 5	50-64	F	36	36	Level 2	One-to-One
Employee 6	16-24	M	6	6	Level 2	One-to-One
Employee 7	50-64	F	35	35	Level 3	One-to-One
Employee 8	50-64	F	32	32	Level 2	One-to-One

* Senior Managers in Team 4 are the Middle Managers from Team 2.

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4.7   Research Methods

Methods used were semi-structured interviews incorporating the critical incident technique (CIT) using a phenomenological approach (Chell, 2004). In the pilot study, employees were only interviewed in groups. Following the pilot review, this was amended to interviewing employees on a one-to-one basis but was supplemented with focus group interviews where access was granted (two focus group interviews were held with Non-Professional Team 3 in addition to Professional Team 1 in the pilot). This change was initiated as not all teams could grant access for focus group interviews. In total, 32 interviews were conducted. 29 were on a one-to-one basis, and there were 3 focus group interviews held with employees (non-management), discussed next.

One-to-One Semi-Structured Interviews Incorporating the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) Using a Phenomenological Approach

The research questions aim to understand the perceptions of how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered in austerity, and how this has shaped their PC given the dilution of the employment deal. Consequently, a constructionist and interpretive approach is needed to understand the points of view of the interviewees, in this case the perceived fairness, trust and delivery of the (new) deal (Guest and Conway, 2002), to identify the different 'truths' experienced by the participants (Blaikie, 2007). Methods included were individual semi-structured interviews incorporating the CIT (Flanagan, 1954) using a phenomenological approach (Chell, 2004) with all levels of line managers within each of the four teams (three senior, five middle and five first line managers) and sixteen employees (non-management). This technique has also been used qualitatively by Atkinson (2007) in the examination of trust and the PC. The CIT is:

> "*... a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles*". (Flanagan, 1954, p. 1)

In other words, it is a procedure for gathering facts about behaviour in defined situations (Flanagan, 1954) thus reflecting its initial positivist roots (Hughes *et al.,* 2007). However, now it is used much more flexibly and can include self-report (Butterfield *et al.,* 2005) and can be used within an interpretive or phenomenological paradigm (Chell, 2004) as in this study, thus extending beyond 'scientific' behavioural analysis to human experience and the meaning that people give to their activities (Hughes *et al.,* 2007). Consequently, Chell (2004, p. 48) defines CIT as:

> "... *a qualitative interview procedure which facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences (events, incident, processes or issues), identified by the respondent, the way they are managed, and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects. The objective is to gain an understanding of the incident from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective and behavioural elements*".

The advantage of using the CIT was its ability to collect data entirely from the participant's point of view (Chell, 2004), and explore the same event from different perspectives within teams (Miles *et al.,* 2014) and incorporate the austerity context. It also enabled teams to be compared (Miles *et al.,* 2014), particularly in relation to the new reciprocations negotiated. Whereas, other methods, such as an unstructured interview, would not require such a specific focus and linkage (Chell, 2004). Additionally, it helped ensure that the critical incident preceded the subsequent thoughts, feelings and behaviour described in the interview, thus avoiding the need to, and difficulties in, estimating the time duration of the 'lag' effect (Khilji and Wang, 2006; Harter *et al.,* 2010; Winkler *et al.,* 2012; Shipp and Cole, 2015) where any number of factors could also affect engagement. Although the CIT can be criticised for its problems with recall bias (Flanagan, 1954; Kandola, 2012), and does not comprehensively cover all issues (Atkinson, 2007), this limitation was considered acceptable for this interpretive study as these incidents are 'critical' and specific, so recall is likely to be higher (Chell, 2004) thus presenting issues of salience to that individual (Atkinson, 2007) that may not have been anticipated earlier.

For example, during the third interview, a participant described an i-deal, so the questions were extended to also ask respondents to recall a time (a critical incident - Flanagan, 1954) when they negotiated aspects to their employment that were not available to their team peers. Asking this in an interview enabled clarification to be given (Liao *et al.,* 2014). Focusing on a specific event enabled a more detailed description of the experience to be gained (Thompson, 1989). Additionally, it is these (distorted) views which inform employees' perceptions and leads to their engagement/disengagement (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a; Collins *et al.,* 2013). That said, the ability of the participant to reflect (Claxton, 2015) and articulate critical incidents, particularly with some of the non-professional staff who were less forthcoming, was a limitation and needed to be addressed as much as possible by putting the participant at ease along with relevant but considered probing.

Interviews ranged from 33 to 114 minutes (averaging 59 minutes), providing a total of 1876 minutes of audio recordings. More specifically, manager interviews averaged 69 minutes and employee interviews averaged 52 minutes. This was acceptable given managers are more likely to have higher skills in articulation, and because they were required to answer questions in their line manager role and also as an employee. The semi-structured nature of the interview questions enabled an informal interactive process with open-ended questions (Appendix 2) (Moustakas, 1994; Lemon and Palenchar, 2018). It also meant that the ability of participants to 'fake' employee (behavioural) engagement by giving socially desirable answers (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000) was lowered as further questions/examples were asked.

Semi-structured interviews also had a number of advantages over other methods. For example, observation was rejected because covert participant observation raises ethical issues (for example, deceiving co-workers) (Chell, 2004), and non-participant observation may result in participants acting differently (Flick, 2009).

Observation may also be more appropriate for content type questions (such as what people do). Whereas, semi-structured interviews and the CIT are more able to explore process type questions (why/how they do it) to discover reasons for behaviour (Hines, 2000). Consequently, observation alone would not demonstrate how a series of events contributed to the current situation. Although Kahn (1990) used interviews alongside observation methods to offset some of these difficulties, manager's efforts to foster employee (behavioural) engagement may not be regularly apparent (Flick, 2009) making observation costly and high risk (Boxstaens *et al.,* 2015). Whereas, the methods used in this study were low risk and overt (Chell, 2004).

That said, interviews do have a number of other disadvantages that had to be addressed. The questions had to be piloted first and then amended prior to rolling out to the other three teams to prevent the likelihood that questions were misinterpreted (Flanagan, 1954). Reliability may also be considered a concern. However, as the objective was to understand the participants varied thoughts, feelings and actions, rather than searching for one 'single truth' (Blaikie, 2007) this was not considered problematic. The interviews began with a social conversation to put the participant at ease and build rapport. The purpose of the study (that is, to understand how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered and experienced within the austerity context) was explained to participants, and also why they had been selected (that is, to gain their views on what works and does not work in the austerity context), and assurances were given about confidentiality and what would happen with their data (that is, names/job titles would not be published, and the data would be used for the PhD thesis and articles, along with a summarised anonymous report to LA managers). Permission was gained to use the voice recorder, and it was given to participants to control so that they could stop it at any time. Only one participant actually stopped the recording during the interview, and they continued with the recording a few moments later.

The Senior Manager of the pilot team was also the Senior HR Manager so a series of questions were also asked in that capacity. The purpose was to ascertain the organisation's expectations of line managers and how they are supported to understand how the organisation pursued employee (behavioural) engagement through their line managers.

Interview questions with managers were different to employees (non-management) as they focused on the beginning of Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007a) People Management-Performance causal chain. First managers were asked about a critical incident where they had fostered employee (behavioural) engagement (explained as how they get the best from them, help them focus on their work, care about their work, and enable them to share and implement ideas/improvements with others), and the outcome was positive. Before managers answered, it was explained that their staff would be asked about this too in order to explore their experiences of the same event. After the critical incident was discussed, subsequent questions revolved around how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered (if not sufficiently covered in the critical incident), and how it is different since austerity, and what they consider to be engaged behaviour. Then a series of questions were asked to managers as employees rather than organisational representatives. Questions included asking the manager about what it was like working there, and then depending on the answer, subsequent questions followed regarding the employment deal since austerity. These questions were phrased in such a way to be appropriate for the public sector context. For example, there were no questions on high pay (Rousseau, 1990) but there was a focus on fairness of pay and benefits (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002).

It was acknowledged that managers are likely to portray the organisation positively, which is why it was so important to compare manager interviews with employee responses (Guest, 1999; Paul and Anantharaman, 2003).

Employee interviews consisted of warm-up questions designed to encourage participation and discover salient themes. This included questions designed to find out if they if they had an instrumental or career orientation to work (Goldthorpe *et al.,* 1968), and open questions such as "what it was like working at that LA?". Further interview questions were used flexibly in response to this question (Marshall, 1999). The employee's view of the critical incident described by their line manager was then asked to see how the line manager's actions influenced the employee's engaged behaviour thus enabling the employees to take on an expert role in relation to their own lived experience (Bann, 2009). Given individuals may be reluctant to report disengagement or deviant behaviour (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997), disengagement of other employees was also explored when the participant raised the issue. Such peer reports of behaviour have been shown to be valid and reliable despite the reluctance to formally use them as part of performance management procedures given the implementation difficulties (McEvoy and Buller, 1987). Further questions included asking participants about their perceived fairness of 'the employment deal' and their own employee (behavioural) engagement (see Appendix 2).

Focus Group Interviews with Employees (Non-Management)

This method is effectively an interview with more than one interviewee. The term 'focus group interviews' differentiates it from one-to-one interviews and also other types of focus groups such as problem solving (Hines, 2000). Focus group interviews were selected in addition to employee one-to-one interviews for a number of reasons (discussed next) where the LA could provide access (used within Professional Team 1 and Non-Professional Team 3).

Whilst phenomenology normally explores individual experience and therefore is not normally used in group methods (Webb and Kevern, 2001; Dowling, 2007), there are times when group methods are a useful addition in phenomenological research (Qutoshi, 2018). In this study, they were considered useful as they enabled participants to share their experience and participate in that shared understanding to elicit meanings (Hines, 2000), thus gaining from the group interactions in order to gather rich data about the inquiry (Asbury, 1995). This occurs when interviewees question each other's views/justify points to gain more knowledge. This is especially useful when the topics discussed, such as i-deals, become normative (Hornung *et al.,* 2008). Context may also be highlighted more clearly as shown in Reissner and Pagan's (2013) study on management communication and psychological state engagement in the context of organisational change. Consequently, it was relevant for this PhD study given the focus on the austerity context which was central to the research questions. The story telling approach of recent events and different perspectives was also very interesting (Kandola, 2012). This was valuable given the focus group interviews were held within teams enabling a socially constructed view (Gergen, 1985) to emerge of each team's line manager's behaviour in the fostering of employee (behavioural) engagement. This was compared with the line manager interviews thus contributing to trustworthiness/credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) and demonstrated the difference between intended and actual practice (Gratton and Truss, 2003; Wright and Nishii, 2005; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a).

That said, group think, where the desire for unanimity results in the group agreeing with each other rather than appraising the points raised (Janis, 1972), had to be reduced in three ways. First, participants were non-management employees of a similar level/status to avoid/reduce pressure to contribute 'acceptable views'. Second, all participants were encouraged to supplement information later by email/telephone as some employees may have been reluctant to discuss their manager's efforts to foster employee (behavioural) engagement or their i-deals with colleagues. Finally, names/job titles were not used on the interview transcripts/reports/thesis to maintain anonymity (Flick, 2009). These efforts were important as staff may have been reluctant to discuss their line manager's behaviour given the insecure job climate, or their i-deal (where applicable) if it had dysfunctional elements such as secrecy (Rousseau *et al.,* 2006). Given the variety of views put forward in the focus group interviews, groupthink did not appear to be an issue.

Another reason for using focus group interviews was to observe group behaviour to see if there were any visible conflicts/pressures amongst group members. This was of particular interest to those members that discussed their i-deal. Two out of three groups discussed their i-deal and seemed to demonstrate co-worker acceptance, or that individualised arrangements are the norm (Hornung *et al.,* 2008), or that employees informally discuss their idiosyncratic arrangements with co-workers. It also has the advantage that the interviewer's language is identical for all participants, whereas in the individual interviews, given the semi-structured and conversational style, questions were asked in different orders, and inevitably with different wording. Participants in the focus group interviews were different to those interviewed on a one-to-one basis to prevent/reduce contamination.

It would have been advantageous to hold the meetings offsite as that may have provided a psychological break for participants (Carey, 1994). However, participants could not be released from work to allow travelling.

All Interviews – Probing, Transcription, Field Notes and Checks

All interviews were conducted as a conversation, rather than a question and answer session (Thompson *et al.,* 1989). Questions were used as prompts to guide the participant to describe their experiences. Relevant probing, such as asking what happened next or enquiring about their feelings, was carried out only where necessary to understand the impact of context (Wilson, 2014) and to avoid leading questions. It was explained that the researcher would take notes during the session as a back-up. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim by the Researcher. This was the first stage in becoming familiar with the data (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999) and may identify revealing points post reflection (Watson, 1995). It also preserved the data in another form which was preferred to audio coding, provided an audit trail, and allowed for interpretations to be checked. Given the scope for transcribing errors, the audio tape was simultaneously listened to whilst reading the transcript (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006). This also helped in identifying meaningful qualitative elements rather than simply lines of text (Chenail, 2012). In transcription, punctuation and/or other notations were used to represent tone, excitement and abrupt cut-offs. For example, uppercase text represented loud volume, square brackets were used to record field notes and observations (although some may have been missed given the pressure to take notes whilst facilitating the interviews), and note when language did not mirror tone such as sarcastic responses or unclear words (Bird, 2005). With hindsight, it may have been better to learn one of the standard conventions for transcribing given the possibility that in future, research may be done in teams. Interviewees were asked to check the interview transcripts (respondent validation) to contribute to credibility and trustworthiness. Fourteen participants accepted this, although no amendments were requested. Four participants emailed further information and one participant requested an additional interview thus providing opportunities for '*collaboration and reflexive elaboration*' (Tracy, 2010, p. 8). Transcripts and field notes were imported into NVivo software for analysis, discussed next.

4.8   Data Analysis

The aim of this study was to understand how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered within the context of austerity, and how this has shaped the PC in terms of the reciprocations between line managers and employees. This meant that both management and employee perspectives needed to be understood, as well as the impact of context (Carey, 1994). How this was analysed is discussed below.

After transcription, the scripts had to be checked by listening to and simultaneously reading each transcript. This was repeated numerous times in an active way to understand patterns and meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which demonstrated how the participant understood the experience (Blank *et al.,* 2013) of being encouraged to be engaged and the state of their PC. Such immersion within the data contributed to Heidegger's aim of understanding the participants' 'lifeworld' (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005) where participants' realities are influenced by "*the world in which they live*" (Lopez and Willis, 2004, p. 729).

Coding into themes was achieved by using template analysis and NVivo software. Template analysis emerged in the USA in the 1990s and '*is a style of thematic analysis that balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study*' (King, 2012, p. 426). The reason why this was selected over other data analysis methods was mainly due to its ability to be used with a phenomenological and interpretivist epistemology (amongst others). It is also able to analyse multiple perspectives, in this case managers and employees, and large quantities of data (both within and across teams), typically 15-30, although Donnelly (2008) has used it with 81 interviews. Additionally, it is suitable for both data collection methods used, and permits a priori coding enabling themes to be defined in advance of the analysis.

Starting with a priori codes and ending with emergent themes is consistent with interpretive phenomenology (Reiners, 2012), and facilitated the understanding of how the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement was affected by austerity. That said, a priori themes were reconsidered given too many codes may prevent identification of emergent important themes, and yet too few may lead to an overwhelming mass of complex data (Waring and Wainwright, 2008).

Moreover, template analysis enabled the themes to be organised into hierarchical relationships (Krause and Moore, 2018). This provided flexibility by enabling more themes to be identified and coded in the richest data, whilst following a systematic process to enhance the quality of the research (King, 2012). This was particularly useful when coding i-deals and when identifying different dimensions of employee (behavioural) engagement. It was also useful when comparing teams, as the hierarchical coding enabled text to be analysed at different levels.

NVivo software was used for coding given it could work well with template analysis (Langdridge, 2007), its ability to provide a database that could be stored on a password protected laptop, the ease of coding functionality thus minimising training required, and the transparency it provides in comparison to manual coding. It was also provided by the University thus reducing costs.

Initially many potential themes were coded because even if they did not appear to respond directly to the research questions, there was the possibility of them becoming relevant later as the analysis developed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). That said, there were occasions where transcript text was not assigned to any codes (Thomas, 2003) such as when engaging in initial general conversation when entering the interview room to put the participant at ease. The eight themes initially coded were taken from Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007a) 'People Management-Performance Chain' model to provide the highest level coding.

This highlighted the process from management actions planned and taken in the fostering of employee (behavioural) engagement, and employees' perceptions and subsequent attitude and behaviour this generated. Unit level outcomes were not considered due to the interpretive nature of the study, and to focus the inquiry on employee (behavioural) engagement. The lower level codes were developed through an iterative process of reading through the transcripts and noting emerging themes that illuminated these experiences in more depth (Poppleton *et al.,* 2008). Consequently, the coding process was repeated numerous times given the coding template increased with each interview transcript (see appendix 3 for first and final code list). Sometimes text was coded into more than one category (Thomas, 2003). Themes which emerged included contextual information and the new reciprocations negotiated and expected. Full quotes were saved in the codes so that they could be evidenced in the thesis and related articles, and preserve the context (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which was essential within a Heideggerian phenomenological approach. As with Kahn's (1990) study, the definitions of engagement provided sensitising concepts to identify employee (behavioural) engagement and disengagement from each interview and what led to these experiences. It was recognised though that the sequential nature of analysing individual transcripts meant that the researcher was oriented or primed to certain themes as coding progressed which may prevent the identification of new themes. However, this focused 'lens' can also lead to new insights not realised earlier (Smith *et al.,* 1999).

Although Thomas (2003) advises to continue with the coding process until no new themes emerge, it was decided to stop when amendments to the template did not provide very much added value (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and more specifically when the only remaining uncoded sections of text did not respond to the research questions (King, 2012). The final significant themes were i-deals, favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust.

After coding, Van Manen (1990) says that the coded themes may be analysed in three main ways, and the first two were used in this study. First there is the holistic approach which aims to capture the meaning of the text/data source. This enabled a general understanding of the situation. The second is where a selective approach is adopted to ask what is essential or revealed in the data in relation to the research questions. More instances of codes did not necessarily mean that the code was more crucial (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, by listing the number of times a code has been used within each transcript, it enabled instances where the code was not used to be explored, because sometimes these exceptions are very revealing (King, 2012). For example, when there were no instances of agreed i-deals in Professional Team 2, this may have been the reason for the perceived social disengagement, although rival explanations also had to be considered. Moreover, counts do not enhance understanding of the lived experience and is essentially why content analysis was not used. Furthermore, some themes may not have been mentioned in the interviews either because other issues were more salient to the participant, or due to censorship (Carey, 1994). The final approach is the detailed line by line approach to see what each sentence reveals about the phenomenon. Whilst each line was read, the data was coded and analysed within meaningful qualitative elements (Chenail, 2012) rather than line by line. This is because line by line risks fracturing the data if the line does not represent the whole experience and context (Charmaz, 2000) which the research questions and the Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach required. Moreover, the multi-perspectives research design called for findings to be presented in a coherent way to show how the experiences related to one another by consensus, reciprocity of concepts or conflict (Larkin *et al.,* 2019). Consensus was shown by both parties highlighting the perceived one-way nature of the employment relationship during austerity. Reciprocity of concepts was suggested by the different demands this one-way relationship placed on each party. Conflict was suggested by the varying views of the extent of employee voice.

Consequently, the first aim of analysis was to understand the participant's world (Larkin *et al.,* 2006). This involved two interpretations. One where the individual provides their lay account of the situation which is their interpretation (Van Manen, 1990; Blaikie, 2007) and sense-making of their social world (Smith, 2004). Then, this was described and further interpreted by the researcher (chapter 5), inevitably being affected by what the researcher already believes (Pritchard, 2010), suggesting that meaning is a co-creation between the researcher and the researched (Lopez and Willis, 2004). This means that there may be other complementary, deeper or richer interpretations (Van Manen, 1990), although the interpretations presented in the study must be plausible and logical to reflect participants' realities (Annells, 1996; Lopez and Willis, 2004) by being supported in the data (Allen, 1995; Wilding and Whiteford, 2005), and be sufficiently convincing to be able to change practice (Parker and Addison, 1989). Heidegger considered that a good interpretation would answer the existential or practical question being investigated, rather than providing universal facts that would be true for all time, referred to as 'fallenness' (Packer and Addison, 1989).

As such, the researcher's LA background was useful here, although at odds with Husserl's ([1931] 1962) epoché, making Heidegger's (1962) existential approach more suitable whilst exercising reflexivity (discussed later). Here, efforts were made to understand participants' lived experiences of interventions to foster employee (behavioural) engagement within the context of austerity, thus exploring their relatedness to the world (Larkin *et al.,* 2006) or 'lifeworld' (Dowling, 2007; Van Manen, 1990; Wilding and Whiteford, 2005). The hermeneutic circle (Heidegger, 1962) acknowledged the researcher's presuppositions that are embedded in the interpretation thus acknowledging the interrelationship of the "*knower and the known*" (Tappan, 1997, p. 651). This is a circular relationship between understanding and interpretation, because we "*interpret our understanding, and our understanding arises from interpretation*" (Wilson, 2014, p. 30).

Subsequently, understanding is gained by considering the issue from the interpreter's stance or perspective (Packer and Addison, 1989). This was achieved by moving between the whole and parts of interview transcripts, and between the data and the researcher's understanding (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007). As understanding increased, the interpreter's presuppositions could be addressed (Tappan, 1997) and new possibilities emerged thus allowing interpretations to be revised and elaborated (Packer and Addison, 1989; Tappan, 1997; Larkin *et al.,* 2006) to further understand participants' 'lifeworld'. This was repeated numerous times, ensuring that the parts or chunks of the transcripts analysed related back to the whole transcript (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005) thus helping to ensure that it made sense in relation to the whole interview (Wilson, 2014) and expressed experience (Tappan, 1997). Then, the employee data was compared with the line managers' data to contribute to trustworthiness/credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

When analysing the focus group interviews, the group interactions also had to be analysed to consider the plausibility of comments made and identify potential exaggerations. For example, when one participant alleged that the Senior Manager had referred to employees as '*bums on seats*' at a large face to face meeting about the budget cuts. The reactions of participants within the focus group interview were particularly useful here, as they were also present when this incident occurred.

The second aim of the analysis was to answer the research questions by understanding how the participant's experience compared to the extant literature (chapter 6), thus distinguishing it from grounded theory. Once all individual transcripts had been analysed, all four teams were analysed individually to identify within-team patterns and increase familiarity. Teams were written up individually to demonstrate the line manager-employee relationship in relation to the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement and the PC (appendix 6).

To do this, the critical incidents were compared within teams starting from the senior manager, and comparing that with all other team participants and the extant literature to understand meaning, identify similarities/contradictions and consider reasons for differences (Eisenhardt, 1989), along with contributing to trustworthiness/credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). That said, given the individuality of the line manager-employee relationship, it is acknowledged that different participants would be likely to raise different issues (Carey, 1994). Then, the teams were compared systematically in two ways. First, the teams were compared using the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) incorporating MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) four enablers/drivers of engagement as frameworks to see if there were any similarities/differences in the interventions used to foster employee (behavioural) engagement, and the line managers and employees' experiences and perceptions (Goulding, 2005). This was particularly useful given two teams were considered by Senior Management to be engaged (Teams 1 and 3), and the other two socially disengaged (Teams 2 and 4).

Secondly, the themes within the professional teams were then compared with the non-professional teams to identify differences and whether any similarities existed across occupational groups (Reid *et al.,* 2005). In particular, as i-deals had emerged, agreed and denied i-deals were analysed to understand the factors present. This enabled the justification of interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

When writing up, analysis continued as further insights were gained. Again, this involved returning to the individual transcripts to see if that the insights were relevant to other participants thus lengthening the writing process. Throughout it was important to keep the researcher's interpretation separate to the accounts of what the participant actually said (Smith *et al.,* 1999). Care was taken to ensure that there was a match between data (quote extracts) and claims made (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to contribute to quality and rigour discussed next.

4.9 Quality/Rigour

Trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) was met as follows to enhance the quality of this empirical work (appendix 4).

Credibility was achieved by selecting methods and data sources that suited the epistemology and research questions to produce good quality data (Patton, 1999). In particular, incorporating the CIT within the interviews enabled a focused exploration of both manager and employee perceptions which inform their behaviour (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a), and these dual viewpoints provided authenticity and credibility. Credibility was also enhanced by asking interviewees to check the interview transcripts (respondent validation) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Analysing data within teams enabled the line manager-employee relationship to be explored, and also enabled a reasonable proportion of team members to be sampled (34%) (Purcell *et al.,* 2003). That said, while the data has provided rich insights, the small sample size means that the findings cannot be generalised to larger populations (Ichniowski, 1996). Instead, the goal was to understand the experience within context (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007). Nevertheless, the rich accounts of context will enable readers to assess transferability of findings to other settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) such as other organisations experiencing downsizing. Use of template analysis provided a systematic process that could be tailored to the research questions to enhance quality and rigour (King, 2012). Whilst a constructionist study reveals multiple truths (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006), findings were extensively considered to make sure that they made sense and would be credible to the academic and LA communities (Miles *et al.,* 2014). As values and prior knowledge is embraced in a Heideggerian phenomenological approach, prior assumptions were documented in order to acknowledge the researcher's own horizon (Wilding and Whiteford, 2005) as part of reflexivity efforts thus contributing to confirmability (appendix 5). Dependability was achieved by retaining records of the research process to enable the justification of interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

4.10   Ethical Considerations

The University's 'Ethics Checklist' was completed and submitted, and was reviewed as necessary. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were asked to sign a consent statement (Appendix 1). The purpose of the study was explained to all participants (that is, how do line managers get the best out of their staff during austerity?), along with details of what would happen to their data and assurances were given regarding their confidentiality and anonymity. In particular, it was explained that a summarised report would be submitted to their Senior Manager, but it would not name any individuals. As stated earlier, participants controlled the interview recording. Care was taken when probing to ensure it did not cause discomfort or embarrassment.

When asking about the critical incident, managers were told beforehand that other participants within their team would be asked about this event. Similarly, when asking employees about this, it was explained that their manager discussed this in their interview, and that the employee experience would provide another perspective. In all teams, Managers were interviewed prior to employees to ensure that employee confidentiality was not inadvertently breached. For this reason, it was also decided not to interview managers for a second time after interviewing employees, because whilst this would have enhanced credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) further, it would have been at an unacceptable risk to the employee participants. Similarly, it was decided not to report participant gender, job title or note any identifier other than a broad age group (which was often shared) for each interview quote. Such an approach has also been used by Loaring *et al.,* (2015) to reduce the likelihood of participants identifying each other. Consequently, when participants referred to co-workers, "him/her" or "he/she" was noted to prevent inadvertently revealing individual identities, despite the possibility of these examples revealing gender differences in terms of the meaningfulness sought, or their psychological availability (Kahn, 1990).

The research design and sample size were also not appropriate to produce such generalisations. Participants were invited to ask questions or make comments at the beginning and end of the interview. Interview recordings and transcripts were stored securely on the researcher's premises with an electronic back-up copy stored securely off-site. Only authorised personnel were able to listen to them (researcher, supervisors and examiners on request). These will be retained as per University guidelines, and disposed of securely. For the same reasons, actual LA funding information was not cited as this information is publically available and may inadvertently reveal the LA sampled.

Checks were made prior to thesis and article submission to ensure that details had not been exposed inadvertently, for example, by referring to the job title thus revealing the participant's identity (Tracy, 2013). The LA also wished to remain anonymous, and is referred to as "the LA", a term used by participants when referring to the organisation.

This approach to the data collection made every effort to ensure that no negative outcomes resulted for any participant (Anderson, 2017) and that their dignity was respected, and discomfort/anxiety prevented/reduced (Bell and Bryman, 2007). As discussed, these considerations needed to be acted upon throughout the process from research design, during data collection, analysis and subsequent write-ups and publications (Larkin *et al.,* 2019). Reflexivity, discussed next, helped to ensure that findings were presented accurately, being careful not to select data which only supports prior assumptions (Bell and Thorpe, 2013), and acknowledges the researcher's part within the research process (Larkin *et al.,* 2006) thus contributing to accountability (Tappan, 1997).

4.11 Reflexivity

The researcher's LA background was a benefit to this Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological study. The main advantage was having an understanding of the workings of a LA, statutory obligations and financial constraints from the austerity measures. For example, a recent study by Francis *et al.,* (2013) appeared to make an inaccurate conclusion due to the possibility that the researchers may not have understood how the conditions of service for senior LA officers differ from those of lower level staff. Consequently, the understanding gained by the researcher from this study is likely to be different than other readers that have not worked within this sector and environment (Wilson, 2014).

Despite this strength, the researcher's background also presented disadvantages, particularly in managing the tension between researching others and the researcher's own lived experience (Haynes, 2012). As noted by Van De Ven (2007, p. 14) *"no form of inquiry is value-free and impartial"*, and in the role of researcher and more specifically, 'interpreter', it was important to recognise the potential power to influence the understanding of the participants' lived experience (Tappan, 1997). This relational tension between the context of the participants' and the context of the researcher, is referred to as the double hermeneutic (Brogden, 2012). Consequently, reflexivity, that is how the researcher's role affects the research process through the interactions with participants (Anderson, 2017), was a crucial part of accountability (Tappan, 1997).

Reflexivity was practised by making a considered effort to avoid imposing personal views onto the interviewee (Reiter *et al.,* 2011) or ask leading questions. Bracketing (or epoché) was not used for this Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological study as we are too much 'beings-in-the-world' to bracket successfully (Cooper, 1999; Larkin *et al.,* 2006). Also, pre-understanding was considered to be useful and necessary (Hasselkus, 1997; Lopez and Willis, 2004; Wilding and Whiteford, 2005).

Instead, presuppositions were noted and referred to frequently in an effort to be open and transparent. This included personal experiences of both being encouraged to be engaged as an employee, as well as the process of engaging others as a manager. This meant that when listening to interview tapes, in addition to listening to the view of the participants, it was also important to consider how the researcher's presence and interaction affected the process (Haynes, 2012). Such transparency aided consideration of the interview process and analysis to ensure conclusions were a co-creation between the participants and researcher, and not predetermined by the researcher (Tappan, 1997), thus contributing to addressing the double hermeneutic (Brogden, 2012).

Similarly, whilst questioning/probing during the interview was useful to check understanding, it was very important that this was minimal and relevant to avoid leading questions. Balance was key (Chell, 2004). The challenge here was recognising the extremely personal and often distressing nature of the participant's experience and their 'lifeworld'. This was suggested first by the senior managers as they all selected the restructure process as the critical incident. This was an event where significant managerial effort seemed to have been deployed to manage the negative circumstance of downsizing whist simultaneously trying to foster employee (behavioural) engagement from both redundant staff working through their redundancy notice, and from survivors, whilst often being at risk of redundancy themselves. Similarly, when discussing this with survivors, the stories of uncertainty, frustration and disappointment with the way the process was handled, occurred frequently. In discussing these events, the researcher used language and prompts carefully to encourage the participant to continue to reflect on this negative and emotional lived experience by demonstrating empathy from the researcher's own experiences of managing a downsizing process thus engaging with the double hermeneutic (Brogden, 2012). This also contributed to ensuring that this was a helpful rather than harmful process for the participants as their 'lifeworld' was explored.

In addition to the audio recording of these interviews which captured such connections, field notes were also maintained. It may have been useful to also maintain a reflective journal to critically reflect on how the researcher's presence may have influenced participants' constructions (Flick, 2009). That said, Silverman (2010) is critical of such an approach as it can paralyse the researcher. He therefore recommends a balance in being critical, but not too self-critical. Consequently, in this study, field notes of observations and feelings were maintained. This included those that at the time were not considered important, but were recorded as these details are easily forgotten, and acknowledgement can provide support for the findings later as the analysis develops (Eisenhardt, 1989; Flyvbjerg, 2006). This also helped explore how the participants' lived experience differed from the researcher's prior lived experience, and highlighted other perspectives given the different backgrounds, personal values and context, thus enabling new meanings and understandings to be co-created (Tappan, 1997; Lopez and Willis, 2004).

Throughout the research process, issues were discussed with peers and experienced academics during symposium/conference attendance and emails. Writing publications also enabled feedback from expert reviewers and editorial teams to be gained (Anderson, 2017). To maintain openness and transparency, it was essential to declare the researcher's LA background in the thesis and publications.

Finally, whilst quotations are provided in the findings chapter, it was decided to present the critical incidents in their entirety in appendix 6. This enables readers to formulate their own interpretation(s) which is in line with a Heideggerian phenomenological approach (Van Manen, 1990; Wilson, 2014).

4.12   Summary

This chapter explained the methodology selected to answer the research questions. The study was interpretive and constructionist (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The research design was qualitative and consisted of four teams within one LA which was purposefully sampled. Data was analysed within teams mainly to examine the line manager's impact on fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. Teams were theoretically sampled and therefore comprised of either professional or non-professional employees with at least one year's service to provide comparisons. An interpretive phenomenological approach enabled both context and participants' meanings attributed to their experiences to be captured. This was essential to gain understanding and respond abductively to the process type research questions and austerity context.

Methods chosen were semi-structured one-to-one interviews and focus group interviews when access was granted by the organisation which both incorporated the CIT using an interpretive phenomenological approach to elicit meanings within context (Heidegger, 1962). Data sources included all levels of line management and employees (non-management). Consideration was given to trustworthiness and authenticity to maintain quality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Data analysis was achieved by template analysis (King, 2012) which enabled teams to be examined individually, and across teams. This enabled the comparison of two occupational groups. It also allowed the comparison of engagement interventions in two teams that Senior Management considered engaged, and two teams that Senior Management considered socially disengaged. Ethical considerations were addressed to ensure there were no adverse consequences on the participants following the research, and reflexivity exercised throughout. The findings will now be presented in the next chapter, and discussed in the penultimate chapter.

Chapter Five

Findings

5.   Findings

5.11   **Background to Local Authority (LA)**

The organisation sampled is an English Local Authority (LA) which is part of the public sector. The LA wished to remain anonymous, so is referred to as the "LA" which, as noted in chapter 4, is a term used by the workforce. The LA provides a wide range of services to the community such as refuse collection and waste management, street lighting, libraries, social care, housing and education. Such a wide range of jobs requires a diverse workforce. The organisation has experienced considerable downsizing since austerity reducing from 5944.91 full time equivalents (FTE) in March 2011, to 4678.87 FTE in March 2015, giving a workforce reduction of 21.3%. Most of the redundancies were voluntary, although there were some compulsory too. At the time of data collection (July 2013 and May to August 2014), collective consultations were ongoing to reduce terms and conditions, and the annual inflationary pay rise was still being negotiated after having been frozen for three years. Additionally, employee pension contributions had been increased. The LA does not have an employee engagement strategy or policy, and whilst managers are expected to foster employee (behavioural) engagement, they have discretion in how this is achieved:

> "*There is no over-arching engagement policy or communications policy. Errm - there is kind of an unwritten rule that managers will have meetings with their staff. How those meetings go is up to the individual manager*". (Senior HR Manager, age not declared).

The lack of an engagement policy demonstrates the reliance on the line manager to take the initiative to foster engagement. This places line managers central in the process of fostering engagement.

The teams sampled will now be introduced.

5.12   The Teams

Four teams have been selected for this study, two professional and two non-professional. Professional Team 1 and Non-Professional Team 3 are considered by Management to be engaged. Whereas, Professional Team 2 and Non-Professional Team 4 are considered by Management to be socially disengaged. As the LA wished to remain anonymous, the teams have not been named or occupations detailed to avoid inadvertently revealing their identity.

Next, each team will be introduced. To achieve the first and second objectives, the teams will then be analysed and compared to understand how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered and experienced in austerity, using quotes from the critical incidents and interviews to justify inferences. The critical incidents for each team are shown in full in appendix 6 to preserve the context which is important within a Heideggerian phenomenological approach, and allow readers to consider their own interpretation (Van Manen, 1990; Wilson, 2014).

As line managers are expected to foster employee (behavioural) engagement from their employees, and the study seeks to illuminate both line managers and employee voices, the teams will be analysed using the People Management-Performance Causal chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers. These frameworks place the line manager central in the process of fostering engagement and seek both line manager and employee viewpoints. Using established frameworks to analyse findings is endorsed within a Heideggerian phenomenological approach (Lopez and Willis, 2004), and helps ensure findings are analysed systematically.

As noted in chapter 4, the critical incident question was revised following the review of the pilot study with Professional Team 1. Consequently, for teams 2-4 inclusive, the critical incident question asked senior managers to discuss a critical incident where they had fostered employee (behavioural) engagement and the outcome was positive.

Of interest here is that all Senior Managers chose to discuss the restructure process as the critical incident. The restructure process also featured heavily during the interviews with pilot Team 1 too. This demonstrated the impact of austerity on the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement given the challenge of managing the downsizing process whilst simultaneously attempting to foster employee (behavioural) engagement from staff at risk of redundancy, redundant staff working their notices, and survivors. Consequently, these critical incidents directly addressed the research questions to illuminate the experience of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement during austerity.

The chapter will end with a summary which outlines the themes to be examined in the discussion chapter which will achieve the third objective, that being to understand the reciprocations between line managers and employees.

5.2 Background to Team 1 - Professional Support Service (Pilot Study)

Team 1 is a professional service providing professional support services to internal customers across the LA. At the time of data collection (July 2013), the headcount comprised 63 staff members, which equated to 59.93 full time equivalent posts. As a support service, this team is vulnerable to job losses via shared services or outsourcing and downsizing. The team has already lost about 50 posts via downsizing since 2011, and further reductions are expected. Full time working hours are 37 hours per week, Monday to Friday, and a flexi-time scheme is in operation which must also be aligned with service needs. The Service is divided into a number of specialist teams given the professional nature of their work.

In total, 8 members participated in this pilot study giving a response rate of 13%. The participant profile is shown in chapter 4 (Table 3).

The pilot was used in order to 'test' the research design on a small sample. As such, all of the employee interviews were held as focus group interviews, although the interviews with managers were held on a one-to-one basis. Following a review of the pilot, methods and interview questions were changed slightly which is permitted within a qualitative research (Eisenhardt, 1989). As noted within the methodology chapter (p. 97), this included changing the dominant method to one-to-one semi-structured interviews incorporating the critical incident technique using a phenomenological approach, and supplementing this with focus group interviews when access was granted (used in Non-Professional Team 3 in addition to the pilot team). The critical incident was changed for teams 2-4 inclusive asking managers to think of a time where they successfully fostered employee (behavioural) engagement. Employee (behavioural) engagement was operationalised as effort (physical/behavioural engagement), focus on their work (cognitive engagement), care about their work (emotional engagement), and share and implement ideas/improvements with others (social engagement). Despite these changes to the methods and interview questions, the data gathered from this pilot identified useful and illuminative themes and therefore was retained within the study.

5.3 Background to Team 2 - Professional Frontline Service

Team 2 are a professional team that provide frontline and back office services across 10 sites. Although this is a statutory service, job security is still vulnerable as some other LAs provide the service via the private sector, mutuals and social enterprises. In this LA, at the time of data collection, one site had been taken over by volunteers resulting in job losses.

When the teams were being sampled, this team was described by Middle Manager (A) as "*difficult to engage the staff in the development of the service*". It was suggested that staff needed to be more flexible and change in order to modernise it. Consequently, the lack of social engagement made it a good addition to the study in order to investigate why employees were not engaging with service development.

At the time of data collection, the professional staff earned £23,698 to £26,293 per annum and the first and middle managers earned £27,123 to £51,473 per annum (FTE salary). The Senior Manager's salary was not declared, but given the staffing structure, it will be in excess of £59,192. Interviews were held on a one-to-one basis with managers and employees from the main central site in July 2014. This site employs a total headcount of 10 team members including management. 7 people participated in the study giving a response rate of 70%. The participant profile is shown in chapter 4 (Table 3).

The team had recently been restructured which led to a number of voluntary early terminations (VET – voluntary redundancies). Fortunately, there were no compulsory redundancies. Vacancy management, where vacant posts are only filled on temporary contracts, was in place and will reduce redundancies in subsequent years:

> "*But, this Council is no different to many other in the public sector, we are suffering significant budget cutbacks, which means that we have got to downsize. Because this department like many, its principal costs are staffing costs, so you can make a substantial reduction to the budget, it inevitably comes off staffing, unfortunately. But we try to manage that with vacancy management*". (Senior Manager, 50-64 yrs).

To cope with the reduced labour hours, the team have reduced opening hours, and as mentioned earlier, one site is now being run by volunteers. In addition, staff are now expected to be functionally flexible. Consequently, staff with 19-45 years experience in their own specialist fields, are now expected to work in new, albeit related fields. The employees are also expected to support the non-professionals in Team 4, but they have no line management responsibility for them. Moreover, new services are constantly being added as funding bids are secured, and this of course contributes to retaining jobs, but also presents a need to continually learn new procedures and tasks.

Full time working hours are 37 hours per week and times vary according to the timetable set by the First Line Manager, which includes one Saturday in three.

As the research design had been revised following the pilot, all interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. Although it would have been useful to also use focus group interviews, as mentioned in chapter 4, the LA could not grant access as they were unable to release a number of staff at the same time.

5.4   Background to Team 3 - Non-Professional Frontline Service

Team 3 provides a service direct to the general public across 5 sites on behalf of 133 services. Customer needs can make the job emotionally demanding:

> *"... they* [ie. the customers] *come to us because they have to come to us, we are the last port of call"*.
> (First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

The service is non-statutory and therefore considered vulnerable to cuts, outsourcing, and/or online access to services thus replacing staff with technology. Staff consist of non-professionals, and at the time of data collection, earned £15,207 to £20,253 per annum (full time equivalent). Managers' salaries were in the range of £27,123 to £59,192 per annum. Working hours are fixed from 8.45 am to 4.45 pm with 10 minute paid breaks in the morning and afternoon (recently reduced from 20 minutes), and half hour unpaid lunches. Employees are also expected to work one weekend in four, an increase from one weekend in six, and in return, take that accrued 6 hours off over at least 2 days. Wednesday mornings are closed to the public until 11 am for training and team meetings.

Interviews were conducted during the period May - July 2014 and held on a one-to-one basis, with two focus group interviews with employees that had not been interviewed individually. Focus group interviews were also conducted with this team as the team was able to release a number of staff at the same time on Wednesday mornings given the later public opening time noted above. Supplementing the one-to-one interviews in this way provided additional meanings as participants questioned each other's views (Hines, 2000). It also provided a socially constructed view of their line manager (Gergen, 1985) in their role of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement. Participants for both one-to-one and focus group interviews were from the central site and one of the area sites, employing a total headcount of 34 team members including management. 20 people participated in the study giving a response rate of 59%. The participant profile is shown in chapter 4 (Table 3).

5.5   Background to Team 4 - Non-Professional Frontline Service

Team 4 consists of non-professional staff. They provide a customer facing service across 10 sites. The senior managers of this team are the middle managers within Team 2, however, to maintain participant co-operation and prevent data contamination, they were not re-interviewed. Consequently, the participants in this team consisted of middle and first line managers and employees from the main central site (see chapter 4, Table 3). Interviews were held on a one-to-one basis in July and August 2014. Unfortunately, as noted in chapter 4, access could not be granted for focus group interviews alongside the one-to-one interviews due to service constraints. The site employs a total headcount of 25 non-professional employees (excluding Saturday Assistants) including the first and middle manager (non-professional). 10 people participated in the study giving a response rate of 40%. As with Team 2, their Senior Management Team considered Team 4 to be socially disengaged.

This team has the same job insecurity as Team 2 given the service is vulnerable to outsourcing to the private sector, volunteers, mutuals and social enterprises. At the time of data collection, the staff earned £15,207 to £16,231 and the two managers earned £18,376 to £22,937 per annum (full time equivalent salary). The team has recently been restructured resulting in a number of VETs, which has led to the need to be functionally flexible, which has been difficult given the long service of many employees. Opening hours have also been reduced.

Full time working hours are 37 hours per week with fixed working hours, and includes one Saturday in three. Staff receive a 10-15 minute paid break in the morning and afternoon, and have one hour for lunch which is unpaid. The first line manager sets the timetable for each week so that every day is scheduled ensuring that staff work in the full range of Departments. The professional staff in Team 2 support the non-professional staff in Team 4, although they do not have direct line management responsibility. New services are constantly being added to the core service as funding bids are secured, and this contributes to retaining jobs, and creates a need for frequent learning.

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Cross-Team Comparison

5.6 Cross-Team Comparison

The four teams will now be analysed and compared using the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) in order to capture both manager and employee views. This will also incorporate MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers given the endorsement of the previous UK Government in power during the data collection. MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers also place the line manager central in the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement.

Using established frameworks is consistent with a Heideggerian phenomenological approach (Lopez and Willis, 2004). In this case, utilising the frameworks will enable the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement to be examined systematically from both manager and employee viewpoints as it includes organisational intentions, management actions and employee perceptions. Inferences will be supported with interview quotes from the interviews and the critical incidents to contribute towards accountability (Tappan, 1997).

Whilst key quotations are displayed in this chapter, as noted earlier, the critical incidents from each team are shown in appendix 6 in their entirety to preserve the context and different viewpoints which is consistent with a Heideggerian and multi-perspectives research design (Larkin *et al.,* 2019). It also enhances transparency and accountability as it enables readers to see how interpretations have been made, and allows readers to consider their own interpretation from the description presented, which is also consistent with an interpretive phenomenological approach (Van Manen, 1990; Wilson, 2014).

5.61 Intended Practices

These are the levers/interventions available to line managers to manage people (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) and foster employee (behavioural) engagement. As noted at the beginning of this chapter on the discussion of the LA's background, it was highlighted that there is no separate engagement policy. This means that the fostering of employee (behavioural) engagement is down to managerial discretion. Such an approach is deemed appropriate for a diverse workforce, where it would be difficult to develop one policy to suit all needs. In addition, allocating time for formal engagement is particularly difficult for frontline staff with high customer demand:

> "*So bringing people off to do formal engagement, actually means that they are not there serving the customers. And then I think people get frustrated with 'why am I coming to this when I could be out serving a customer?'. So you have to find a different way*" (Senior HR Manager, age not declared).

This also shows that the Senior HR Manager considers engagement to be the organisational interventions to foster engagement rather than an individual experience (Truss, 2014) or behaviour (Saks, 2006).

Methods for fostering employee (behavioural) engagement highlighted by the Senior HR Manager include employee one-to-ones with their line manager, line managers walking the floor and interacting with staff, and supplementing this with notice boards and global emails. HR policies designed to contribute to the fostering of employee (behavioural) engagement include learning and development (mainly e-learning), personal performance and development (PPD), work/life balance, employee awards/recognition, leadership and management development, well-being, and employability skills development such as time management, literacy, numeracy and IT. The extent these policies are implemented is considered next.

5.62 **Actual Practices**

This is the implementation of the intended practices, the success of which will be affected by the manager's skill/style (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). It is proposed that context, in this case, austerity, will also affect implementation, for example, via concern about exposure to financial cost/risk.

Strategic Narrative

Table 4 - Strategic Narrative (Interventions)

Team 1 - Professional	Team 2 - Professional	Team 3 - Non-Professional	Team 4 - Non-Professional
• Global emails • Team emails • Management and senior staff meetings • Team meetings • PPDs • FAQ spreadsheet • Informal methods eg. open door policy and walking about	• Global emails • Team meetings with a focus on organisations vision, aims and objectives • PPDs • Treat everyone with dignity and respect • Consultation with staff and the Union	• Global emails • Team emails • Individual meetings • Team meetings • Consultations with the Union • Briefing papers • Circulation of minutes • FAQ spreadsheet • Main focus is on organisational change	• Global emails • Team emails • Individual emails • Team briefings (3 times per week) • PPDs • Informal one-to-ones • FAQ spreadsheet • Consultation with staff and the Union

There is some similarity between communication methods available for use by each of the four teams consisting of low-cost methods such as global emails, and also higher cost richer methods such as various face to face meetings. Main points of difference are that Team 1 (professional) use informal methods alongside formal methods. Team 2 (professional) have a deliberate focus on dignity and respect. Team 3 (non-professional) explained that there is little focus on the LA's vision/mission/aims/objectives, perhaps reflecting the strategic uncertainty given further budget cuts are expected until 2019/20:

> "... *it's been lost a little bit errm because the Council corporately kind of don't don't advocate the golden thread*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3 - Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

The 30 minute staff briefings in Team 4 (non-professional) held prior to opening, indicates how opportunities for communication revolve around service needs. Consequently, there appears to be concern regarding exposure to financial costs/risks, and deliberate efforts to minimise these.

Engaging Managers

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Table 5 - Engaging Managers (Interventions)

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Team 1 - Professional	Team 2 - Professional	Team 3 - Non-Professional	Team 4 - Non-Professional
• PPDs • One-to-ones • I-deals	• PPDs every 6 months • One-to-ones with middle managers every 2 weeks • One-to-ones with first line managers every month • Demonstrate management cares about employees work • Praise and small celebrations eg. biscuits for the team • A movement towards a more democratic leadership style	• Development and promotion pack • PPDs every 6 months • One-to-one meetings every 6-8 weeks • Ongoing feedback via email, monthly observations, informal conversations and an open door policy • Internal training to help understand customer needs • Focus groups • Site audits which include an assessment of team leader people management skills • Manager visibility • Informal style • Weekly rota to give varied work • I-deals	• Communication • Feedback • PPDs every 6 months • I-deals

All teams use PPDs to engage employees. Team 1 (professional) and Team 3 (non-professional) also supplement this with one-to-ones, as required by the mandatory PPD policy. Team 3 additionally use an array of interventions to engage staff, including a development and promotion pack to support a career grade 3-5 within the structure:

> "*So so we now recruit at grade 3 and so they have a development log ... if we get a vacancy at grade 4, those people that meet the criteria for grade 4, we have a meeting of Team Leaders where we look over the development logs, ..., they will then be put into that post*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3 - Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

This means that staff recruited at grade 3 can automatically gain a grade 4 higher position once a vacancy arises, provided they have progressed sufficiently with their evidenced development. However, given the organisation is downsizing due to the austerity pressures, it is not clear from the manager's quote how often these vacancies arise. This is important as such opportunity is likely to affect the motivational impact.

Additionally, Middle Management in Professional Team 2 and Non-Professional Team 4, show that they care about employees' work:

> *"... but I do try and demonstrate that I care about what they are doing, what the Service is doing, what the Service is aspiring to do, and that I believe passionately in what we are doing. ...*
> *... I'm starting off with talking about budget reductions, changes to the Service that means that we are going to be reducing the number of jobs, reducing the number of sites, reducing opening hours. So that's quite negative. And I always try and finish on a positive, so, when I'm talking about the budget reductions and things, I start off by saying that "I'll get all this out of the way, and then we'll talk about [named a current project]".*
> (Professional Team 2 and Non-Professional Team 4, Middle Manager A, 50-64 yrs).

This reflects the tensions in fostering employee (behavioural) engagement in austerity, whereby the manager is passionate about the services that the team provides, and wants to share this enthusiasm and appreciation. However, the manager is simultaneously burdened by having to also discuss negative and serious issues such as closures of sites and job losses. As a result, this manager almost appears to apologise for the negative news, mentioning it at the beginning to get it "*out of the way*" in a 'by the way' fashion. Given this negative news will impact employees' livelihoods, this point will be returned to later in this chapter when employee perceptions are discussed.

I-deals (Idiosyncratic Deals)

Table 6 shows that i-deals were used in Teams 1, 3 and 4. I-deals are not part of 'intended strategy' hence why they are presented under 'actual practices'. This contributes to the 'engaging manager' and 'employee voice' enablers/drivers (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009) due to the i-deal's ability to respond to employee needs, thus renegotiating/repairing the PC (Rousseau *et al.,* 2018). From the 45 participants, 10 reported (22%) on either agreed or denied i-deals for themselves or others, demonstrating the idiosyncratic nature as not everybody had one (Hornung *et al.,* 2009). These were categorised as employability/career development (task), flexibility, and redeployment.

Table 6 – Summary of I-deals

	<u>Agreed I-deals</u>	<u>Denied I-deals</u>
Non-Professionals	<u>Redeployment</u>: (Team 3) • Redeployment (redeployment request form)	<u>Flexibility</u>: (Team 4) • Adjustment of part time hours following organisational restructure <u>Redeployment</u>: (Team 4) • Redeployment (no redeployment request form) <u>Employability/Career Development (task)</u>: • Varied tasks (Team 3) • Educational Support (Team 3)
Professionals	<u>Flexibility</u>: (Team 1) • Condensed working week <u>Employability/Career Development (task)</u>: • Project work (Team 1)	<u>Redeployment</u>: (Team 2) • Redeployment (no redeployment request form)
Managers	<u>Flexibility</u>: • Adjustment to hours (Team 4) • Reduction in hours from full time to half time (Team 1).	

Employability i-deals are task i-deals that provide workplace learning (for example, job enlargement) to boost a worker's employability making them more effective and valuable to the organisation, or increase their chances of gaining employment elsewhere. Career development i-deals may also be task i-deals that not only boost employability, but also provide workplace learning that increases the chances of career progression (for example, job enrichment such as managing projects). Flexibility i-deals are changes to working hours and working patterns which can enhance the employee's work-life balance.

Redeployment i-deals involve employees negotiating alternative employment (including location and/or job/tasks responsibilities) because their existing post is redundant.

Where policies are available to everyone, they will not be considered to be an i-deal because standardised policies are not exceptional (Rousseau, 2005). Although the LA has formal work-life balance (flexibility) and redeployment policies, these are not a right and approval is subject to it meeting business/service needs. Consequently, requests have to be negotiated as highlighted by one of the line managers who agreed a flexibility i-deal where working hours were reduced by half:

> *"I had to convince them that my staff could be unsupervised when I was not there, that they had no objection to my change and finally that I could still do my job"*.
> (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

It is this individual negotiation (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016) coupled with personalised (Collins *et al.,* 2013) heterogeneous and exceptional outcomes (Rousseau, 2005; Rosen *et al.,* 2013), due to the variation of flexibility and redeployment i-deals that are sought (Anand *et al.,* 2010), that places flexibility and negotiated redeployment back into the i-deals arena (Hornung *et al.,* 2009; Collins *et al.,* 2013; Rousseau *et al.,* 2016).

Although some of the i-deals literature classifies flexibility i-deals involving a reduction in hours as a 'reduced workload' i-deal (such as Hornung *et al.,* 2009), Rosen *et al.,* (2013) advised this duplicates the 'flexibility' and 'job tasks' i-deal categories. Additionally, Rousseau *et al.,* (2016) stated that workload reduction is a variation on flexibility i-deals thus making 'flexibility' a more appropriate category. Consequently, the 'flexibility' category was selected for this i-deal. Furthermore, 'flexibility' more accurately described the i-deal content as full supervisory responsibility was maintained despite the reduction in hours.

Integrity

All team managers appear to make an effort to foster and maintain integrity so that the organisation's values are reflected in everyday behaviours.

Table 7 - Integrity

Team 1 - Professional	Team 2 - Professional	Team 3 - Non-Professional	Team 4 - Non-Professional
• Role model appropriate behaviours	• Role model appropriate behaviours to foster trust	• Honest communications	• Share information to keep them informed and build an honest relationship

Professional teams 1 and 2 explained how they achieve this by role modelling appropriate behaviours:

> "... *having to present I suppose the management image - I can't sound off myself, I can't rant and rave, I've got to be a manager, wear the manager hat. ... I model what I want people to be like - so it means you can't have a mini tantrum even though you are feeling bad one day or if things aren't going your own way*". (Professional Team 1, Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs).

> "*I think people do, rightly or wrongly, look at how you behave, ... , if you go round down in the dumps, or not seen to be on board with things, I think that's a massive knock-on effect, errm, on the staff*". (Professional Team 2, Senior Manager, 50-64 yrs).

Again, this suggests the tensions for managers in having to continually project a positive image even if they are not necessarily feeling positive about organisational changes. This was indicated further by the Middle Manager in Non-Professional Team 3 (please see quote below) in reporting that even managers' jobs are at risk. Nevertheless, his/her senior manager appears to continue to project positivity in stating that a job will be available for the redundant middle manager, although the middle manager does not appear to believe that:

> "*Errm, we just feel constantly, errm under the Kosh really, it it its always there in the back of your mind. At the moment obviously I don't know whether if in 6 months, I'll have a job or not. Errm. And [named Senior Manager]'s always positive in saying "[named self], [named peer manager] there is a job for you. But at the moment, we don't know if that's going to the case it all depends on who is going to be ring fenced for a specific job. So it's always at the back of my mind*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Despite this tension caused by the austerity pressures, the critical incidents in Non-Professional Teams 3 and 4 showed how they focus on communications to not only keep staff informed, but also help build an honest relationship. In particular, the critical incident in Team 3 highlighted that the Middle Manager appeared to use mitigating and reframing techniques to make the messages more positive in an attempt to shape the PC favourably:

> "*It's never easy to try and say to staff that errm 'we are moving from 9* [sites] *to 4* [sites]*'. And trying to obviously get that across to customers, because all they see is services being cut. Errm but what we try to say is that 'yes we are losing these* [sites] *because the footfall is not there, but that doesn't mean to say that we don't, the Council doesn't value the service that we provide. And that all we are trying to do is strengthen our services by focusing them at 4 sites rather than diluting them at 9'* ".
> (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Notably, it appears that this Middle Manager uses similar mitigating and reframing techniques with staff, as the Senior Manager uses with him/her shown in the earlier quote above. This may reflect the change of culture and the new psychological contract (PC) which no longer offers a 'job for life'. However, it appears that attempts are being made by managers to portray this positively in order to maintain morale and foster employee (behavioural) engagement.

Given the impact this has on job losses, the actual employee voice practices will be explored next.

Employee Voice

Employee voice methods used have also been identified in the sections on strategic narrative and engaging managers. The relevance of the employee voice enabler/driver is how the mechanisms are used to listen and respectfully respond to employee views. These will now be considered.

The open door policy in Professional Team 1 may encourage employee voice, thus encouraging and enabling informal conversations between employees and their line managers. Professional Team 2 appeared particularly interested in improving employee voice and social engagement, but finds it hard to foster these feelings, and does not appear to understand (or see a link between) why staff are reluctant to suggest ideas and why they feel they are not listened to:

> "*How can I encourage them to enjoy the job that they are doing, to share ideas, and that is something that comes out of every staff briefing, that people have ideas and they are not listened to. And, I do not know where that perception comes from because I will always listen to people's ideas, and one of things that I do say to people is, that what I would hope would happen is that people are knocking on my door saying 'I've got this great idea' or 'I think we should be doing this'. And it's me that's saying 'oh just wait a minute, let's just think about that'. Rather than me that's constantly saying* [ie. giving ideas]. *[Chuckles]. And that is how it feels sometimes*".
> (Professional Team 2, Middle Manager A, 50-64 yrs).

This demonstrates the senior management view that the team is socially disengaged, thus not coming forward with ideas or solutions. The manager appears perplexed with employees' apathy with this, and seems to be unable to identify the cause of it. This uncertainty reflects some of the dimensions of existential hermeneutic phenomenology (Rolfe *et al.,* 2017) whereby the manager cannot identify the reasons for employees' reactions. This threatens the manager's normal managerial practices, and appears to generate feelings of helplessness.

Despite reflecting on the experience, this state of existential uncertainty prevents the manager interpreting and understanding the experience in a way to identify further action (Heidegger, [1926] 2010) to foster more positive psychological conditions (Kahn, 1990) for employees. Consequently, as the manager is unable to identify and implement corrective action at this particular point, the employees are likely to remain socially disengaged. The longer this goes on for, the higher the risk that employees will embed socially disengaged behaviour as the norm. If this happens, any subsequent corrective managerial action would have to significantly focus on fostering psychological safety to unlearn those embedded behaviours.

Non-Professional Team 3 had a particular focus on responding to employee concerns consistently. They have also recently changed the format of the focus groups to make them smaller to increase the likelihood of participation. Whereas, in Non-Professional Team 4, the first line manager tries to give feedback to employees on their suggestions:

> "*I try and explain to them why I feel that it wouldn't work. Errm, but make sure that they know that we have taken it on board, and they are not just being shot down by it*".
> (First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs).

Here, the manager appears pleased with their actions, perhaps considering that they are implementing 'text book' methods of people management practice, and assuming that employees will then respond positively. As employees do not appear to be behaving in the way that managers expect, as suggested by senior management's view of Team's 2 and 4 social disengagement, the employee perceptions of these practices will now be considered.

5.63 Perceived Practices

Often managers, employees and employee representatives disagree about the presence or effectiveness of HR practices (Ichniowski *et al.,* 1996). Consequently, the perceptions of both management and employees revealed in the critical incidents and interviews in relation to these implemented practices will now be considered.

Strategic Narrative

First the actual practices were noted below and compared with the perceptions of how these were received within each of the four teams:

Table 8a - Strategic Narrative - Actual and Perceived Practices in Professional Team 1

Actual Practices	Perceived Practices
- Global emails - Team emails - Management and senior staff meetings - Team meetings - PPDs - FAQ spreadsheet - Informal methods eg. open door policy and walking about	**Perception of Communication:** *"And this authority is atrocious at communication. We spend too much time thinking about 'is that the right message and how are we going to send it out, when should we send it out, and who should it go to?'. Cos by the time we send it out it's past and everybody knows anyway because the rumour mill has made it up".* (Employee, 40-49 yrs). "*The general communication tends to be by global email which is ... flat and impersonal and not at all readable - really it is all very .... dry*". (First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs). "*But I would say 80% of our workforce out there have no idea what these things are, and yet these are the strategies that are shaping the way this organisation will move*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

The critical incident (Table 8a) revealed that organisational communication regarding the organisational strategy and change, tends to be by email which is not very engaging, and is too slow so employees normally hear about organisational change via the grapevine first. Additionally, it was felt that the workforce does not understand the strategic direction of the organisation.

This indicates that both employees and line managers are frustrated with the ineffectiveness of communication, and appear to offer solutions to improve it. For example, noting the flat and impersonal nature and implying that the wording within global emails should be adapted for the audience. They also highlight the importance of improving communication in terms of employees not fully understanding the strategic direction of the organisation. Consequently, it appears that participants agree that communication needs to be improved given it has declined in comparison with pre-austerity. Of further interest here is that both managers and employees demonstrate an understanding of the austerity context by not proposing more costly communication methods despite their frustration with current methods, preferring to suggest how the current methods could be deployed more successfully.

Table 8b - Strategic Narrative - Actual and Perceived Practices in Professional Team 2

Actual Practices	Perceived Practices
• Global emails • Team meetings with a focus on organisations vision, aims and objectives • PPDs • Treat everyone with dignity and respect • Consultations with staff and the Union	• **Lack of Employee Suggestions:** "*Well the [named Service] at the moment, the main things that have gone in there have been instructions from ourselves. .... But there is an open offer to staff to put forward any suggestions they've got in terms of better ways of working and any other services they want to put in there*". (Senior Manager, 50-64 yrs). • **Employee Perception of Ineffective Communication:** "*The odd situation in Local Government in that, we can, we often complain about this, we often read about things in the press. If you worked at Boots, or Smiths, you wouldn't read about things in the press. But because the Councils, the nature we are actually, reading the press is a very good way of finding out what's going on*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs). • **Lack of Understanding of the Strategic Narrative:** "*And the* [employee] *said to me 'I don't know why they did that'. And I said 'but everything that you do, you know, is a part of that'* ". (Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

Despite the range of methods used to communicate the strategic narrative, the first quote in Table 8b shows that management consider that most of the ideas/initiatives to develop the service have come from Management. Again, this reflects senior management's perception of social disengagement within this team. The senior manager also appears to consider that making an open offer to employees to make suggestions, is sufficient action to generate social engagement. As employees do not appear to have responded to this offer, it indicates that employees need to be willing to engage thus reflecting their personal agency. It may also signal a lack of psychological safety (Kahn, 1990).

The critical incident (Table 8b, 2nd quotation) also indicates ineffective communication where employees explain that it is useful to read the local press in order to find out about organisational changes. This may link to the earlier discussion where managers reported how difficult it is to implement the strategic narrative and generate enthusiasm amongst employees when much of the organisational communication contains negative issues which adversely affect employees' job security. The employee's perception of ineffective communication suggested by this quote appears to reflect these difficulties. Whilst it was noted earlier that managers struggle with this mix of positive and negative messages, employees appear frustrated, and perhaps even angry, about having to find out about strategic decisions by other means. The uncertainty generated from this, and perhaps even disappointment in management actions, may be the reason for their social disengagement. Afterall, why should employees communicate ideas and improvements to managers when, in their eyes, management are not doing a satisfactory job in communicating to employees? This indicates a perceived psychological contract breach, a perceived lack of reciprocity, and reflects issues of personal agency again.

Furthermore, the final quotation in Table 8b suggests that the strategic narrative is not well understood, perhaps due to ineffective communication.

Here, the employee did not appear to understand how their service had contributed towards achievement of a national award. This may also contribute to social disengagement, as a lack of understanding of what they do and how this contributes to the organisation's vision and strategy, is likely to prevent creativity in identifying service improvements.

Consequently, the methods used do not appear to be implemented in a way that encourages social engagement from employees, and yet this is necessary to maintain and develop the Service.

Table 8c - Strategic Narrative - Actual and Perceived Practices in Non-Professional Team 3

Actual Practices Team 3	Perceived Practices Team 3 – Non-Professional
• Global emails • Team emails • Individual meetings • Team meetings • Consultations with the Union • Briefing papers • Circulation of minutes • FAQ spreadsheet • Main focus is on organisational change	• **Different Management and Employee Perceptions regarding Communication:** "*I don't think we had anything really to hide from them. We tried our real damned hardest and we really kind of wore our heart on our sleeves, and I think the staff recognised that we did try to do as much as we could. Errm cos I think we do really value our staff and yeah we, as I say me for one, I I I was out there possibly telling them too much at times just to try and tell them and give them as much where they could trust what I was saying errm and that, if I can't answer your question, I'll get you the answers from HR. And making sure that we did that*". (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs). "*We always feel as though that, you are not being told everything. But then again, you might be being told everything, you just don't know what's going on. And sometimes, you hear things first, like in the local newspaper, yeah. ... And you think 'why couldn't you just tell us instead*?'". (Employee, 50-64 yrs). "*Honestly, I felt it was very poor. Err, information wise. Errm, we weren't given much. Errm, we had one large meeting. That was for every service that was affected. And, me personally, I just thought it was poor. I just thought, we weren't told much, basically. And everybody was worried about their jobs. And, the stress was unbelievable. ... I know we have to save money, and I know the Council has to make cuts, but then they need to be honest with the staff, and they need to tell us what is going on and what is happening. And we need regular briefings, and we don't get them*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs). • **Perceived Lack of Employee and Manager Parity:** "*We used to have regular Wednesday morning team meetings, but because of training, I don't think we could have had one for at least 6 weeks*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs). "*Because they said they haven't got the time because of the training. But then they get to do theirs* [ie. Management Meeting] *on a Wednesday afternoon. So, you can see that peeves us off a little bit*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

The critical incident (Table 8c) and earlier analysis (p. 146) shows how managers tried to give negative messages such as the closure of sites, in a clear and sensitive way. However, there were also several examples where employees did not feel that they were sufficiently communicated with, and that communication was dry and impersonal. This perceived lack of uncertainty appeared to increase stress levels at what would be a difficult time anyway. However, the contradiction between management considering they were being excessively honest, and employees feeling they did not know the whole picture is perplexing. What would management have to do to be able to convey that they were telling employees everything? Or, is the employee perception formed because of hearing about key issues via informal methods discussed earlier such as the grapevine or local press? If that is the case, why do management feel they are doing such a good job in communication?

Furthermore, at the time of data collection, team meetings for this team had been suspended due to additional training, but Management continued to have their Management meetings. Employees here appear to feel aggrieved that one of their key communication channels, the team meeting, had been temporarily suspended, and the disparity that Management still hold their meetings appears to be fostering feelings of unfairness. Additionally, the benefits of receiving additional training in lieu of team meetings do not appear to have resonated with employees, perhaps expecting that should be provided anyway. Consequently, employee and manager perceived obligations do not appear to be aligned on this issue. This may be due to a lack of understanding regarding the other party's priorities. As fairness judgements are based on perceptions, perhaps more openness, transparency and clear communication would improve this situation?

**Table 8d - Strategic Narrative - Actual and Perceived Practices
in Non-Professional Team 4**

Actual Practices Team 4	Perceived Practices Team 4 - Non-Professional
- Global emails - Team emails - Individual emails - Team briefings (3 times per week) - PPDs - Informal one-to-ones - FAQ spreadsheet - Consultation with staff and the Union	**Lack of Understanding of the Strategic Narrative:** "*No. I think, sometimes I think about it, I'm just floating from day to day trying to make this work, and not knowing the bigger picture in that sense*". (First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs). "*Errm, but, those that are interested, you tend to explain more to them, well they will find out for themselves anyway, why they are doing what they are doing*". (Middle Manager, 40-49). **Slow Communication:** "*We read it in the* [named local newspaper] *before we were told by management, what they were planning to do. ... Or a member of the public would come and tell us, 'have you seen this morning's paper?'. And we did say to Management, no matter what it is, can you phone us up, send us an email, let us know what it is before we open. Don't allow a member of the public to come and tell us, or to bring us a newspaper. Tell us! And never, on many occasions, it happened every single time. ... it's just good manners. It would have been the professional thing to do. ... and the crowd had gathered and they came with the* [television] *cameras, and we knew nothing about it. And then we got a call from Management, they* [the television crew] *were already there. And it got to be, I think, quite humiliating*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Although the team briefings for this team are conducted 3 times per week, managers reported that they tend to focus on issues affecting the site and initiatives the site is involved in, and do not generally include wider Council issues. Subsequently, the first line manager openly admitted that he/she did not understand the Council aims and objectives (Table 8d). This would mean that this first line manager would not be able to reinforce senior management's strategic narrative messages effectively, and yet such repetition is necessary to help employees understand and embed new initiatives. Consequently, this suggests one of the reasons for the lack of employee understanding and justifies strengthening the strategic narrative so that managers of all levels understand the strategic narrative so that they can reinforce those messages with employees.

Additionally, the Middle Manager explained that not all employees are interested in the larger Council picture, but more is explained to those that are interested. This highlights another management action that may be creating employees' lack of understanding of the strategic narrative. If some employees are being communicated with more than others, it is not surprising if other employees will feel they do not know as much as others regarding strategic decisions. The manager here within this example does not indicate any action to try and resolve this situation. It is as if they have given up on communicating with some staff and will reserve communication for those that 'act' interested. However, will the manager have the accurate insight to know who is acting interested and who is genuinely interested? Despite this, the perception that 'interested employees' are communicated with more demonstrates the reciprocal nature of communication, and that the information contained in the communication is perceived as a resource.

The critical incident also showed that employees were also critical of the slowness of communication, particularly when it was in relation to job losses. As with the other teams, often they had already heard announcements through the grapevine, local press, the public, or in one case, by the arrival of a local television crew. Not only does this show the slowness of communication, but it also shows the negative feelings that this fostered, in this case initially through embarrassment when the local television crew arrived unannounced, followed by feelings of betrayal. This implies that employees consider that this reflects the organisation's unwillingness to meet their support and loyalty obligation thus breaching the psychological contract (PC). The repetitiveness of this occurrence seems to frustrate and dishearten this employee, potentially leading to violation of the PC.

All Teams – Perceptions of the Strategic Narrative:

Although these accounts show that there are strategic narrative tools in place, it also suggests that despite managerial efforts, the benefits do not appear to be fully realised. This may be due to how they are implemented thus highlighting the importance of the line manager's skill and style. For example, managerial actions in relation to the strategic narrative do not appear to be meeting employees' expectations of the employer's support and loyalty obligation.

Subsequently, when communication is done well, it appears to generate the conditions more likely to foster employee (behavioural) engagement (Table 9). However, when the messages are negative, such as when the Senior Manager in Non-Professional Team 3 spoke to staff in a face to face briefing about site closures which would result in job losses (Table 9), poor implementation appears to exacerbate the negative effects. For example, Non-Professional Team 3 employees within focus group 2 explained how the choice of language made them feel worthless and not appreciated, thus highlighting the reciprocal nature of respect. In this case, it appears that the senior manager's comments have 'switched off' employees. Consequently, in addition to the line manager's skill and style affecting the success of communication, employees' personal agency in terms of their willingness to listen to communication also seems to be a factor that leads to success or not. This may also be affected by their perceived psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) which may be reduced or increased by the manager's actions or choice of language. The significance of the manager's skill and style here may make managers prefer one-way methods where language may be planned and executed more easily.

Accordingly, a major impact on the success of the 'strategic narrative' in fostering employee (behavioural) engagement appears to be in the manager's success in being an 'engaging manager'. As such, the employee perceptions of the 'engaging manager' enabler/driver are discussed next.

Table 9

- Non-Professional Team 3 Communication Examples

	Example of management's choice of language during face to face communication	Affective impact on employees:
Positive Example	*"... a lot the information it started off with [named Senior Manager] errm getting staff to the [named Town Hall] and telling them the changes .... We all closed the sites for one afternoon, and we went on mass to the* [named Town Hall]*. So and I think that worked well, as everybody got the same message all at once*". (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).	"*The very top layer, errm, when we had all the cuts, and when we were losing staff, the Head of Service errm was very supportive of us. ..., and we appreciated that as that was what we needed. We needed some sort of confirmation from top management*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).
Negative Example	"*... we were actually told* [by the Senior Manager]*, the last major restructure when people were not happy about the mood and everything, 'you are bums on seats, that's what you are ... You are a number'* ". (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).	"*You are an adviser, you are not a person. I think it makes you feel, well you are here for the job. Well yeah, we are all here for the job, but you are also a person, you've got, you know, your own lives, you've got things, you know some people are better at dealing with things than others, and you know, it's not an easy job, and to be told well you are just a number*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs). "*They just don't seem interested*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs). "*You've got to have respect basically for your management, but as I say, they've got to have respect for you as well*". (Employee Focus Group 2,16-24 yrs).

Engaging Managers

All the methods shown in Table 5 appeared to be in use, although not as frequently as intended. Employees and managers from all teams explained that PPD/one-to-one meetings are sometimes postponed through lack of time following downsizing. In addition, these meetings appeared one-way, favoured to the organisation, with less emphasis on development (Table 10):

Table 10 - PPD/One-to-One Meetings – Perceptions

Perception	Examples
One-way nature (favoured to the organisation)	"..., *effective learning and development, professional learning and development is just so scant, appraisals have have more or less ended up with objective setting and allocating work, and that is not really the great thing for me. You know errm, they'd do that anyway. You know. Errm, there is no carrot in there - for me - it's all one-way - you know, we want you to do this and this, and we want you to improve this and we want you to do that, and all the rest of it. But you could do some learning and development from this list, and as long as it costs nothing, then that's fine. And it's it's errm, you know, it's errm there is no way of rewarding people because to some extent letting people go on a 2 day course with a stay in a hotel, you know, it it is in a way a reward and to say you are worth investing in, you're, you know. But all of that's gone - so it makes the process a little bit dry and oh well here we go. I'll give you some jobs to do over the next year, and by the way you are doing really well. And by the way you are not going to get a pay rise. And by the way you are not going to get any learning and development - it is a one-way street*". (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).
Reduced focus on development	"*Well I think, I mean, my one-to-ones are very, its its very job based rather than skills and future development based. But I think again that is just the sign of the times, what and you know, how busy everybody is, and the team, and the work, the service areas priorities really. So it tends to be about you know are you ok with everything, what do I need to look at, these are the things that we've got the heads up on that are coming on board, this is what we need to plan for. Errm, whereas the old PPDs and the one-to-ones used to be about, you know, objective setting and in six months time your training priorities*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs). "*They give you the training for the job, but before* [austerity]*, I did a supervisory course, you could do things like that to try and, but now that has all gone. You could look at the courses and say 'oh can I do that?'. It didn't necessarily have to be something that you needed for your job*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs).

Here, it seems that managers feel that they have less tools or levers to use in order to foster employee (behavioural) engagement given PPDs are now restricted to objective setting. Similarly, employees recognise that the process has lost the previous developmental focus, and that learning and development is now restricted to current jobs rather than aspirational roles. As such, it seems that the constraints here cause managers as much difficulties as employees.

Additionally, it appears that when development is provided, it is now restricted to e-learning and in some cases i-deals. The reliance on e-learning seemed to have generated a number of concerns given the lack of other learning opportunities as shown by quotations from two different respondents (Table 11).

Similarly, the cross-functional working in Professional Team 2 created a need for further training, and although shadowing was the preferred training method as demonstrated by the quotations from two different employees, it was too resource intensive in the current austerity context (Table 11). Consequently, employees seem to be unable or unwilling to consider alternative learning methods. This is likely to stifle performance given the reduced staffing levels require the team to work cross-functionally, thus creating a development need. Additionally, this appears to be creating bad feelings amongst both managers and employees as managers are frustrated that employees are not learning by lower cost methods, whilst employees report they are finding the new work difficult given their lack of training. Consequently, it seems the psychological contract (PC) between employees and line managers here is breached from both parties' points of view.

Non-Professional Team 3 also explained in the critical incident that for some software changes, training is via memos which they feel is inappropriate, and that face to face training would be more effective, but again not used due to cost (Table 11).

Table 11- Perceptions re Development

Perception	Examples
Over-reliance on e-learning	*"... whilst it* [e-learning] *does mean it is open to just about everybody, errm there are still for us quite large pockets that don't have access on a daily basis to a terminal that they could do it. But also, even for us who are sat in front of a pc all day, doing e-learning at your desk just isn't feasible. So it's it's difficult because I think it has its uses, but I don't know if we are maybe becoming a bit over reliant on it because of the cuts we needed to make to the services in order to deliver what we need to deliver, I don't think e-learning is the complete solution but it is about all we have got at the minute"*. (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs). "*And having that, you know, 'And what did you do?'. And share your experience. 'Oh and that's a good idea' and take that away. Cos there is none of that - you lose that human interaction really because everything is electronic*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs).
Difficulties shadowing	"*So, we tried to do some shadowing, but it was incredibly hard because we'd had this cut in our team, and doubling people up is time consuming, you know it it eats up the resources that are available. So the shadowing was very very patchy and it was largely pushed in here at the deep end*". (Professional Team 2, First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs). "*I'll tell you a real problem now is that you used to learn an awful lot when [named profession] worked alongside [named profession], whereas now that hardly ever happens on the timetable. And this is, this is one reason why I think it is difficult downstairs, in the [generalist work area], because I am the only [professional] on duty. ... But in the past, you know, that is how I learnt, in my early years, with more experienced colleagues, side by side. ... I would say, you, they* [as in the Management] *wouldn't, they wouldn't regard it* [shadowing] *as a good use of professional time*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs). "*I don't feel that we have necessarily had sufficient training to just go from one place to another*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs).
Dry and perceived inappropriate training methods	"*Our training now consists of memo 34, do this, this and this. Memo 35, ignore memo 34.* [Exasperated chuckles all round]. *Now, errm, Memo 36, this has now changed. Now when it comes down to using the systems, you don't want a memo saying this is what it is. You want to be sat down to see the system, to find out what the change is. That no longer happens. So, you have a training section, that isn't giving you the training in the method that is needed, it comes out as a memo, a memo update!*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).

The dryness and perceived inappropriateness of the training method here appears to be causing employee resentment not just because it is considered to be dry and impersonal, but also because of the repetitive changes in procedures causing a need for further training. This may appear to employees as if the organisation does not fully understand the direction it is travelling in, which adds to the insecure job climate.

However, it is not just the availability of learning methods that is stifling development. The insecure job climate also seems to be lowering employee's willingness to develop. This was suggested in Non-Professional Team 4's critical incident where employees reported that they are reluctant to undertake funded professional training for some jobs, and are not interested in applying for some of the higher grade new fixed term posts given the uncertainty in future LA funding (Table 12). Subsequently, job insecurity and uncertainty regarding whether the role will exist in future appears to be adversely affecting the desire to work towards internal career development. This may present future skills deficits, especially given the skills lost through recent redundancies. Consequently, it appears that austerity has reduced the levers available to managers to foster employee (behavioural) engagement, and that presents challenges in fostering employee (behavioural) engagement, but also challenges in growing internal talent. Employees recognise and appear to accept this reduction in levers, and in doing so, seem to perceive a more transactional exchange relationship.

Moreover, given the austerity constraints, managers reported the difficulty in summoning the emotional and physical energy to foster engagement (Table 12). As discussed earlier, this reflects the challenge in being an engaging manager within such difficult financial circumstances created by austerity.

Table 12 - Barriers to Engagement

Barrier	Example
Reluctance to Undertake Funded Professional Training	"*And the last one we filled outside of the Service. And we have got one at the moment that we didn't get anybody apply for. Which, I mean it's a fixed term contract, but actually a fixed term contract probably has more security than full time permanent contracts do*". *... but we had two places, fully funded places for a University qualification, and I think we had three people that put their names forward*". (Senior Manager [Middle Manager A from Team 2], 50-64 yrs). "*I think, it, one, one time ago it would have been a career. But let's face it, while the Tories are in, if they get in, god forbid if they get in next year* [2015]*, there won't be any public* [named service]*. So, yeah, when I first came as an apprentice I thought yeah I wouldn't mind being a* [named profession] *one day. ... And even if I did go and get a degree in* [named profession]*, there is no future in it*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs). "*Would it be a degree that I regretted because I wouldn't be able to get anything out of it, because* [named service] *are not seen as being important to some people anymore. You know. But* [now]*, I think maybe I see where* [named the service] *were going before I made any big decisions*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs).
Manager difficulties in summoning the emotional and physical energy to be engaging.	"*But it is sometimes difficult to, to keep things on track when you feel emotionally yourself that you are kinda under fire, it is hard then to lead people and be jolly. It takes a lot of energy to keep that going*". (Professional Team 1, Senior Manager, age not declared). "*I don't ever have a day where I am not managing people - sometimes it would be nice to switch on and off so that I could actually produce more myself as an individual, cos when you are managing you forget how much time that takes - even on a good day - you know steering people or errm giving people direction or even just having meetings - it takes so much time*". (Professional Team 1, Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs).

Similarly, employees expressed negative emotional issues, many of which appeared to link to organisational change (Table 13) given all the critical incidents were in relation to the organisational restructure. This shows the difficulties in redundant employees performing during their redundancy notice period when they know they have lost their job. For example, there appeared to be deliberate disengagement in the form of acting out by repeatedly retrieving disposed items, laziness, poor attitudes and lack of volunteering. This apparently adversely affected employees' well-being too with examples cited in the critical incidents of hair loss (Professional Team 2), and negative feelings where employees perceive a lack of loyalty towards them (Non-Professional Team 4).

Table 13 - Emotional Issues

Team	Emotional Issues
Professional Team 1	• Sustainability issues during redundancy consultations and notices which could last up to 9 months
Professional Team 2	• Repeated retrieval of disposed items during a service reorganisation • Difficulties 'squeezing' people into cross-functional working • Hair loss • Employee reluctance to challenge management • Manager deliberately disengaging to cope with redeployment/redundancy consultation talks with employees
Non-Professional Team 3	• Customer complaints regarding staff attitudes during the restructure process • Employee perception that managers' do not listen to staff • First Line Manager not trusting middle and higher level management to make the right decisions
Non-Professional Team 4	• Employee perceptions of the lack of the organisation's loyalty towards them, particularly given the perceived lack of communication and the process of observations from volunteers taking over their jobs • Moving house twice to lower household bills to enable them to accept an employment contract with fewer hours if necessary • Reduction in volunteering for tasks • Doing less, laziness • Employee perception that managers' do not listen to staff • Employee apparently unable to speak up to request a more appropriate redeployment i-deal.

Perhaps acknowledgement of the affective impact of change and appropriate support may have alleviated some of these issues to enable them to more readily engage to the new working environment? This highlights the importance of the line manager's role in creating a work environment that is conducive to Kahn's (1992) psychological presence. This appears particularly difficult when the context of austerity is diluting the employment deal. Nevertheless, if managers are committed to fostering employee (behavioural) engagement then attention to fostering the conditions of psychological safety and availability in addition to meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990) is still required.

Consequently, interviews also highlighted the employees' perceptions of the one-way nature of the employment relationship (Table 14), favoured to the employer, which were in addition to the comments made regarding the one-way nature of PPDs and one-to-ones discussed earlier:

**Table 14 - Perceptions of the One-Way Relationship
(favoured to the employer)**

Team	Employee Perception	Employee Expectation
Professional Team 1	• Lack of support for employees at risk of redeployment or redundancy	• More managerial support
Professional Team 2	• Failure to provide appropriate training (considered by employees to be shadowing)	• Shadowing
Non-Professional Team 3	• Support to deal with personal problems such as ability to accrue lieu time to use for occasional early finishes where necessary • Increase in Saturday working • Removal of flexi-time, replaced with fixed hours • Centralised annual leave booking • Training perceived to be delivered by an ineffective training method	• Time-off-in lieu scheme • Favours ('give and take') • Ability to take a full day off in lieu of Saturday working rather than a few hours over 2-3 days • Restricted time-off-in lieu scheme • Favours ('give and take') • Annual leave to be booked within area • Face to face training
Non-Professional Team 4	• Lack of loyalty and support	• Loyalty and support

The perceived lack of 'give and take' or favours was most noticeable in Non-Professional Team 3 (Table 14). Here, employees appeared accepting of the reduction in terms and conditions, particularly the move onto fixed working hours after previously enjoying a flexi-time scheme, and an increase in Saturday working thus appearing to accept the new PC. However, staff felt that given they often arrive to work early to ensure they are ready for opening, and their fixed hours prevented them from accruing this as lieu time, that they should be allowed to go early on occasions when there is a genuine need. However, early finishes are only authorised if they have accrued approved lieu time, and arriving earlier than the official start time does not qualify:

"*It's a quarter to nine start, if we all didn't log on until quarter to nine, this place would not open at nine*".
(Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

"*But if you leave early on a night, ... , it's noted*".
(Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

Subsequently, since the loss of the flexi-time scheme, it has apparently led to requests for time-off to be refused (Table 15).

Table 15

- Perceived Examples of the One-Way Nature of the Employment Deal

Non-Professional Team 3
- Employee Reports of Refused Requests for Time Off:

- To collect partner from hospital:
  "*One of the boys/girls asked for time off to pick his/her husband/wife up from hospital after he/she had quite a big operation. And no. It's planned, and so you should plan other people to do it*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs).

- To attend hospital while grandson was undergoing anaesthetic:
  "*I was treated like an animal. My grandson had been born and he had a stroke, he had to go into a thing, you know where, they had to give him something to knock him out. My daughter was worried that he would go in and have another stroke again, and so I wanted to be there. Couldn't spare me from* [named building]. *Went to Management Team, and still couldn't spare me. So I remember being in that cupboard talking to a grade 10* [ie. the middle manager], *and I said to him/her 'I'm going regardless'. And so he/she said 'but yeah but you are so good, and you are being a bit awkward and that'. And I said 'no, no, I'm not, this is my grandson, I am going, it's from* [named building] *and it's across the road'. In the end it was agreed that I could go when he was going under, but I had to come back, as soon as he went in*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

- Requirement to return to work within the afternoon after a close friends funeral despite another employee offering to cover:
  "*I had to go to a really good friends funeral, ... And I had to come back to work at quarter past three. And somebody actually offered to work for me, and they* [Management] *said no*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs).

- Refusal of annual leave to attend brother's wedding on a Saturday:
  "*And it was a Saturday, and I didn't realise I was working that Saturday, and I said 'oh well, we'll take it to management'. And they* [management] *said 'No'. They wouldn't let me have me time off when my brother was getting married*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

- Refusal of a fortnight's holiday as one day was expected to be busy:
  "*I wanted to book, a, err, a holiday, and there was one day I couldn't have, and so I couldn't book the holiday. And I ended up having to pay an extra £350 and book the holiday at a later time. And I felt well Management could be a bit flexible, and and and it was because I was told that, 'that one of the days that you wanted off, we couldn't let you have it, because it would be a busy day'*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

- Inability to book long weekends as all the Friday and Saturdays have been booked by other employees one year in advance:
  "*Long weekends are a thing of the past for us ... it's very rare to get a Friday and a Monday off*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

The second quote in Table 15 also suggests that employees do not just form opinions on whether the request is refused or not, but they also take into account the way they are treated in assessing the fairness of their perceived PC. Here, despite the employee's request eventually being approved, negative feelings still seemed to be present due to the way they felt they were treated during the request and approval process.

Additionally, the centralised approval process for holiday booking has led to reported difficulties in booking desired dates, and yet holidays would normally be a key benefit in the public sector due to the generous entitlement (see Table 15). These restrictions may also produce unintended consequences, such as taking sick leave when holiday requests are denied, thus demonstrating employee agency and power. This was suggested by the employee below whose daughter was due to have a baby:

> "*I would be having to think 'oh, oh, what if she* [daughter] *goes into labour and I have to take a day off', I'd be off sick, it would be sick wouldn't it?"* (Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

Staff also felt that they should be able to take a full day off in lieu of Saturday working, rather than taking the hours off over 2 days, effectively working a 6 day week:

> "*It's just the Saturdays really. Yeah, yeah. We would have liked a full day off during the week. But now we are getting 2 half days. So we are still working a 6 day week. ... There is no work work-life balance. I mean, I have got kids. I wanna spend my time, my weekends with my kids. Whereas if you get 2 half days off during the week, they are at school, you know it's. There is no balance, there is no balance there. I appreciate that we have to work Saturdays, I have no problem with Saturdays. Errm, I would just like a full day off during the week".* (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*Cos some people don't want half days, some people want to take a full day*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).

Here, employees are not just complaining about the situation, but they are also problem-solving and suggesting solutions, although they do not appear to have either been voiced to management or taken-up by management.

Consequently, there are business reasons in addition to moral reasons to justify re-considering this tight managerial control. Whilst the austerity context would prevent a return to the previous flexi-time scheme, as noted earlier, employees have suggested that a more restricted time-off-in-lieu scheme could be negotiated with them.

Employees Reciprocating Favours

Despite these tensions and dissatisfactions, there seemed to be evidence of employee (behavioural) engagement being reciprocated for favours received from the First Line Manager. The examples below show that one employee takes shorter lunch breaks in exchange for arriving 5 minutes late in the morning, and another employee explains that team members comply with unfavourable management requests to prevent the first line manager being reprimanded by higher management:

> "*But it works both ways, ..., because they are serving, they* [co-workers] *will go into their dinnertime 10 minutes late, and what they will do, they will come back 10 minutes late, and that will just drag things on and you never have enough staff to cover. Or. I don't do that, what I did is I said to* [named First Line Manager] *was as often, because I have got children, I might be 5 minutes late in the morning, ... So if I'm late* [going] *for my dinner, I don't mind. I will come back on time to be wherever I need to be, because I know, if I am late in the morning, he/she will not say a thing to me whatsoever. So, it just, it needs to be working both ways*". (Employee, 25-39 yrs).

> "*I like to think that we support him/her as well. ... You know, there are things that maybe he/she doesn't agree with, and he/she will say 'this has not come from me, it has come from Management'. Errm, and you know, it might be something that none of us like, but, because he/she would get it in the neck if it didn't happen, we would all, you know, go by it*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

There also appeared to be some reciprocity perceived in the form of i-deals, discussed next.

I-deals (Idiosyncratic Deals)

This section explains the perceptions of i-deals as part of MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) 'engaging manager' and 'employee voice' enablers/ drivers. Both professionals and non-professionals tried to gain both flexibility and redeployment i-deals. One of the agreed flexibility i-deals was as follows:

> "*And the flexible working can work so that you can drop your children off at school and pick them up*".
> (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

This shows how the flexibility i-deal provides work-life balance, whereas the redeployment i-deal related to negotiating which site the redeployed employee would be based at:

> "*And then I came back here, because this was better for me, financially, family, medically, children. But it was on the understanding that I would still do cover at the* [named largest site]". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

Again, this redeployment i-deal suited the employee's home circumstances, but it was on the agreement that the employee would provide cover at the largest site when necessary, demonstrating the mutual benefits required in i-deals.

Employability/career development (task) i-deals were pursued by some professional staff in the form of project work that offered some on-the-job learning, and by non-professionals by varied tasks which can provide development and variety:

> "*... it's personal choice. It's whether you want to get involved with something or not. And whether there is development in that for you*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*Well its more experience, and a bit more knowledge, doing certain things like [named project], it was good to know, understand how that side of it works. .... Errm, so, I guess for me it's it's I get a buzz because then I get to talk to different people, it's a bit of networking I suppose as I'm getting to know the people in other areas, so for me I kinda get a bit of a satisfaction*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

The quotes show that the employees did not appear to consider this extra work to be exploitive given they had a choice in doing it. Rather, they appear to value the development opportunities it provides. Of further interest here is that employees have purposefully negotiated these benefits for themselves, perhaps choosing to influence issues where they perceive that they have some control in order to improve their employment deal. The low-cost nature of these benefits may suggest that employees have considered both their needs and the organisation's ability to afford such benefits. Consequently, the flexibility i-deal has the potential to enhance the individual's work-life balance at very little cost to the organisation, given it was the responsibility of the individual to propose how his/her workload could be achieved. Similarly, the redeployment i-deal may be low-cost given it may just involve a reallocation of staff across available sites. Furthermore, given training budgets have been reduced resulting in limited training provision, mainly restricted to e-learning and mandatory face-to-face training, external training appears to be substituted by employability/career development (task) i-deals to provide development opportunities. However, for these substitutions to be perceived as fair and avoid exploitation, the perception of integrity must be positive and is explored next.

Integrity

Whilst the critical incidents showed that managers in the professional teams focus on maintaining integrity by role modelling and being 'jolly' and positive, even if they disagree with organisational decisions, this may be having an unintended adverse effect on honest conversations. For example, delayed communication in Professional Team 2 until organisational decisions are finalised appears to foster suspicion amongst employees which may lower trust:

> " ... but there are some things as a manager that you just can't tell your staff. ... *I think sometimes the staff are a bit suspicious really. Errm, and sometimes things will come out and we say 'well actually we didn't know that was going to happen' but they still don't believe that you didn't know it was going to happen. So, you can't really win can you*?".
> (Professional Team 2, Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

> "*But I feel like there are maybe things that we don't get told, like they are withholding certain things. ... and sometimes I feel like, are you really telling us everything? ...* [Because they give] *sort of cagey answers to questions. Like we have ... these things on the pc's where we can write questions, and they are anonymous, and then they get answered, ... And some of the answers are a bit, non-informative. And maybe that is just because they don't have the information. I don't know, it always makes me think, err, ok, maybe you are not telling me everything?*".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs).

This seems to lead to some employees lowering their trust in management, perceiving that Management are withholding information. Again, these feelings influence employees' viewpoints despite them not actually knowing if they are receiving all the information from managers or not. This may be why employees feel that communication is lacking and leads to employees consulting informal and external sources.

Moreover, the incident reported earlier where employees in Non-Professional Team 3 stated that a Senior Manager referred to them as 'bums on seats' in a large face to face briefing regarding the budget cuts and team restructure is likely to lower the managers perceived integrity.

This clearly conflicts with the intended strategy of promoting dignity and respect, although there may be some retrospective bias in this account.

Additionally, the exonerating techniques used (Table 15, 2nd quotation) did not always appear to be appreciated by employees which may adversely impact their perception of their line manager's integrity.

Furthermore, procedural and informational injustice was reported in Non-Professional Team 3 regarding the restructure process which the First Line Managers considered 'flawed' and different to what they were initially told. A lack of integrity was also reported by employees in the critical incident for Professional Team 1 where a couple of redundant employees were apparently offered temporary positions which no-one else was able to apply for, leading to perceived distributive injustice. All these factors have the potential to lower trust in management. This will be explored more in the next section as this perception may be partly due to reduced employee voice examined next.

Employee Voice

Although the line managers use a range of employee voice mechanisms, employees appeared critical of the effectiveness due to the following:

a) Reduction in employee voice opportunities was suggested by reduced PDPs and one-to-ones, loss of staff forums, reduction in team meetings, and delayed communication. This was a particular concern when employees' jobs are affected and they are not informed until it is published externally, thus reducing employee voice and genuine consultation:

> "*Errm certain parts of our service will possibly cease from March and it will get decided next week, and we didn't know until it was going onto the public domain, as part of council protocols*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

b) Employees did not appear to know about (or utilise) the full range of employee voice mechanisms. For example, the non-professionals in Team 3 reported that they dd not take advantage of the written FAQ system:

> "*I have not looked at it* [the FAQ spreadsheet] *to be honest, because I couldn't tell you where to find it. We have probably been told, but because we are so busy, it just goes out of my head, you know. Errm, I don't even know if our Management has sent a link. They probably have at some point. But yeah, I mean, same again. There is no, there is no personalisation there. It's a spreadsheet. I don't want a spreadsheet. I want somebody's who's face, who is facing me, who can have a proper conversation with. Not a spreadsheet*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

This may contribute to the perceived organisational injustice due to the lack of understanding about why decisions are made. Similarly, there also appeared to be a reluctance to challenge management by some employees in Professional Team 2 which is likely to stifle creativity and social engagement:

> "*The trouble is, you are not meant to change somebody's policy, are you, I don't think*".
> (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

c) There also appeared to be a perceived failure to listen to employees. For example, the critical incidents demonstrated that although Management claimed that they valued employee involvement in strategic decisions, employees reported otherwise:

> "*And if I say that 'right we need to do this, we need to maybe close down a site, which ones the best? Which ones are used the most? Which ones do you think would have the most impact? Ask the staff for me, you know, which one do they think?'. So they would collate it and get it together and they would go 'well we think it's ...'.* [Senior Manager replied] *'Well ok then, let's go with that'* ".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> "*But for us to bounce about those options with the management would be a good idea. To see it from the staff point of view. ... From a management point of view it might work, but from a staff point of view it might not. And I think that's what they need to do*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

This discrepancy may be clouded by emotions on either or both parties. For example, managers may involve staff sometimes, but the additional length of time this extends the decision-making process and submersion in the consultation process may make it feel to managers that they always fully involve staff, even if that is not the case. Similarly, if employees have just heard about one strategic change via informal or external sources that affects them, it may make them feel that they are never involved, even if they had been involved previously. The salience of one issue would make it stand out to them and foster feelings of unfairness which may then affect subsequent viewpoints. However, when employee voice was present, managers and employees reported it worked well:

> "*And that was staff and management working together, and that was great. We all enjoyed that. We all felt part of the decision-making process. And I think that is what we need*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Another reason why employees within Non-Professional Team 3 felt that they are not listened to, is their perception that managers do not respond to their emails or viewpoints. For example, in relation to the reduction in paid breaks from 20 minutes to 10 minutes twice daily:

> "*They asked us if, if we have got any comments on the email to email them back. But why would you email again when you have had no response from the first one? And if you say anything, they will just bat it down to the one-to-one, you are not there with your team to hear what everybody actually thinks, everything is done separately so that they can divide and conquer*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).

Additionally, employees also perceive a lack of authenticity in the line manager's actions shown in the line manager's facial expressions and body language, thus making employee's feel rushed in discussions:

> "*Lack of attention, lack of time. Being rushed. ... Even when they are looking at you, they are looking at you while they are talking to you, but you feel they are being rushed*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

This demonstrates again the importance of the engaging manager and this includes the importance of managers managing their emotions in order to foster feelings of caring and responding to staff needs. Failure to do so may mean that employees may consider this to be a breach of the employer's support obligation. Perhaps linked to this perceived lack of managerial authenticity, some employees reported that they receive incomplete information from managers:

> "*But I feel like there are maybe things that we don't get told, like they are withholding certain things. ... and sometimes I feel like, are you really telling us everything? ...* [Because they give] *sort of cagey answers to questions. Like we have ... these things on the pc's where we can write questions, and they are anonymous, and then they get answered, ... And some of the answers are a bit, non-informative. And maybe that is just because they don't have the information. I don't know, it always makes me think, err, ok, maybe you are not telling me everything?*".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Employees also expressed that the reduced trust and employee voice indicates a lack of respect for employees:

> "*You know, I think you become very weary really of how management, how, small you are really. And how indifferent they are to you, they don't ask questions, they are really not interested. That's how I feel. And that is how a lot of people feel*".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

> "*Because when you do put your point across, and it doesn't really get listened to. ... I think the higher up you go, the food chain, the less likely your opinion is going to be taken on board*".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Despite these unfavourable reports, some employees and lower level managers recognised that resource constraints brought about by austerity reduced the options available:

> "*I think they do their best, the best of their ability really, because they have probably got their hands tied*".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

> "*I think we would be stupid thinking the managers here want this to happen, because they don't*".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs).

This suggests that whilst employees have expressed elsewhere that managerial actions are not meeting their expectations, employees do have some understanding of the austerity constraints. This implies the support should be appropriate for the austerity context, and thus employees appear to appreciate it needs to be low cost.

Consequently, these reports highlight that the way employee voice is implemented is key in forming the employees' opinions on fairness and trust, and this includes managers managing their emotions to portray an image of concern for the employee, as well as ensuring that every employee question/concern is responded to in good time. Furthermore, employee voice may be one of those management tasks that only needs to be done badly once, and that will form the employee viewpoint for every subsequent interaction, thus having a major impact on the employee psychological contract (PC), explored next.

Psychological Contract (PC)

In addition to asking employees about their experiences of the intended and actual practices, employees were also asked about their psychological contract (PC) to understand the state of it (Guest, 1998). This was of interest given the impact austerity has had on the employment deal, and was explored under four themes:

1. Fairness, breach and mistrust
2. Job insecurity
3. New employment deal
4. I-deals.

Fairness, Breach and Mistrust:

Table 16 - Fairness and Breach

PC	Example
Perceived Psychological Contract Breach	**Refused Holidays:** *"When this place opened, I was asked to delay our holidays - delay my holidays until we got this place up and running. And I delayed my holidays, and I had two weeks holiday, and when I come to put my holidays in, because it was business needs, there was too many people off, I was refused them. Even though I had put my holidays on hold for them, I lost 2 weeks holiday. And I've never forgiven them for that".* (Non-professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs). **Requirement to be Functionally Flexible:** "*I spend a lot of time working on [named the specialist area]. I am also now expected to be a [generalist professional]. The two are very different. And I haven't been a [generalist professional] for about 20 years. So I am completely out of touch. ... it's frightening. .., because I haven't been doing it, ..., I just maybe do it maybe once per week. ... It [referring to one aspect of the generalist work] is probably the most complicated bit of err, [named profession] that you are ever likely to come across*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs). "*Well I think most of us would rather that we could stick to our expert field*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs).
Perceived Fairness - Positive PC	**Past Reciprocations Positively Impacting the PC:** "*... sadly training budgets have been reduced, but when I first started work, there were huge budgets for people to go to college and get professional qualifications. The Council paid for me to get qualified. So the Council is a very good employer*". (Professional Team 2, Senior Manager, 50-64 yrs).

There appeared to be positive feelings about the fairness of the employment deal in Teams 1, 2 and 4, despite the pay freeze and reductions in benefits, terms and conditions. However, the critical incident in Non-Professional Team 3 (Tables 14 and 15) did suggest employee concerns about changes adversely affecting their terms and conditions, in particular those relating to the booking of annual leave, the loss of flexi-time and increase in Saturday working already discussed. These changes, brought about because of the austerity measures, have led to employees perceiving the employment relationship to be one-way, favoured to the organisation. In addition, one employee in Non-Professional Team 3 complained about losing 10 days holiday after he/she had deferred taking them to help launch the new centre (Table 16). The perceived violation seems to be due to the employee responding to an employer request to postpone their holidays to achieve a major work objective of opening a site, and this then created an employee expectation that a later holiday request would then be approved, perhaps to reflect the organisation's appreciation of employee loyalty. However, the manager did not appear to perceive such an obligation, and as the holiday request was at a time when other staff members had absences already approved, the request was denied. Whilst holidays can be transferred to the next financial year, there are restrictions on how many days may be carried forward. This meant that the employee lost most of their holiday entitlement which is a major benefit in LA's especially for those staff with long service. This highlights how reciprocal expectations are fostered, and the importance of both parties having the same understanding of these expectations and perceived obligations. It also shows how long the adverse effects of violation can last given this happened a few years ago and yet anger is still apparent.

Similarly, past reciprocations may positively impact the PC for a long time, as shown by the Senior Manager that appears to have a positive PC due to the education previously funded by the LA (Table 16).

Here the Senior Manager may be attempting to portray a positive image of the organisation given their senior role status. Nevertheless, as an experienced senior manager, the memory of the training obligation provided and met in previous years still appears salient in the senior manager's mind. This may explain why the reduced employment deal is accepted, almost as if acceptance is gained from previous accrued obligations that have been met and satisfied.

The critical incidents also showed that Professional Team 2 were not happy with the new requirement to work functionally flexibly thus breaching their perceived original agreement regarding their role responsibilities (Table 16). Despite this breach, employees were reported by management as working cross functionally, but it is likely that their lack of development may be resulting in performance that is less than their ability level. It may also be another reason that contributes to the perceived social disengagement, due to their lack of confidence in this unfamiliar work area.

Additionally, the critical incidents and previous analysis on employee voice suggested that employees felt the organisation was not meeting their employee voice obligations.

Of further concern, was that the critical incidents cited numerous instances where trust between employees and management, and between employees had reduced which is likely to adversely affect the PC (summarised in Table 17). Moreover, it was noted that all these instances were as a result of negative feelings from the restructures brought on from the downsizing exercises as a result of austerity. This highlights the additional hurdles line managers need to overcome if they are to foster engagement in a climate where there is mistrust.

Table 17 - Mistrust Examples

Professional Team 1	Professional Team 2	Non-Professional Team 3	Non-Professional Team 4
• Employees 'covering their backs' (p. 333). • Minority of redundant employees treated more favourably by selecting them for new posts which were not advertised to other employees (distributive injustice) (Table 18).	• Middle Managers withholding information from their peers when they were competing for their jobs (p. 340) • Employee suspicious of a Middle Manager when informally purchasing him/her a soft drink (p. 203) • Generalist professional apparently felt that the specialist professionals hover whilst generalist staff carry out the specialist roles (p. 345) • Employees perceive Managers are not providing complete or timely information (p. 344).	• First Line Managers reduced their trust in higher management due to perceived procedural and informational injustice (Table 18) in relation to redundancy selection • Employees felt that Management did not trust them (Table 19) and that they are being observed • Employee lost 10 days holiday after management requested that they postponed their holiday to help open a new site, but then was not permitted to take it or carry it forward (Table 16).	• Employees do not appear to trust what the Managers say (p. 170) • Loss of organisational trust when co-workers' i-deals were declined (p. 192) • Employees expect Managers to support them during difficult situations such as the volunteers observing them prior to taking their jobs (Table 19).

Some of the issues in Table 17 suggest that the PC was perceived to be breached not just between employees and line managers, but also between peers. In particular, the competition for jobs led to employees covering their backs (Professional Team 1), and it took a long time for survivors to function properly with their managerial peers after they had competed for jobs (Professional Team 2). Similarly, specialist professionals apparently hovered around the generalist professionals to observe their performance in their new specialist role signified a lack of trusting relationships between peers (Professional Team 2). The cognitive, emotional and behavioural effort needed for these non-value adding activities is an example of 'destructive engagement' where the effort deployed places additional burdens on employees which prevent them from focusing on value-added activities normally associated with employee (behavioural) engagement.

Perceived Organisational Injustice

Table 18 explores more closely the various perceived organisational injustice issues identified in Table 17 which adversely impacted trust. These events demonstrate the impact of austerity through the downsizing process. For example, different participants in Professional Team 1 described their perceived distributive injustice regarding a small minority of employees that were given a temporary post that no-one else could apply for, despite having served their redundancy notice meaning that they could have been legitimately made redundant. Whilst it was good that this small number of employees avoided redundancy, it appears that the participants within Professional Team 1 were aggrieved that the redeployment policies were not applied. This meant that this small number of redeployed employees gained a job that no other 'at risk' employee could apply for resulting in the perceived distributive injustice.

More positively, in Non-Professional Team 3, an issue of procedural justice was discussed in relation to redundancy selection. Here, one of the Team Leaders that was considered by the study's participants to be a high performer in their job, was selected for redundancy because of their interview performance. Both employees and management were apparently disappointed with this outcome as the redundant Team Leader was seemingly well liked and respected given their high performance in role. Moreover, the Middle Manager that selected him/her for redundancy, was also his/her personal friend as well as his/her line manager. Despite being disappointed with this outcome, the Middle Manager felt that the procedure followed was fair.

However, the Team Leaders that were subjected to this process (competing for their jobs), had a different view. They were particularly concerned about the perceived lack of fairness with one of the selection methods used, presenting issues of perceived procedural injustice, and they felt the actual procedure used was different to what they had been told thus compromising perceived informational justice (Table 18).

Table 18 - Perceived Organisational Justice Issues

Organisational Injustice	Evidence
Perceived Distributive Injustice	"*I know of a couple or maybe 2 or 3 people that have been displaced, but they have been offered temporary contracts until the end of year. Now I think that is very generous - that wasn't necessary. They've just served their redeployment* [notice] *period*". (Professional Team 1, Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs). "*Somebody has been given a role*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs). "*Nobody else was given the opportunity to apply for it*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs).
Perceived Procedural Justice	"*And there was one particular Team Leader, which was displaced and which was quite a surprise, and actually sent some quite shock waves through the service which you know, wasn't nice at the time, but as I say it was dealt with quite professionally and quite well in my mind. ... We wanted to have ... a 3 stage process, so a piece of work, an interview and also assessments leading up to or how they are. The unions said basically that wasn't objective enough, and basically they wouldn't allow us to do the, to do the one-to-ones and errm the PPD kind of work that me and [named the other Middle Manager] did with the Team Leaders cos we might have favourites. ... It was done on a transparent process on the day. ... But, at least I can say that he/she was one of the, the Team Leader who lost, was one of my personal friends and I still take him/her as a personal friend, but I was professional enough to say he/she wasn't good on the day. And that was hard to do*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).
Perceived Procedural and Informational Injustice	"*There was 9 of us when it first started out, and there was going to be 6 jobs, and we knew that. Two of the members of staff asked to go voluntarily, which meant there was one. And we unfortunately, we did go through the interview process, and one member of staff did lose their job. Errm, it was awful. It was totally different experience then going for a normal interview, errm, because when you go for a normal interview, you've applied for that job, you are going cos you want that job. ... There was a big debate on whether or not, errm, whether your past performance should be taken into account, ... and the person who lost his/her job, I think everybody was shocked. We were more shocked about the result. Errm, and it did, I think, come down to the day*". (Non-Professional Team 3, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs). "*We were in a team meeting at first with [named Middle Manager]. .... and there was talk about how the restructure process was going to work, there was more than one option. It was going to either be a desktop option, whereby they look at things like your time keeping, errm things that you do here, sickness, all them type of things. Or an interview base, an informal interview base is what we were told. I would have gone for a desktop option knowing my [job] partner was uncomfortable going through an interview scenario. And, but we didn't get the option to be able to vote on that errm for whatever reason that may be. So, we went through, what we was told was an informal process, which turned out to be a very formal competitive interview. We had a very what I considered to be, we had to do a written piece of work, beforehand, and that was going to be marked as 50% of the marks, and your interview was going to be the based on the second 50% of the marks. Which was fine. But I think that the question that they gave us was a very ambiguous question. ... Errm when we was in the interview, I think we were told that it was looking to be informal, it wasn't, it was very structured. Errm, there was 3 people in the panel, one of those was brought in as an independent he/she was from [named another team], which is fine, I don't have a problem with that. Errm, but it wasn't anything what we were led to believe*". (Non-Professional Team 3, First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

It appears here that these first line managers were not aware that it was the union that changed the selection process due to concerns regarding fairness (Table 18, perceived procedural justice quotation). This highlights the need to explain reasons for decisions to prevent or reduce negative feelings forming. Accordingly, the emotional impact of this restructure process still appears to be adversely affecting this First Line Manager, suggested by their articulation of how their existential anxiety made them feel angry about the process and information provided, potentially lowering trust. Nevertheless, resilience and engagement to the staff and customers was indicated:

> *"I don't think it's something I'm ever going to get over if I'm honest with you. Errm, not that I won't ever move forward, because you have to do that, but it is something I will always remember. ... I felt as though I was going through a bereavement, that is how I felt at that time, that is how strong the feelings were. ... I was angry with our management team. ... you need to rely and trust on the people that you work with. And that's where I found it very difficult. I didn't. I ended up not trusting them. ... I didn't trust them* [management] *to make the right decisions. ... I am not happy with it, you know, and I'm angry about the way things happened, but I'm realistic to think that things have to move on and you have to move with them. Which is exactly what I did.* I wouldn't want anything to slip because of what's happened. *... Staff need you. Your customers still need you, regardless of what you are going through".*
> (Non-Professional Team 3, First Line Manager 1, 40-49 yrs).

This highlights the range of emotions experienced during such a traumatic downsizing exercise, and the length of time that individual concerns can continue to adversely affect engagement levels. Line managers had to deal with these issues themselves and also simultaneously attempt to foster engagement from lower level managers and employees. Moreover, it shows how eventually some individuals chose to focus on engaging with other aspects of organisational life, such as their customers, thus pulling themselves from this emotional swamp of negativity to enable them to focus and work towards a more engaged status.

Another example in Table 17 shows how positive managerial actions may be misconstrued when the employee was suspicious of the soft drink the manager purchased for them (Professional Team 2). More positively, it was interesting how job insecurity affecting both managers and employees actually supported the line management-employee relationship, leading to more trusting relationships between them:

> *"The senior [professionals], there were 4, and we had to reduce them to 3. Errm, myself and the other Principal [professional] did those interviews. Errm, we had to do the interviews, we had to tell the person that he/she was on redeployment, and we still didn't know whether we had a job or not. ... That was hard because you're trying to maintain a front if you like for the other staff, because you know that they are all going through it as well. .... But I think there was that understanding, because he/she knew I was in that position where I didn't know, so at any moment, somebody could be doing exactly the same with me as I was having to do with him/her. ... So he/she was maybe not as rebellious as he/she could have been".*
> (Professional Team 2, Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

Here the empathy felt for the manager by the employee given the manager's job was also at risk of redundancy, seemed to bring them together and cope with the negative situation of job loss.

Less positively, some employees reported that they felt observed while they were working and not trusted by Management, giving examples that Management would intervene when they are talking to a colleague. They expressed that this pressure made them doubt their knowledge when they were advising a customer (Table 19). Consequently, it appears that such mistrust is leading to disengagement where employees perceive high managerial control.

Table 19 - PC Breach from Mistrust

Perception	Example
Perceived Low Management Trust of Employees	"*I think what they* [Management] *are frightened of, is that you might be having a private conversation with somebody, rather than actually thinking 'oh he/she is doing some work'. You know what I mean? ... And they just jump to this conclusion that 'you are not working, you are talking, what are you talking about?'. You could be discussing a situation at work*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 50 to 64 yrs). "*I think that's when you start questioning what you are doing. Cos you feel like you are being watched*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 50 to 64 yrs).
Perceived Lack of Loyalty and Respect	"*They* [the volunteers] *were asking a lot of, quite uncomfortable, we always answered them, but some of them were quite uncomfortable. ... And there was a table not far from the counter. And they sat there and just watched us, and then wrote down what we were doing. It was uncomfortable. But what can you do? ... And we asked if Management would, errm, support us a little bit more. They were having meetings with these people, and they could say to the people 'can you just back off a little bit - just leave them out of it cos they can't become involved'. ... And I think by the time we left, I felt as though we were sort of creeping out of the back door. In fact on the very last day, it had been an awful week. ... we were welcomed to go at lunchtime. We stayed - it must have been about quarter to six by the time that I'd left. ...* [Named colleague] *knew what we were doing cos he/she was saying 'why are you doing it?'. And we said 'because we want to leave it looking lovely so that when they walk in on Monday, they will know that, you know, we made it nice for them, you know as a handover'. ... Morale was so low, ..., our team had been broken up, and that was the attitude all the way. I think it was quite insensitive, errm, lack of communication and insensitive and no sort of errm, loyalty to us really*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Finally, another issue of mistrust where an employee felt that management had not met their obligations of providing support and loyalty, was when one particular site was being transferred to volunteers. This resulted in job losses. However, during the handover period when redundant and redeployed staff were working their notices, the volunteers observed the staff in order to learn the operational procedures. Here, a redeployed employee explained in the critical incident that this was an uncomfortable process and made them feel helpless (Table 19).

It appears that this employee felt that Management did not reciprocate their hard work with loyalty, thus breaching (or violating) the PC. The employee considered that this could have been rectified by more timely and honest communication, and more support from managers with their dealings with the volunteers. Additionally, the staff's existential anxiety was articulated by their anger and upset from the disbandment of their team and loss of working relationships.

Consequently, these examples demonstrate how wide ranging the impact of austerity has had on employees and managers, and the adverse effects on their subsequent employee (behavioural) engagement. The motives underpinning these behaviours may be fuelled by the job insecurity brought on by the austerity conditions. This will be explored further next.

Job Insecurity:

Next, job insecurity was explored, and this raised issues of anxiety, technological change, and loss of a job for life (Table 20).

Table 20 - Job Insecurity

Job Insecurity	Evidence
Anxiety	"*But there are changes afoot which make me slightly concerned and anxious I suppose, but to be expected. So it's, I don't think, errm, it's unfair, I don't think it's unreasonable, but it still you know, you look at it from personal 'what does it mean to me then?' "*. (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs). "*... anxious, knowing what we are facing with the comprehensive spending review announcement of another 40 million, in the next two years on top of what we already know we have got to save, on top of what we know our interest is, that we've gotta find before we start even looking at the savings. Very anxious, for the next couple of years. It's going to be a very different organisation if we achieve what we need to achieve*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs).
Technological Change	"*At the minute I don't feel that I have enough people* [that is, employees] *because of the* [customer] *waiting times have come significantly higher. But I know I won't get any more people* [employees] *because there is not any more money to pay. So what I have think about is how I can shift some of the work to self-service so that the people* [that is, the customers] *that are coming through the door are the ones that we really need to see*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs). "*... and now they see that their role is changing again to try and sit behind the customers and get them* [customers] *using the internet, but once they have done that, where does that leave them? And that is their worry*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).
Loss of a job for life	"*And that is the minds that we try to get everyone into. There used to be the old saying that you get a job with the Council, its err, you have got a job for life, that is not the case anymore. You know, it's a more of a company really. There are pressures, financial targets, and the place changes. That means jobs evolve over time*". (Professional Team 2, Senior Manager, 50-64 yrs). "*We are all on a year's contract*". (Professional Team 2, Middle Manager A, 50-64 yrs). "*I think now for me personally anyway, we are down to the fact that we are working on a yearly contract so, if we are here next year, that is really lucky*". (Professional Team 2, Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

Table 20 shows that employees in Professional Team 1 expressed concern for the future. Despite their concern, they still considered this to be fair. The rationale for this perceived fairness suggests a good understanding of austerity, and how this has and will continue to impact the employment deal.

Similarly, the critical incident in Team 3 also showed that employees and managers feel particularly vulnerable about their jobs given their service is not statutory, and their work is susceptible to being reduced due to the legislative changes causing services to cease (for example, universal credit reducing the number of benefits available), the vulnerability of non-statutory services (which may be ceased to provide financial savings), and the impact of technological/societal change (which encourages customers to use online self-service systems, rather than visiting council offices which of course reduces demand for staffing) (Table 20). Subsequently, the critical incidents in Teams 2 and 4 showed that Senior and Middle Management have deliberately tried to change the PC from a 'job for life' to 'working on annual contracts (Table 20). Referring back to the examples provided earlier of employees not pursuing developmental opportunities or higher graded posts (Table 12), this perhaps sheds light on why that has occurred. Consequently, changing the culture to perceive the employment deal as a (hopefully renewable) annual contract, has led to employees no longer working towards internal career development.

Consequently, it appears that managers are purposefully changing the PC from a 'job for life' to encourage employees to perceive it as an annual contract with no guarantee of annual renewal. The employees' understanding of the austerity context appears to have led to employee (resigned) acceptance of this negative change to the employment deal. In turn, this has stifled internal talent management. Nevertheless, despite this managerial purposeful effort, managers also appear perplexed that employees are no longer seeking internal careers.

New Employment Deal:

With the diluted employment deal, it seems that the organisation has passed responsibility for personal and professional development from shared responsibility between the employer and employee, to the responsibility of the employee. Participants cited instances where they do not have time to complete any training during working hours due to increased work demands, and the difficulties in keeping up-to-date with professional development which may adversely affect their expertise (Table 21).

The Senior Manager in Professional Team 1 also explained how he/she also does extra work on a Sunday (Table 21). Effectively this is unpaid overtime, and yet the Senior Manager has appeared to have accepted it as a coping strategy to deal with the high workload, perhaps due to downsizing, and to preserve their pride in their work. It is also worth noting that given this quote is from a senior manager, their terms and conditions will be different to employees. Senior managers are expected to work as necessary in response to the exigencies of the service. As such, it should not be inferred that this example affects employees in the same way or to the same degree.

Whereas, Professional Team 2 do not appear critical of the austerity situation, perhaps glad that they can still do the job they enjoy (Table 21). Here, there appears to be engagement to job/profession. It is implied that the 'attractive' job gives the employee positive feelings, perhaps in terms of satisfaction and/or achievement.

Conversely, there appeared to be (resigned) acceptance and learned helplessness in the Non-Professional Teams (Table 21). This may reflect the non-professional nature of the job being unable to generate the same positive feelings that Professional Team 2 felt.

It also suggests a form of 'forced resilience' where it is as if employees feel that there is nothing what can be done to improve the situation, so there is no choice but to accept it.

Table 21 – New Employment Deal

Perception	Examples
Neglect of Development	"*I don't get any time in works time for personal development and even professional development, you have to do that in your own time. Cos there just isn't, the tasks are so enormous and there are so many of them, that it is very difficult to keep on top of it*". (Professional Team 1, Senior Manager, age not declared). "*... accessing specialist errm, post graduate training and development, updating, has become almost impossible. And I worry about that because it is about your expertise, it's about keeping up-to-date and so on. So, severe limitations on that. ... 'You can have what you want as long as it's free'. [Giggles]. If you want to go to an update seminar for a day that costs £60, then 'oh no'. You won't be doing that!*". (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).
Work Intensification	"*... last Sunday, ... I get my blackberry out and I do my emails and I'm reading things and I'm trying to get myself organised for next week. ... every Sunday for the last 2.5 years I have done that. And I feel that if I don't do it I can't cope with the job. ... it is self-preservation and it's, it's kind of, it's probably a lot of pride as well in the work that you do, it's kind of I can't let it slip for my own pride - and I can't, I would not want to go into a meeting not having read the papers. And that is what would happen because there is just no time in in things to do that*". (Professional Team 1, Senior Manager, age not declared).
No Viewpoint Provided	"*I haven't really consider it, considered it too much to be honest. You know, I am still in employment and employment is better than being unemployed*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs). "*But I mean, the fact is you don't go into this job to get rich. ..., it is nice to find a job that is attractive and well paid. But many attractive jobs, ...* [are] *not brilliantly paid*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs).
Resigned Acceptance	"*Cos however much we say about leave and things, it's never going to change is it?*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs). "*... but there is nowhere to go, because there is no scope for changes, cos we have had to make all these cuts, this is the way that we must work, so, its, there is nothing that can be done, that's how you feel*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Despite this resigned acceptance, there were some examples where employees appeared to shape the PC via i-deals, discussed next.

I-deals Shaping the Psychological Contract (PC)

To understand how the new substituted reciprocations negotiated via i-deals affected the PC, the processes involved with agreed and denied i-deals were compared, followed by an exploration of the type of exchange fostered.

Agreed and Denied I-deals Comparison

Agreed i-deals involved individuals putting forward business/service reasons why it would work:

> *"From a domestic point of view, it suits me, I've gone to part time - half hours - and that suits me. ... I was not offered any reduction in my workload or the expectations they had of me, nor was I offered job share. It was clear that if I wanted to reduce my hours I had to make the necessary adjustments".* (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, in this flexibility i-deal the employee, who was also a first line manager, explained that identifying the solution to permit the reduction in hours was their responsibility. Although the first line manager's post was a full-time position, job share was not offered. Rather the first line manager had to identify how their job could be distributed throughout the team, ensuring the team was not adversely affected by a 50% reduction in direct supervision. This enabled the first line manager's salary to be reduced by 50% which provided senior management with a 50% salary saving which could be used to contribute to the budget cuts required in the austerity measures. Accordingly, this i-deal led to an outcome which senior management may not have identified, which may suggest that employee (behavioural) engagement in the form of innovative behaviour drives i-deals.

The redeployment i-deal negotiations were conducted in a similar way where employees had to convince management of the advantages:

"It's got to be like war and peace, hasn't it, basically it's got to be like an essay". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

"... honestly you felt you were being interviewed all over again. You had to give really good reasons as to why". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs).

Again, this suggests that the i-deal negotiating process was not easy and that the i-deal had to genuinely provide mutual benefits to the employee and organisation. This places significant pressures on employees in identifying the business benefits of their proposed i-deal, which may be particularly difficult for employees that lack the self-confidence and/or the business knowledge to make a credible request. In some teams, employees were provided with a form to help them articulate why they were requesting a redeployment i-deal to work at a particular site:

"It's got to be financial, family, children, medical, if it's not one of those, ..., then you won't get your first choice". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

Essentially this is a 'redeployment i-deal request form' which helps employees articulate sufficient business benefits for their proposed i-deal. In addition, this low-cost intervention helps to encourage reasonable proposals with the most chance of success. This reduces employee and management negotiation time and the potential demotivation from declining i-deals due to business reasons. Unfortunately, this simple intervention did not appear to be available to all teams, meaning that those employees that are unable to successfully articulate their request, are unlikely to benefit from an i-deal:

".... he/she doesn't speak up for him/herself. ... but he/she was too, err, he/she couldn't communicate really. Have the confidence to say "can you give me a job in one of those [sites]?". So ..., when they asked him/her where he/she wanted to work, he/she said 'anywhere'".
(Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Some denied i-deals appeared to create anger amongst staff suggesting PC violation. For example, one denied i-deal involved a number of part-time non-professional employees having their hours changed from working two and a half days together, to working five days per week for a few hours per day as part of the organisational restructure. Their existential anxiety was articulated in their anger from having to work for a few hours every day, and they were unable to negotiate a flexibility i-deal to reverse it:

> "... they worked 18.5 hours a week, ..., they would work 2.5 days together. So either the beginning of the week or the end of the week. And they split that 18.5 hours, so that they had to come in every day at the busy periods over the week, and they were in uproar because they said "well we don't have a life outside of work then, we are in every day" ... ... some of those people had worked here for over 30 years, and they don't call in sick, they are reliable, err, they are loyal".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

The employee that provided the above quote was describing an i-deal for a group of colleagues, and not therefore directly affected. Nevertheless, the quote implied the anger felt on behalf of the affected co-workers because their i-deal was denied. This suggests that denying i-deals risks not only breaking the PC of the employee(s) requesting the i-deal, but also reduces the co-worker's organisational trust if they feel that their co-worker's i-deal should have been approved. This also occurred with another employee:

> "And, instead of finding him/her, I mean, he/she had worked in the Council for over 30 years, he/she could do the job, errm, he/she was very good at his/her job, he/she would never phone in sick, cos it would have made him/her ill just to do that. He/she was never going to be late for work, he/she was never going to break a rule, he/she was 100% loyal. ... instead of finding him/her another little [site] to go to, sort of like as a duty of care, they sent him/her here [ie. largest and busiest site]".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, there was a perception here that the employee concerned was worthy of the denied i-deal given it was perceived that the employee had met their obligations by hard work and loyalty over the years.

That said, not all denied i-deals resulted in perceived PC breach. For example, a career development i-deal was declined due to financial reasons for one of the non-professionals. The employee reported that the line manager advised:

> "[Management] *couldn't pay for you to do a level 4, because you don't need* [that] *... within this area*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

The employee explained:

> "*I suppose it's like austerity as well, they can't really afford to let off the staff, we've not got enough staff to serve, so I do understand that, I know it's not just like them being like mean or what have you, they are looking at the bigger picture, whereas you know, I'm just looking out for myself*".
> (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Here, despite desiring external training, the employee understands that the organisation cannot justify funding it and granting time off to study given the austerity constraints, which may explain why the PC did not appear to be breached or disengagement occur. The type of exchange fostered may also shape the PC and is explored next.

Type of Exchange

Flexibility i-deals appeared to create a social exchange for some participants, and an economic exchange for others. For example, the flexibility i-deal reported earlier, which permitted a 50% reduction in hours and cost saving, seemed to reflect a social exchange:

> "*So it's about the relationship really - they get a* [professional] *manager for a half time salary, and I get half the time at home which is where I need to be - I have a family*".
> (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

Here the First Line Manager clearly recognised the mutual benefits of the i-deal, but also the importance of a social long-term relationship too.

Similarly, the flexibility i-deal where hours were agreed around the first line manager's caring commitments also appeared to suggest a social exchange:

> "I was willing to take on a full-time post, on the condition that it didn't interfere [with home], which they were great about. ... Errm, and they have allowed me to fit my hours sort of around the school day and stuff like that. So, it's been great. You know, I came up with my hours, they just said "yeah does it fit in?", "yeah", "that's fine". ... It makes you feel wanted, not maybe wanted, appreciated".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Here the organisation proposed the i-deal in principle and allowed the i-deal recipient to consider how it could be achieved for mutual advantage. The relationship formed is suggested by the i-deal recipient's appreciation, and both parties focus on mutuality and trust. Whereas, one of the employees who had a similar flexibility i-deal, suggests an economic exchange:

> "I work 4 days a week, 32 hours over 4 days, so I have 1 day off per week which is fantastic when you have family - errm, it gives you the quality of time that you need ..., it is just such a benefit". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Here there was no reference to the employment relationship or any benefits to the organisation or any open-ended agreements. Rather, this i-deal was described as a tangible employee benefit that does not appear to require trust given it is clearly stipulated and agreed. This singular, tangible focus makes it more transactional in nature.

This leads to the next part of the people management-performance causal chain, employee attitudes.

5.64   Employee Attitudes

Table 22 - Employee Attitude Examples

Commitment:	All teams appeared committed to their customers (both internal or external customers): "*And it's your customers as well isn't it. You want to deliver*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs). The critical incidents showed that employees appear to maintain their commitment to their customers, even when they consider that they themselves are not being treated very well such as during organisational restructures (for example, pp. 181-182).
Job Satisfaction:	Concern for the customer also seemed to contribute to job satisfaction: "*And they* [customers] *go out and they are smiling, where they were crying when they came in*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 50-64 yrs). When asked why they work hard when they could do less if they wished, the response was: "*But you get a more sense of achievement of doing it, and working hard*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 50-64 yrs). In addition to the job itself, the working hours also contributed to job satisfaction as noted by one part time member of staff: "*Fits perfect. I do a few more extra hours now but that still fits within it, so the flexibility there is still great, so that I suppose, for me is a big pull. ..., I'm home every night, and I'm not having to work 12 hour shifts and bank holidays*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs). That said, the critical incidents showed that some staff in Professional Team 2 and Professional Team 4 are uncomfortable with cross-functional working which adversely affects their job satisfaction.
Frustration:	The critical incidents highlighted employee frustrations in relation to the lack of and/or lateness of communication, inefficient procedures, not being informed of procedures, insufficient employee voice, perceived dilution of service quality and team members who are considered to be not doing as much as other colleagues.
Morale:	Morale appeared variable - the contrasts were as follows. Employees in Professional Team 1 reported that they were doing extra work, and questioned the sustainability of it long-term. However, when asked if they felt exploited, employees vocally agreed that they did NOT feel exploited. Whilst all teams recognised unsatisfactory issues, all teams appeared positive. Even employees in Non-Professional Team 3 that had numerous stories of perceived unfairness discussed in the critical incident, maintained positivity from their team spirit. That said, they did explain that at their last team meeting, their morale dropped when discussing how to treat verbal abuse from customers: "*I have never seen, the whole lot of us, just went from there to there* [actioned high to low]". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).
Willingness to Co-operate:	Despite variable morale, there was evidence of willingness to co-operate displayed in Table 23 (see physical/behavioural examples).
Blame:	The critical incidents indicated that employees appear to blame Central Government for the impact of austerity rather than their own employer. "*Well obviously, we are in the hands of the National Government, ... the whole thing is out of our hands isn't it? We can't criticise what has been done locally because it is entirely the consequence of national decisions*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs). "*But I think that is in all Local Government really. ... It is a national thing. ... I think it's the Central Government, they are not getting the money, so everywhere is being cut, anything that is Local Government, whether it's the Police, Fire Service, anything like that*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 50-64 yrs).

5.65   **Employee (Behavioural) Engagement**

The dimensions of employee (behavioural) engagement were evident within the interviews:

Table 23 - Employee (Behavioural) Engagement Examples

Cognitive Engagement:	All teams (both professional and non-professional) had examples of cognitive engagement, and many of these were shown in the critical incidents. In addition: "*I think in the [named Service] we tend to do a lot of that coming up with ideas and then going, seeing how we can make them happen*". (Professional Team 2, Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs). In the non-professional teams, cognitive engagement was indicated when staff improved procedures for the services that they provide on behalf of other Departments. What makes this interesting, is that they could just follow the Department's instructions, but instead they have chosen to think how they can provide a better service, despite not having the detailed operational knowledge of that work given they are only providing one aspect of that service: "*But the excitement of the challenges and the problems that customers bring to you. ... So that in a way excites me because I wanna think 'right ok, how can I do this, is there a process that I can err, you know, I can change, take to the Team Leaders'*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs). "*They have given us some new rules saying that, obviously the log book will have your name and address on it. However if you are printing out your motor insurance from the internet, as often it doesn't come with the home address on it. Ok, so we have been told, 'no, you have to have something with a name and address on'. They don't have the address on, I have got me own and I haven't got an address on it. So, what do you do? However, if that person has a utility bill, same address, same name, you know, they have got a letter, a Council Tax bill, same address, you know what I mean? What's there to just say no? I think you have got enough to do it*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 25-39 yrs).
Emotional Engagement:	There were also numerous emotional engagement examples in the critical incidents suggesting that employees care about their work and the customers that they serve. Other examples that were discussed during the interviews include: "*And I don't think that there is a single member of this team, that I could, that I would imagine, didn't have a passion about their [named profession] and about their job*". (Professional Team 2, First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs). "*... they* [customers] *sometimes bring their life in in a carrier bag saying that 'I can't cope - I have no money - I don't know what to do - errm, I've got these bills I've got this - I owe rent, I owe council tax - I've got no money - I didn't sign on so I'm not receiving my welfare benefit' and so they* [employees] *sort it - you know - and that's hopefully the reward*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Physical/ Behavioural Engagement:	There were multiple examples of physical/behavioural engagement within all teams. In addition: "*And so, we generally help each other considerably, so I know they are fully engaged. No one sits back, they all offer and are very willing to get involved*". (Professional Team 1, Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs). "*I think that they perform fantastically well. I think they work incredibly hard. They, they do take on, all of them, take on challenges to the best of their abilities. Their abilities might be different, but their their 'tryingness' as it were, the amount that they try to do things that are uncomfortable to them, it's just, you couldn't get a better group of people to be trying to tackle the challenges that they are facing at the moment. Like I say, they all work incredibly hard*". (Professional Team 2, First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs). "*You have your job to do and there are other roles you do, like errm, order ordering things, and topping up the photocopiers, and filling the files, so you do these extra jobs, but you just do them because, there's like, effectively when I came here it was a bit of a mess. This woman had come for a form and it was just like it wasn't there, ... And so, I just do that in the morning, and go around topping up the photocopier, emptying the shredder, tidying the cupboard, just doing a little bit*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 50-64 yrs). "*So this person, came at 2 o'clock for a [named service] appointment, she should have been at [named another site] but because we offer good customer service, we didn't turn her away*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs).
Social Engagement and sharing/ implementing ideas:	Teams 1 and 3 provided examples of social engagement: "*... so they will spin a chair round and say 'I've got this client - what do you think?'* " (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs) "*... they make suggestions, and they propose new ways of working*". (Professional Team 1, Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs) "*The team really work well, they sound off each other. Yeah. And they will go and ask, rather than, if they think that I am busy, they'll go and to a more experienced staff and say 'well what do you think in this instance?'. ..., because then they have got this sounding board 'well actually I think I'd have done it this way'*". (Non-professional Team 3, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs) However, the interviews also revealed how awkward employees in Professional Team 2 feel when joining a conversation which may partially explain the perceived social disengagement: "*The problem then is that, if you join a conversation, it seems as if you have been eaves dropping*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs). The discomfort expressed here may be due to a lack of psychological safety and maybe even introverted personality traits and/or past work experience.

Engagement to the Line Manager:	Some employees also appear to be engaged to the direct line manager: "*... the good communication channels that we have between ourselves and the manager. ... I think he/she is doing the best he/she can with the information he/she receives at the moment*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs). Also, Managers appear to be engaged to their own direct line managers: "*He/she has got some really good strong ideas and I think he/she has always managed to get us on board with with saying like again, myself and [named the other Middle Manager] are changing, but we understand the need for the change, and and I always feel that, we feel quite part of that*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).
Engagement to the Customer:	Numerous examples were provided across all teams to highlight engagement to the customer. Another example is where an employee used their discretion to assist an elderly customer so that the customer did not have to go home to get the right eligibility documents: "*... it's a long way away, for an old lady, for them to be sent to the bus station to go home and get her bus, like something she needs, it's like, well, what do you do there then? Because I wouldn't want my Grandma to be, like just left* ". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs).
Engagement to the Team:	Team engagement was suggested in all teams, with multiple examples of staff working together and offering help. In addition, when staff were unable to help through no fault of their own, they were frustrated. For example, employees in Professional Team 2 are required to support employees in Non-Professional Team 4. However, Non-Professional Team 4 provide two services that the professional staff have not been trained on. Consequently, when there are problems with these services, the professional employees cannot provide assistance: "*And the professional* [staff] *haven't been trained in any of this. So, that can be a little bit awkward because although we want to support the staff and we support the staff in terms of when someone is kicking off, we can't step in and sort something, because we don't understand how to work the systems*". (Professional Team 2, Employee, 50-64 yrs).
Engagement to the Job/ Profession:	There were also indications of engagement to the job/profession within the critical incidents and within the interviews: "*... what exists is that a, they are in employment and it's our, it's our commitment to perform as best we can - professionally*". (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs). "*... but some of it is about the professionalism that says I've gotta get it done, there is nobody else to do it, so, I'm going to have to stay to get it done*". (Professional Team 1, Employee, 40-49 yrs). Embedded within these quotes are the implications of austerity reducing staffing levels and resources. This is suggested in comments such as performing '*as best we can*' and '*there is nobody else to do it*'.

Engagement to the Organisation and Pride:	There were mixed feelings about pride amongst participants, perhaps with the austerity measures reducing the pride felt:
	"*Because it was seen as the Council, you worked for the Council, you've got a job for life, it was seen as something to be proud of. ... Now I can't say that I'm not proud, but I don't shout about it. ...I've got a job*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).
	"*So the sort of loyalty and pride that I've experienced in [named another organisation] for example, cos of the way they organise and foster that, errm, whether that still exists I don't know but I think it does, that pride in the organisation and the stationery, and the business cards, the badges and everything else that carries that logo, doesn't exist* [here]*. It doesn't exist - not at all. ..., if I go out into town, I take the badge off before I go out - yeah because I don't want people to see, I'm not proud of working for [named LA]. I don't think anybody is really*". (Professional Team 1, First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).
	Whereas other participants said they were engaged to the organisation:
	"*Both. Yeah both. Both. Cos we are helping our citizens. ... I wouldn't go anywhere else. I love it here*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Employee, 40-49 yrs).
	"*Am I proud of working for [named LA and Service]? I am. ... at the end of the day, we provide a service to young people*". (Non-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs).
	Of interest here is that there are examples of organisational pride and lack of organisational pride from both younger and older age groups. Whilst this interpretive study does not aim to find generalisations, it is still noteworthy that the comments were not restricted to a particular age group.

There were also examples of employee (behavioural) engagement from i-deal recipients too discussed next.

5.66 I-deals and Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

Employee (behavioural) engagement examples from i–deal recipients and their managers were purposefully kept separate to show the associations within this small sample. These are explored below:

Professional Team 1

Of particular interest is that this team reported the most agreed i-deals (career development and flexibility i-deals), with no denied i-deals, and different management levels commented very favourably about their team's employee (behavioural) engagement:

> "*I know they* [employees] *are engaged because they are keen to give ideas and feedback, errm, they make suggestions, and they propose new ways of working, errm, they are enthusiastic and errm, they offer help, errm they volunteer for things*". (Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs).

> "*... the quality of the reports that they do, the stuff that they have considered, the fact that they have taken care and sharing with colleagues before doing the reports and so on - there is no-one just sitting churning out the reports - there is no-one doing that. The three advisors ask each other, and share with each other ...*".
> (First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, line managers perceive employees to be cognitively and socially engaged when writing reports, ensuring they make the best recommendations by consulting with peers first, proposing and sharing ideas and suggestions. Emotional and physical engagement is suggested by their apparent enthusiasm and willingness to volunteer. Given the professional nature of these roles, such behaviours are crucial. Furthermore, the innovativeness followed by social engagement to share, refine and implement the innovations is essential for the Service to maintain delivery within the reduced funding. Working smarter rather than harder is key to sustaining engagement. In addition, managers acknowledged that employees' cognitive engagement extends beyond their own job, and that they understand the austerity constraints and know how they are contributing to the organisation's objectives:

> '*... they* [employees] *understand the work that they are doing, and they understand the situation that we are in*'.
> (Senior Manager, age not declared).

<u>Professional Team 2</u>

This team had no agreed i-deals, and whilst management reported examples of their employee (behavioural) engagement, they did appear to consider that social engagement was lacking:

> "*I think they work incredibly hard. ... But all of them, do things they do, because they want the best for our Service*".
> (First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> "*... that what I would hope would happen is that people are knocking on my door saying 'I've got this great idea' or 'I think we should be doing this'*". (Middle Manager A, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, it appears that employees are behaviourally engaged to the Service (suggesting either job, professional, organisation, customer, team or line manager engagement, and potentially combinations of these different elements) and work hard. Despite that, innovations and suggestions for improvements do not appear to be forthcoming from this team. This reluctance to use employee voice and challenge management may explain why i-deals are not requested, but also why Management considered them socially disengaged. Given the effort the employees make in other aspects of their work, it appears that something is preventing these hard-working employees from exercising creativity and employee voice, thus stifling development of the service.

<u>Non-Professional Team 3</u>

As reported earlier (Table 23), Non-Professional Team 3 had agreed redeployment i-deals. Their employee (behavioural) engagement examples included:

> "*So what I see is that care and that ability for them to not face the customer and say 'I'm sorry that's not my job - you need to ring up somebody else'. They deal with it to the end. And that is absolutely everywhere. ... All that is going on with the Council around budgets and change and job losses you know the customer is always at the heart here which is really really nice for me to see*".
> (Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> *"But it* [the redeployment i-deal] *did make me work harder cos I felt as though I had to...., the way I act with a customer, I'm just not representing myself, I'm representing [named LA]. And if I do a good job, the customer will see [named LA] as doing a good job"*. (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

The first quote suggests effort, caring and focus in being determined to resolve customer problems. Whereas, the second quote indicates emotional engagement where they are concerned for the organisation's reputation, thus employing their personal resources of belief, pride and knowledge.

Non-Professional Team 4

Non-Professional Team 4 reported flexibility i-deals and employee (behavioural) engagement:

> "*Even our Head of Service, [named], he/she sat me in here the other week, and he/she just said 'you know you have done this, this, this and this, and it's all been brilliant, thanks, I really appreciate it, and I'm glad that you are in the post'. And so, you know, I just think it is a brilliant place to work, I really do"*.
> (Middle Line Manager/[now speaking in their employee role], 40-49 yrs).

Consequently, it appears that the Head of Service (indirect line manager) appreciates the efforts that the individual has made in their work, citing examples. In particular, his/her immediate line manager reflected the same positive comments about his/her employee (behavioural) engagement in relation to the effort (Kahn, 1990) and focus (Saks, 2006) the individual gave:

> "*So he/she was doing all this work ... And he/she likes to get it finished. He/she wants to get the dots on the i's and the crosses on the t's"*.
> (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

From these examples provided by line managers and employees, it appears that employee (behavioural) engagement is present amongst all teams. That said, whilst Professional Team 2 provided employee (behavioural) engagement examples, social engagement appeared to be lacking, thus supporting Senior Management's view. It was also notable that Professional Team 2 did not have any i-deals and seemed reluctant to challenge management. This may suggest that successfully managing the i-deal process (agreed and denied) may foster social engagement in particular due to the employee voice it provides.

5.67   **Disengagement**

Although an engaged profile was communicated by both managers and
employees across all teams, there were also elements of disengagement.
For example, Table 23 suggests there is less organisational engagement.

There was also evidence of withholding suggestions within Professional
Team 2 and Non-Professional Team 4, possibly as consequence of
perceiving there to be a lack of employee voice or lack of psychological
safety. The critical incident in Professional Team 2 also showed
deliberate disengagement as a coping technique when an employee was
suspicious of the care the manager tried to portray:

> "*But I, and I quite innocently, errm went across to Boots and
> bought myself a drink, and I thought 'oh he/she likes these drinks,
> I'll take him/her one back'. So I took him/her one back and put it
> on his/her desk and he/she said, you know 'what's that for?'.*
> [Manager replied] *'I got myself one and I thought you'd like one'.
> But he/she was really suspicious that I'd actually bought him/her a
> drink. And that is when I sort of cut myself off if you like. You
> know, I sorta took that back myself, from being that, trying to be
> that more caring person, to well we will just go through the
> processes then*".
> (Professional Team 2, Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, this shows how managerial intentions from their actions
may be mis-construed and therefore interpreted differently. It is also
noteworthy that after an initial verbal defence of their actions, the manager
then chose to disengage from the situation and from there on, restricting
their managerial support to just complying with policy and procedure.

Of further interest was the Management view on disengagement, and how
one Manager perceived it may be the outcome of too much managerial
communication:

> "*we actually give them the staff, too much time to talk, and we give
> them, we have too many meetings .... It was actually working against
> us*". (Non-Professional Team 3, Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

It is almost as if this manager believes that giving employees a voice is a negative action, and implies it would be better to reduce that to prevent the disruption that the manager appears to perceive. If that is the case, then what image does the manager portray when communicating with staff? Would the difference between the manager's personal viewpoint and action be visible to employees? Is this part of the reason for the employees' perception of the manager's lack of authenticity and integrity and perception of insufficient employee voice?

Potentially, the critical incident in Non-Professional Team 3 showed that there may be some unintended consequences from the reductions in terms and conditions, for example, taking sick leave if annual leave is not approved, thus fostering another form of disengagement.

Within Non-Professional Team 4, disengagement was also suggested in the critical incidents where it was highlighted that volunteering for extra hours has reduced since overtime was replaced with time-off-in-lieu as a result of the reduction in terms and conditions. It would appear therefore that this change in obligations from overtime to time-off-in-lieu is not valued by this group of employees. This may also be why disengagement in the form of laziness was also reported:

> "*I can walk through [the generalist department], and I can see 3/4 members of staff stood at the back just talking and there is a queue at the desk*".
> (Non-Professional Team 4, Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

The exasperation from the Middle Manager about this situation appears to be a new performance management issue that they need to deal with, and that they feel that it is unnecessary as such disengagement should not occur in the first place. Perhaps the reduced employment deal is resulting in these employees attempting to reduce the deficit by working less hard in return. Nevertheless, this disengagement appears to have an adverse effect on other employees too, suggesting that disengagement may spread to other team members.

This is particularly the case if the employees feel like they are working harder than their disengaged peers:

> "*a lot of it goes down to what you have come onto. Sometimes you come in work in the morning, and I can start off in a bad mood because I will come in, and I will go into like the main [generalist work area], and the shelf will be just be full of clearing from stuff that should have been done yesterday, and all of a sudden, you are in a bad mood just like that. ... But, it does sorta put you in a bit of a right 'ahh I am going to have to do this all morning now, all the clearing up for somebody else that thingy that hasn't done it'. And if it is done, then you sorta feel like, 'right if that's done, I don't have to worry about that - I can start doing something else', if you have got another job you can do it".*
> (*N*on-Professional Team 4, Employee, 16-24 yrs*).*

Consequently, this highlights the value in investigating and addressing disengagement before it gets out of hand.

The chapter will now conclude with a summary of identified issues to be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

5.68   Summary

The teams have been analysed by the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) incorporating MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers. This has systematically explored how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered during austerity, how this is experienced by both line managers and employees, and how the reciprocal expectations/promises between employees and line managers have been affected. For teams 2-4 inclusive, managers selected the restructure process for the critical incident, which highlighted the difficulties of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement within this context. This also demonstrated the importance and challenges of the line manager's role in creating a work environment conducive to employee (behavioural) engagement during austerity.

Findings appear to show that austerity has led to a hard HR approach being implemented, shown in particular by the dominant focus on work objectives within the PPD process; a significant reduction in learning and development, now restricted to current jobs rather than aspirational roles, favouring low-cost methods, along with passing responsibility for self-development to the employee; reduced quantity and quality of communication which is often late; and reduced employee voice intensified by the reduction in PPDs, one-to-ones, team meetings and downsizing. These factors are likely to have reduced trust.

Managers also appeared to supplement formal methods with informal methods of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement, such as an open-door policy, informal conversations with employees, employee recognition and being 'jolly'. This also helps to maintain their integrity if they are seen to be living the organisational values, although managers also reported the difficulty in maintaining a positive mood within the austerity climate given their own job insecurity. Additionally, managers reported that they felt frustrated with the lack of time that they have to devote to the fostering of employee (behavioural) engagement, and dislike that some interventions feel one-way (especially PPDs and one-to-ones) and would welcome a more two-way relationship. Concern was also expressed regarding the over-reliance on low-cost e-learning. This may also be exacerbated given the loss of talent through redundancies.

Despite the organisational constraints due to austerity, mutuality and employee voice was suggested via small i-deals in Teams 1, 3 and 4, in particular employability/career development (task), flexibility and redeployment. Flexibility i-deals appear to sometimes create an economic exchange, and other times foster a social exchange. Cases of denied i-deals indicated that this needs careful handling to avoid PC breach/violation, and loss of organisational trust from co-workers. Non-Professional Team 3 had a low-cost intervention in place, essentially a 'redeployment i-deal request form', to help employees articulate the business benefits of their redeployment i-deal request. I-deals were noticeably absent in Professional Team 2, although denied i-deals were discussed. This team also appeared to experience numerous problems in accepting organisational change and the new PC including cross-functional working and self-development for this new work. This may suggest that the ability to request i-deals in the other teams may have helped to shape the new PC and gain acceptance to it, potentially due to the control gained from identifying and negotiating the i-deal, and respect for employee voice this conveys. Consequently, the ability to request i-deals may foster psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) via employee voice.

From all the teams sampled, Non-Professional Team 3 appeared to be impacted the most by the reduction in benefits, terms and conditions, shown by the loss of flexi-time, increase in Saturday working, reduced paid breaks and tight centralised control over annual leave, normally considered a key benefit in the public sector. Nevertheless, employees appeared to accept the need for such reductions and locational flexibility driven by service needs within the austerity climate. That said, there appeared to be a perception amongst employees within this team of a lack of mutuality. Consequently, they expressed an expectation for the LA to be more supportive in helping them cope with occasional personal circumstances, and seemed aggrieved by the perceived lack of 'give and take' (favours) and tight central control in the employment relationship. Employees expressed that this could be facilitated with a time-off-in-lieu scheme which would be more restricted than the previous flexi-time scheme, but give accrued time off for genuine personal emergencies.

Communication was described by employees as unclear, too late and delivered by inappropriate methods for the content and intended recipients, meaning that despite management efforts, employee reports suggested that the full benefits were not being realised. Managers also reported the loss of the strategic narrative or 'golden thread', and this may have contributed to some employees not fully understanding how their work contributes to the organisation. This was suggested by the employee in Professional Team 2 that did not know why they received a round of applause at a regional event, and the first line manager's report in Non-Professional Team 4. Late communication was particularly damaging when employees were alerted to major changes which threatened their job security through external sources such as reading the local newspaper, from customer conversations or in one case, by the unexpected arrival of a television crew. These examples were perceived as a lack of loyalty towards employees thus breaching (or violating) the PC, and reducing psychological safety (Kahn, 1990).

The reduction in employee voice may also have adversely impacted social engagement given senior management's perception of social disengagement in Teams 2 and 4. Employees in Professional Team 2 appear reluctant to challenge management ideas and make suggestions, which may in part be due to introverted personality traits and/or past work experience. It may also be due to the employee perception that employee voice is not respected. This may foster a perceived culture that is considered to be psychologically unsafe (Kahn, 1990). Such an environment will prevent employees from making suggestions/improvements which is likely to stifle innovation and achievement which is needed for service development within the funding constraints, and appears to have resulted in changes being mainly management led. Non-Professional Team 3 seemed to enjoy employee involvement but there appears to be a difference of managerial and employee opinion regarding the frequency this occurs. If communication and employee voice improved, this may not only improve the strategic narrative and employee voice enablers/drivers, but also improve engaging managers and integrity, providing empirical support to show that MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers are mutually reinforcing.

Professional Team 1 and Non-Professional Team 3 had concerns regarding different types of organisational justice (distributive/procedural/informational). These included reports on treating a small minority of people more favourably (distributive injustice) creating perceived inequity, instances where redundancy procedures were different to what was initially explained (informational injustice), and perceived unfair redundancy selection procedures (procedural injustice). The perceived unfairness here is likely to have reduced trust in the organisation, and this may have led to PC breach/violation. This may have been prevented if the reasons for these decisions had been explained to those affected. Moreover, reduction in trust was discussed in all teams (Table 17), which is likely to have adversely affected psychological safety (Kahn, 1990).

The organisational restructures which were reported to occur every other year, seemed to be a major threat to employees' job security, and the individual approach in dealing with this varied significantly thus highlighting the difficulties in fostering employee (behavioural) engagement within this context. Some employees coped positively, and others appeared unsettled and concerned as suggested by their traumatic accounts of the experience. This has reduced many employees' intentions to progress internally within the organisation, resulting in a reluctance to undertake funded specialist training, a rare commodity in the financial climate, or apply for higher level positions. Although this has been facilitated by Management's deliberate attempts to communicate the loss of a' job for life' in an effort to change the PC, Management appear disappointed and unable to see the link.

Across all teams, there were minimal concerns expressed about pay freezes, and when it was mentioned, it was from the managerial perspective of loss of incentives that could be offered to employees. That said, the loss of overtime in Non-Professional Team 4 was reported as reducing volunteering for new tasks. The new PC was also evidenced with employees accepting responsibility for requesting appraisals and one-to-ones, and partial acceptance that employees are now responsible for their own learning and development. Employee reactions to this ranged from either being reluctant to learn (Teams 2 and 4), or by the use of employability/career development (task) i-deals (Teams 1 and 3).

Despite this reduction in the employment deal and quality of working life, many employees across all teams seem to reciprocate with their engagement. Engagement mainly appears to be with employees' profession/job and customers, although examples of engagement to the team and line manager were provided too. Whilst engagement to the organisation is not apparent from all employees, there appeared to be a significant focus on the communal perspective, perhaps because blame for the austerity conditions appears to be attributed to the national rather than local level, which may potentially be due to the publication of the public sector deficit in the media increasing employee understanding. The long-term sustainability of this may reveal whether this is work intensification or physical/behavioural engagement - a possible future study.

Overall, this suggests there is broad acceptance to the new PC, and employees appear very understanding of the austerity situation. Employees seem to believe that the organisation can no longer afford rewards previously enjoyed such as external training and annual inflationary pay rises. That said, they also appear to reassess the employment deal based on their view of the organisation's affordability thus highlighting how austerity has affected the reciprocations between employees and line managers/organisations. Findings suggest that lower cost reciprocations expected by employees include small i-deals [particularly employability/career development (task), flexibility and redeployment], favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust. These themes (Figure 6) will be explored more in the discussion chapter next.

Figure 6 - Themes

Reciprocal Expectations   **Behaviour**

- I-deals
- Favours ('give and take')
- Communication (meaningful and timely) and Employee Voice
- Trust

Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

Source: Author's own
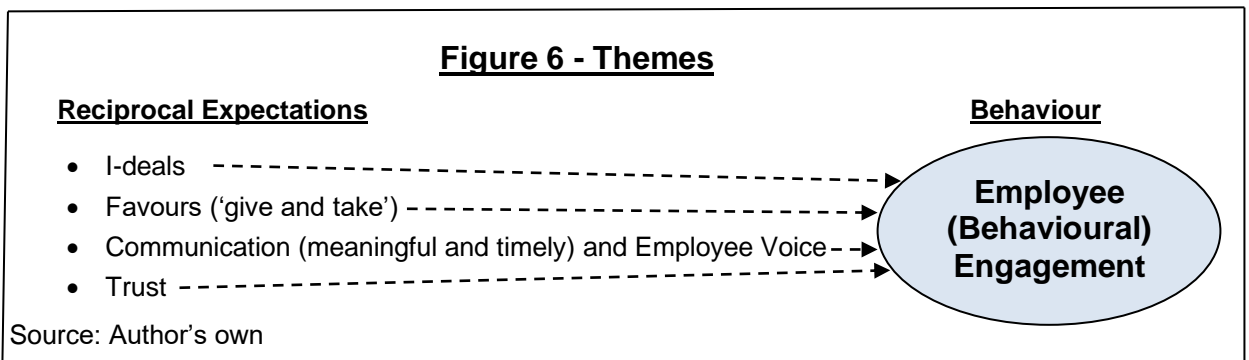
Chapter Six

Discussion

6. Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how austerity has impacted the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement and shaped the new psychological contract (PC) given the demise of the public sector's notion of a 'job for life', along with the diluted employment deal in terms of pay freezes and reductions in benefits, terms and conditions (CIPD/PPMA, 2012). The reciprocal basis of the employee engagement construct led to examining this through the lens of social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964).

For social exchange to continue in a recurrent fashion, both parties need to value what they gain from the exchange (Homans, 1958; Foa and Foa, 1976; 2012). As job insecurity increases and pay and benefits reduces, it is reasonable to assume that disengagement would occur. This would be detrimental in austerity where downsizing makes disengagement difficult to absorb (Kiefer *et al.,* 2014). However, the findings have revealed that there appears to be broad acceptance of the new reduced employment deal, and an understanding that economic rewards cannot be increased due to austerity. Consequently, whilst there are examples of disengagement, there are also many other examples of employee (behavioural) engagement too. This suggests that overall, the reduced employment deal has not adversely affected employee (behavioural) engagement.

Despite this apparent acceptance, some employees do appear to be seeking alternative low-cost reciprocations, perhaps indicating their attempt to shape the PC. These are in the form of idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust. Consequently, to achieve the third objective, these reciprocations will be further explored individually by drawing on Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions, SET (Blau, 1964), PC and resource theory (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 1980; 2012). This will help understand how austerity has affected the perceived expectations/promises between employees and line managers, to shape the PC and foster employee (behavioural) engagement.

6.1 Idiosyncratic Deals (I-deals)

This section will examine how idiosyncratic deals, also known as i-deals (Rousseau, 2005), are used to help foster employee (behavioural) engagement (Rousseau, 2005; Hornung *et al.,* 2008; Anand *et al.,* 2010; Vidyarthi *et al.,* 2014) by encouraging acceptance of the changing PC, in particular the demise of the public sector's notion of a 'job for life' and reduced employment deal (CIPD/PPMA 2012). First, the use of i-deals will be discussed, followed by the impact on employee (behavioural) engagement and the PC.

Use of I-deals

In line with Hornung *et al.'s* (2008) findings, i-deals were also present in this bureaucratic organisation where standardised employment practices are prevalent. This may demonstrate the movement towards the individualisation of the employment relationship, coupled with the austerity context creating the need to be leaner and more agile (Bach, 2011; CIPD/PPMA, 2012), showing how macro changes affect the micro-level (individual). Such 'conversations for mutual outcomes' have been shown to meet employee needs and foster a fairer social exchange (Francis *et al.,* 2013) outside of intended strategy. The willingness to discuss other co-workers' i-deals both within the employee one-to-one interviews, and the open discussion of i-deals in the employee focus group interviews, may suggest that individualised arrangements are the norm (Hornung *et al.,* 2008). Alternatively, it may be because financial i-deals, which Marescaux *et al.,* (2019) found to have more potential to provide issues of perceived distributive injustice, did not appear to be present in this study. Given only 22% of the respondents reported on i-deals, rather, it is assumed that, within this sample, they openly discussed the i-deals because they were functional/transparent/fair (Rousseau *et al.,* 2006) which conflicts with Bal's (2017) finding of i-deal secrecy. That said, the LA context may simply reflect the transparent nature of public sector rewards, demonstrating the importance of incorporating context within i-deals research. It also provides further support for distributive, procedural and interactional justice (Rousseau, 2005).

The low number of discussed i-deals (22% from the sample) also demonstrates their idiosyncratic nature. One explanation for this is that context limits i-deals. This means that context needs to provide i-deal availability (Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau *et al.,* 2006; Hornung *et al.,* 2008; Anand *et al.,* 2010; Rosen *et al.,* 2013). Additionally, the employee in Non-Professional Team 4 demonstrated that i-deal negotiation and employee (behavioural) engagement in the new role are stifled when employees requesting i-deals do not have the preference/need for control (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), proactivity (Hornung *et al.,* 2009), self-efficacy, positive social interaction (Bandura, 1977; Hornung *et al.,* 2010) and confidence (Rousseau *et al.,* 2006). Low-cost interventions such as the 'redeployment i-deal request form', that help individuals lacking in these skills or traits present a business case may be useful. This technique has been applied to suggestion schemes (IDS, 2005) and may be more achievable in austerity than more costly interventions such as employee negotiation training.

I-deals and Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

The impact of i-deals on Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions may explain how they contribute to fostering engagement given i-deals can be tailored to favourably meet the dynamic subjective individual appraisal of work factors. For example, flexibility i-deals are likely to contribute towards psychological availability (Kahn, 1990) by supporting employees to gain more work-life balance thus enabling them to bring more personal energies to their role. This concurred with Wang *et al.'s* (2018) findings where work-life balance achieved by flexibility i-deals sometimes facilitated creative thinking. As such, the Audit Commission and LGA (2011) recommended that LAs should highlight these benefits to offset the dissatisfaction with pay. Similarly, employability/career development (task) i-deals are likely to contribute to psychological meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990) via enhancing the work experience through meaning and purpose (Shuck and Rose, 2013). Redeployment i-deals may contribute to psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) in meeting their self-image, status and career needs.

Furthermore, Professional Team 2's reluctance to request i-deals or socially engage may be indicative that psychological safety is lacking demonstrating the importance of fostering psychologically safe work climates (Kahn, 1990). Moreover, cognitively and socially engaged employees are more likely to understand the business (Robinson *et al.,* 2004; MacLeod and Clarke, 2009). This may also make them more likely to identify and propose i-deals that are mutually advantageous, suggesting that engagement drives i-deal negotiation. This innovation is necessary to deal with the austerity constraints (Bach, 2011).

I-deals and the Psychological Contract (PC)

The categorisation of i-deals into flexibility, employability/career development (task) and redeployment highlights the inducements that are important to these employees, thus having the potential to foster ongoing exchange. The redeployment i-deals will be due to downsizing in response to austerity. In contrast to Kinnie *et al.'s,* (2005) research, employability/career development needs were shown to be important to both professional and non-professional employees, perhaps reflecting the job insecurity making development more important amongst employees with either an instrumental or career orientation to work (Goldthorpe *et al.,* 1968) to maintain their employment. This may also indicate the acceptance of the new PC (Hiltrop, 1995; CIPD/PPMA, 2012) where employees seek to enhance their employability via lower cost workplace learning rather than expecting a 'job for life' and/or external training. As i-deals are driven by the employees' motives for learning, they may also enable them to create their own learning paths (Poell, 2017), and this learning may be more relevant than formal learning (Hicks *et al.,* 2007; Cunningham and Hillier, 2013). Moreover, the transparent nature of i-deals resulting from the negotiation and authorisation process, may prevent some of the disadvantages that can come from informal learning, such as learning bad habits and/or negative attitudes (Billett, 1995; Dale and Bell 1999). Developmental i-deals may also foster engagement as Shuck *et al.,* (2014a) has shown that development interventions may foster engagement, and Fairlie (2011) found that this is because it increases Kahn's (1990) psychological meaningfulness. Claxton (2013) also believes that such investment indicates to the individual that they are valued.

Managers only had flexibility i-deals within this small sample, perhaps because they have already met their (current) career aspirations. Here, Hornung *et al.'s* (2008) research was supported, where reduced hours did not lower the employer's performance expectations given the i-deal recipient had to convince management that the job could still be done. However, longer term, Wang *et al.,* (2018) warns that there is a risk that others will perceive that the flexibility i-deal recipients are less engaged. Consequently, Rousseau *et al.,* (2016) suggests that i-deal recipients communicate their achievements to managers and co-workers to prevent/lower this risk. Bal (2017) notes that this is especially important in insecure job climates, thus relevant to this study.

Of further interest is that, whilst other studies have highlighted that i-deal benefits arise from the privileged status of gaining special terms and conditions not available to peers (such as Guerrero and Challiol-Jeanblanc, 2016), this study highlighted examples where peers felt that co-workers should be granted i-deals, especially in relation to redeployment and flexibility i-deals. Failure to grant them seemed to result in co-workers losing trust in the organisation. This may be due to the transparent nature of public sector rewards demonstrating a further need to examine context in i-deal studies (Rousseau *et al.,* 2009). Also, Rousseau *et al.,* (2016) and Marescaux *et al.,* (2019) found that co-workers that care about the i-deal recipient, are supportive of these additional arrangements. As with Singh and Vidyarthi's (2018) study, the co-operation of subordinates was also required for the managers' i-deals within this PhD study, in particular in Professional Team 1 which had a reduced hours flexibility i-deal, indicating the importance of various stakeholders in the success of i-deals.

Findings appear to contradict Rousseau *et al.'s,* (2009) earlier view that the type of exchange formed from an i-deal depends on the content of the i-deal, and that flexibility i-deals create an economic exchange. Here, findings suggest that flexibility i-deals appear to foster a social exchange for some participants, and an economic exchange for others. As later suggested by Rousseau *et al.,* (2016), this may indicate that the individual attribution of why the i-deal was approved may be more important than the content of the i-deal in determining the exchange relationship formed, and subsequent attitude.

The participant's acknowledgement of a social exchange relationship may also demonstrate a strong orientation to exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). That said, not all i-deals can be approved in the current austerity context. Given denied i-deals may disengage staff if they feel that their PC has been breached/violated, it is in management's interests to adequately and respectfully explain the reasons for refusal. Understanding the reasons for denial may also provide a learning opportunity resulting in a more mutually beneficial future i-deal. Such efforts acknowledge the pluralistic nature of the employment relationship (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006). It may also maintain affective trust (which can continue after losing cognitive trust) to prevent PC breach/violation (Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007) and maintain engagement.

Furthermore, as also shown by Guerrero *et al.,* (2014), the employee's pursuit of an i-deal following PC breach may help to repair the employment relationship, thus increasing the likelihood of engagement. Hornung *et al.,* (2010) says this can be an active form of coping, which is useful during organisational restructures and downsizing, thus enhancing an employee's self-efficacy which may predict engagement as suggested by Xanthopoulou *et al.,* (2009a) and Xanthopoulou *et al.,* (2009b). Potentially this may mean that i-deals provide a positive and active way of utilising the 'bargaining' stage of Kübler Ross's (1969) coping cycle model, thus helping employees cope with organisational change, gain control and engage with their new role.

Consequently, the teams have provided some insight to the benefits that may be gained from i-deals, and included denied i-deals thus responding to Bal's (2017) calls to enhance understanding of the wider context around i-deals. This showed the reciprocations important to this small sample, thus shaping the PC, impacting trust and forming the exchange relationship. This also highlighted the importance of other stakeholder views, in particular co-workers and subordinates. Moreover, it suggested how these reciprocations may foster Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions which may then lead to employee (behavioural) engagement. In addition to i-deals, other reciprocal constructs were identified in the teams. Consequently, the use of favours ('give and take') will now be discussed.

6.2   Two-way Relationship – Favours ('Give and Take')

As discussed in chapter 3, favours are not considered micro i-deals because of their one-off nature and lack of employer benefits. Nevertheless, they appear important to the employee-line management relationship. Favours may be defined as voluntary acts of giving either in response to previously received favours, or in anticipation of receiving direct reciprocation (Blau, 1964; Flynn and Brockner, 2003). Consequently, favour exchange involves the dyadic interaction where the giving and receiving of unspecified resources is expected to be equitable (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964; Flynn and Brockner, 2003). That said, favours/gifts may not necessarily be measured in terms of value as obligations are unspecified, and therefore do not need to be of equal value to what was exchanged (Liden *et al.,* 1997). Rather, equity in favour exchange is maintained by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) where people should help those that have helped them. As this is a perceptual process, fairness will depend on the perspectives of those involved (Flynn and Brockner, 2003). Blau (1964) noted that the timing of a favour (or gift) is pertinent in that it cannot wait forever, but also that it could not be reciprocated immediately. Extremely quick discharge of an obligation is likely to communicate ingratitude as it communicates a more business like relationship. Whereas, the delay in reciprocation suggests that the favour or gift is given freely, but the delay secures the burden of obligation on the recipient. How favours help foster employee (behavioural) engagement and shape the PC is discussed next.

Favours and Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

Tables 14 and 15 demonstrate how favours are needed at different times depending on employee need. The granting of favours can foster engagement by increasing psychological availability (Kahn, 1990) by making adjustments as necessary, often in terms of work hours. Failure to grant such requests can lead to unintended consequences, such as increased sick leave as indicated in Team 3 (p. 166). This suggests that it makes economic (and moral) sense to consider appropriate arrangements, and it may prevent perceived breaches and promote acceptance of the new PC discussed next.

Favours and the Psychological Contract (PC)

The lack of, and employee need for favours ('give and take'), was most noticeable in Non-Professional Team 3, perhaps because they seemed to have lost the most benefits and conditions such as a loss of flexi-time, increase in Saturday working, difficulties in booking annual leave, and the 50% reduction in paid breaks, thus reducing the PC (Table 14). This was in addition to the pay freeze, adverse pension changes and job insecurity that affected the whole LA. A key point here is that these employees appear to accept the new PC in terms of the reduced employment deal, suggesting that they understand the austerity constraints, but they expected some 'give and take' in return. Additionally, Flynn and Brockner (2003) highlighted that the receiver's commitment to the exchange relationship is attributed to how they were treated rather than how much they benefited from the favour. This was shown in the critical incident, when perceived interactional injustice appeared to negate the benefits received (Table 15). Consequently, the anger expressed suggests this employee perceived a PC violation. Moreover, as the perceived managerial obligation to consider favour requests had not actually been agreed, this supports earlier PC authors such as Argyris (1960) and Schein (1980), and also Rousseau *et al.'s,* (2018) more recent thoughts, that 'expectations' are implicit PC obligations.

Despite this perceived favour deficit reported by employees, it is useful to note that employees often believe they have given more favours that they have received. The timing of favours may complicate this assessment given one party may give a number of favours before requesting any in return (Flynn, 2003). Although these subjective assessments are likely to contain perceptual distortions, these perceptual inaccuracies inform employee attitude and their behaviour as demonstrated here. More positively, the employee data suggests that favours were not a one-way process. Employees reciprocating favours towards their organisation/line manager were also evident in Non-Professional Team 4 (p. 167) and are likely to be due to social exchange relations with their line manager (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Karanges *et al.,* 2014). Favours are more likely to be reciprocated by employees if they understand the organisation's needs, facilitated by communication discussed next.

6.3   Communication (Meaningful and Timely) and Employee Voice

The austerity context which has led to organisational restructures and site closures, and reduced staffing levels has created both an employee demand for more communication and employee voice in order to keep abreast and feel involved with organisational changes, and yet a conflicting organisational need to keep costs low both in methods used, and time taken in communicating. How far this was perceived to be achieved will be considered next by first discussing downwards communication followed by two-way communication.

Communication (Meaningful and Timely) and Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

As noted in chapter 3, there is academic support that communication can foster employee engagement (for example, Rich *et al.,* 2010; Iyer and Israel 2012; Karanges *et al.,* 2014), perhaps because it helps employees feel valued (Kahn, 1990; Claxton, 2013; 2015; 2016; Reissner and Pagan, 2013) which may contribute to psychological safety. It may also enhance understanding thus contributing to psychological meaningfulness. The sense of control this provides may enhance psychological safety too. This may also impact psychological availability (Kahn, 1990), especially if the communication generates excitement and/or a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996).

All four teams here implemented a wide range of downwards communication methods, although managers expressed that the strategic narrative (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009) or 'golden thread' had been lost (p. 140). Moreover, the range of communication methods did not appear to produce the benefits intended, highlighting that intended best practice is not always effective. Employees considered this was due to the perceived incompleteness of the communication, the use of 'dry' methods and/or late communication. The loss of the strategic narrative, and the perceived incompleteness of the communication, may have been due to the reduction of PDPs and one-to-ones, and reduced communication activities due to time constraints following the staffing reductions. This relates to Francis *et al.'s,* (2013) similar engagement study which also found that LAs have less time for discussions since austerity.

This is likely to reduce participation opportunities which may have fostered readiness and acceptance to organisational change as suggested by, for example, Amiot *et al.,* (2006), Holt *et al,* (2007) and Oreg *et al.,* (2011). Consequently, more emphasis on the strategic narrative may increase psychological safety, as well as meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990) from a fuller understanding of their role and organisation's purpose, thus providing engagement through participation and ideas as demonstrated in Reissner and Pagan (2013). That said, the uncertainty from the austerity context may make this difficult if the organisation is not sure of the direction it is pursuing. Additionally, Oreg (2006) concluded that the provision of information during organisational change can cause resistance, particularly if the content was undesirable for the employee(s). However, this view ignores the possibility that resistance can lead to positive outcomes (Piderit, 2000; Kiefer, 2002), where employees' detailed knowledge of the work processes can lead to improvements.

Consequently, employees expressed resentment at not being involved, and felt information was being withheld which is supported in the literature, for example, Chaudry *et al.,* (2009). Employees also explained how they wanted some honesty and sensitivity from Managers (Table 8c), even when it was negative news which is also concurred in the literature on survivors (such as Cascio,1993; Dixon, 2013). However, managers felt that it was better not to discuss options with employees until decisions were finalised to prevent building employee hopes or cause unnecessary stress (p. 170). However, this lack of information, particularly given the threats to job security within a sector that has previously enjoyed stability and certainty, appeared to cause suspicion between employees and management which lowers trust (discussed later) and psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). This may partially explain management's perception of social disengagement in Teams 2 and 4. It also appears that withholding information did not avoid employee stress as intended, given the examples of emotional issues summarised in Table 13, which may also adversely impact psychological safety and availability which may lead to disengagement (Kahn, 1990).

Regarding the 'dry' communication methods, the critical incidents, particularly in the Non-Professional Teams, revealed that the benefits of these interventions are not fully realised as some employees do not access and read them (p. 172). This may be due to the preferences of employees as the non-professional teams are likely to have strong auditory skills in comparison to visual skills given their customer facing role. Alternatively, it may be due to a perceived lack of time for reading due to the staffing reductions.

Moreover, managers may prefer to use one-way communication methods during austerity. This may be the case as all managers explained the difficulty in keeping positive and generating excitement when the messages that they had to relay were negative such as budget cuts, site closures and announcement of redundancies. Additionally, they may have been concerned about their own employment too. Consequently, the selection of one-way communication methods may in part be fuelled by their own self-preservation to prevent their own fears/concerns being visible to employees or, prevent them from inadvertently selecting a poor choice of words. The latter point was reported by employees in Non-Professional Team 3 where the Senior Manager allegedly referred to employees as 'a number' (Table 9), leaving employees feeling under-valued. That said, potentially this self-reporting may have been subject to retrospective bias or lack context, and it contradicts the Senior Manager's intentions of treating people with dignity and respect. Nevertheless, the apparent failure of these methods provides further support for Welch (2012) who found that the communication method is as important as the message content. Consequently, whilst these communication methods may have met managerial needs in terms of speed, low-cost, and self-preservation, these one-way communication methods did not appear to be meeting employee needs as previously noted by Ruck and Welch (2012) in their review of academic and consultancy studies on employee satisfaction with organisational communication. Not only will this adversely impact psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability, (Kahn, 1990), but these issues and the lateness of the reported communication may impact the PC discussed next.

Communication (Meaningful and Timely) and the Psychological Contract (PC)

For employees, meaningful and timely information is important as this is likely to inform their judgement of whether they can trust the employer given downsizing increases the risky nature of the employment relationship (McFarlane and Shore, 1995). Such informational justice may also mitigate PC breach from the social atmosphere obligation, and cognitive resistance to change (De Ruiter *et al.,* 2017). In other words, it may support a successful transition from the old to the new PC, if it helps employees understand the reasons for the change (Rousseau, 1995). This is likely to trigger positive emotion, potentially leading to their employee (behavioural) engagement. However, if employees perceive the change as a loss, this may lower the quality of the exchange relationship (Cropanzano *et al.,* 2017) which may then reduce their employee (behavioural) engagement.

In an attempt to manage this process, one manager in particular endorsed reframing techniques previously advocated by Sitkin and Bies (1993) to assist them in what Ashman (2013) referred to as their 'envoy' role (see chapter 3). So, rather than stating that there would be site closures and job losses, the message was reframed to articulate that the LA was trying to focus and strengthen the service at 5 sites rather than diluting them at 9 sites (p. 146). Such techniques were also used on a one-to-one basis. For example, the employee that apparently was not permitted time off to visit their ill newborn Grandson in hospital (Table 15). Here, the Manager used exonerating methods to legitimise the refusal by explaining that the employee was too valuable to be released from work. Consequently, in both of these examples, the Manager was most likely seeking to prevent perceived PC breach from the unfavourable treatment by '*attention switching*' (Sitkin and Bies, 1993, p. 357). Moreover, late communication is quite serious when the organisational changes affect employees' job security as shown by the critical incidents in Professional Team 1 (job losses, p. 172) and Non-Professional Team 4 (closure of a site and television crews arriving unannounced, Table 8d). Employees appeared to consider this a violation of their PC given the lack of loyalty and support this conveyed, and a constraint on employee voice discussed next.

Employee Voice and Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

Line managers and most of the sampled employees in Professional Team 1 appeared to be in agreement that they are involved in some decision-making. That said, there were some employees that expressed anger as they did not know part of their Service would cease, thus putting jobs at risk, until it was published externally (p. 172). Whereas, line managers and employees disagreed on the perceived extent of employee voice (p. 173), reflecting the difference between actual and perceived practices (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). Consequently, employees may want to offer social engagement, but feel that they do not have the opportunity (Appelbaum *et al.,* 2000) and respect to do so. There also appeared to be a lack of psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) particularly within Professional Team 2 with some employees being reluctant to challenge management (p. 172), Non-Professional Team 3 cited feeling isolated when issues were referred to their one-to-one thus not having the support of their colleagues (p. 174), and Non-Professional Team 4 felt that Management did not respect them or the value of employee voice (pp. 174-175).

However, when employee voice was present, for example, when innovating a procedural change in Non-Professional Team 3 (p. 173), both managers and employees reported that they enjoyed the process and it led to success. Other studies have found this to be due to the respect it conveys for employees (Holland *et al.,* 2017) from feeling valued and needed (Kahn, 1990) and contributing to meeting the employees' relatedness needs (Alderfer, 1972). Consequently, in support of Rees *et al.,* (2013) and Holland *et al.,* (2017), when line managers and employees use initiative conversations they develop trust, and, as endorsed by Francis *et al.,* (2013), use their agency powers to create shared meanings and actions to sustain engagement and enable innovation. Generative conversations, which are non-episodic and enable 'challenge' and 'critical exploration', (Francis *et al.,* 2013, p. 2722) may help Professional Team 2 to be more socially engaged and question management policies by providing the psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) to overcome other barriers that may be resulting in social disengagement such as introverted characteristics, or past work experience.

Francis *et al.,* (2013) therefore found that conversational practice acts as both a buffer to relieve stress from the pressures of 'doing more with less', and a lever in integrating employee views in the pursuit of engagement. Such utilisation of employees' expertise may contribute to innovative service improvements that are required in the context of austerity.

Employee Voice and the Psychological Contract (PC)

Two-way communication enables line managers to develop trust (Rees *et al.,* 2013; Holland *et al.,* 2017) and shape perceptions to foster a more reciprocal relationship with employees via a mutuality of gains and interests (Francis *et al.,* 2013), and removal of obstacles (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). This may strengthen the PC which may foster ongoing engagement (Biswas *et al.,* 2013). In particular, conversations that are non-episodic (continuous), non-prescriptive (unstructured and responsive), plurivocal (many voices, in this case to include employees and managers) and constructive (to co-create meaning and action) (Francis *et al.,* 2013) have the potential to shape the PC to address both organisational and employee needs.

However, there were examples provided by employees where this did not appear to occur. For example, with the reduction in paid breaks in Non-Professional Team 3 (p. 174), employees seemed to be more angry about the lack of respect this conveyed as it was implemented without responding to their comments, rather than the actual reduction in paid breaks demonstrating the relational aspects of exchange which appear more important than the content. This is supported in Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analysis on perceived organisational support, which showed that when employee voice is heard, it represents respect and care for the individual and their contribution. Consequently, it appears that employees consider that their line managers are not sufficiently meeting the employees' perceived employee voice and employee respect obligations. Given employee voice and all the other reciprocations discussed so far are all affected by and based on trust, this will be explored next.

6.4   Trust

Trust, organisational justice and perceptions of fairness, are necessary to foster engagement (Purcell, 2012). This is because, as seen with the reciprocations discussed so far, social exchanges are based on trust, and trust is necessary for ongoing reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Holland *et al.,* 2017). Accordingly, when both parties reciprocate benefits received, trust and loyalty tend to increase. As a result, engaged employees with such trusting and high quality relationships with their employer, will be more likely to report more positive attitudes towards the organisation (Saks, 2006). Furthermore, Alfes *et al.,* (2012) found that HRM practices only impact task performance when employees trust the employer. However, it is useful to note that their study specifically examined trust in the employer and not their direct line manager which may be different (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012; Van Wanrooy *et al.,* 2013; Worrall and Cooper, 2013; Purcell, 2014c).

That said, employees are aware that they have less power in the exchange with employers, and are therefore at risk that their efforts will not be adequately compensated. In addition, any detrimental action the employee is able to do to the organisation to redress the balance, will have a lesser impact on the organisation than any detrimental actions that the organisation could take against the employee (McFarlane Shore and Shore, 1995). Consequently, trust is critical to psychological safety and availability (Kahn, 1990) and the PC (Guest, 1998). This will now be examined in the four teams.

Trust and Employee (Behavioural) Engagement

Both professional teams reported that the uncertain austerity climate appears to have created a culture of suspicion where people have a strong focus on 'covering their backs' (Table 17). Whilst this demonstrates the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of employee (behavioural) engagement, it is an unproductive task, thus demonstrating that not all engaged efforts are desirable. Time would have been better spent on value added tasks.

The reported time taken to return to trusting peer relationships within Professional Team 2 (Table 17) shows the adverse impact that downsizing may have on workplace relationships and the implications for survivors, which has previously been highlighted in the literature on downsizing (such as Cascio, 1993). This was also suggested with the cross-functional working where it was reported that generalist professionals felt that the specialist professionals were 'hovering' whilst they were completing the specialist work, thus reducing their psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). Lack of trust was also indicated where a middle manager explained that an employee serving their redundancy notice was very suspicious about the soft drink purchased for him/her as an act of friendship (Table 17). Bal *et al.,* (2010) and Bohle *et al.,* (2017) found that supportive treatment from managers like this during and after adverse events such as downsizing, may lower psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) due to the perceived discrepancy between redundancies and supportive treatment. To cope with the situation in Team 2, the Manager used cognitive distancing to separate them from the downsizing role thus restricting their actions to just following procedures, and not offering any other support in an attempt to depersonalise the event. This also led to emotional hardening where the manager was deliberately less emotionally engaged, which also occurred in Ashman's (2013) study on envoys. This shows how disengagement may not necessarily be deviant behaviour, but rather a coping strategy (Figure 7).

More positively, social bonding appeared to occur between employees and managers in similar situations. For example, Professional Team 2 reported that redundant and/or redeployed employees were much less aggressive than expected given the managers were also at risk of redundancy (p. 183). Such empathy was also demonstrated in Ashman's (2013) study, and may contribute to fostering more trusting relationships (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012) thus boosting psychological safety and availability to foster engagement (Kahn, 1990).

The data also highlights that lack of trust is not one-way. Not only do employees report that they do not trust management, but employees also reported that they felt that managers do not trust them (Table 17), citing examples of Management intervening when employees are informally chatting.

This apparently occurred even when they were socially engaged in problem-solving. This may be supported by the Middle Manager's comment in Non-Professional Team 3, regarding giving the staff too much employee voice (p. 203). Such high management control may lower an employee's psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) thus reducing engagement if they feel that they cannot take risks and expose their real selves without adverse consequences, as indicated by the employee that felt this made them question their actions (Table 19).

Perceived issues regarding the redeployment procedure also appeared to reduce trust. This was because the procedure was considered flawed in Team 3 (procedural injustice), and Teams 2 and 3 felt there was a discrepancy between the communicated plans and what was implemented (informational injustice) (Table 17). Consequently, whilst these first line managers accepted the situation, one openly admitted that this had reduced their trust in higher management which may reduce psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) leading to reduced engagement (Kahn, 1990; Holland *et al.,* 2017). Such emotional upset and deep cynicism with higher levels of Management has been shown to be exhausting (Maslach *et al.,* 2001), thus having the capacity to reduce psychological availability (Kahn, 1990) too. Similarly, Professional Team 1 reported an example of distributive injustice where a minority of people were perceived to be treated more favourably and given fixed term contracts that no other 'at risk' employee could compete for after serving their redundancy notice (Table 17). These incidents highlight the need to communicate the reasons for decisions to other co-workers to prevent perceptual inaccuracies forming, as there may have been legitimate contextual reasons for not implementing policy. This appeared to be the case in Team 3 where the Middle Manager reported that the unions would not agree to the proposed selection methods, hence why they were different to what was discussed with the candidates. Consequently, trust is perceptual, reciprocal (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012) and is informed by the different types of organisational justice (distributive, procedural, interactional and informational), especially where there are relational expectations (Purcell, 2012). This can adversely impact engagement due to the subsequent reduced psychological safety and availability, and PC breach discussed next.

Trust and the Psychological Contract (PC)

The teams highlighted a number of PC breaches, which appeared to stem from a lack of trust. For example, the late communication discussed earlier may make employees feel like there is no loyalty towards them thus breaching the PC. This issue becomes increasingly apparent when managers explain that they genuinely did not know beforehand, but employees react in a way that conveys their disbelief, highlighting the perceptual nature of the PC. The surprise of the Middle Manager in Professional Team 2 (p. 170) that reported this issue reflects some of the dimensions of Heidegger's existential hermeneutic phenomenology (Rolfe *et al.,* 2017). First, as in Rolfe *et al.,'s* (2017) study, it suggests the Middle Managers assumptions of the effect of their actions are disrupted by the unanticipated employee reactions. Secondly, this threatens the manager's usual managerial ways. Third, the manager appears to feel helpless and unable to think of a better course of action and is thus in a state of existential uncertainty. Consequently, this anxiety prevents the individual reflecting on the lived experience to interpret and understand the experience and move forward with corrective action (Heidegger, [1926] 2010).

Loss of trust was also suggested by the employee in Non-Professional Team 3 that cancelled their holidays to help open one of the Centres, and then lost the 10 days holiday despite appealing (Table 16). Given holidays are one of the major benefits in LA rewards, the anger expressed by this employee, despite it happening a few years ago, suggested it was perceived to be a violation of the PC (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Such employee sacrifices may lead to employees feeling a greater sense of organisational obligation (McFarlane and Shore, 1995), which in this case, does not appear to have been met. Consequently, this employee may have attempted to address this imbalance (Blau, 1964; Van Der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016) with disengagement, ranging from withholding suggestions to more destructive behaviours such as absence or sabotage.

Conversely, the Senior Manager in Professional Team 2 stated that the LA was a very good employer citing the training it used to provide (Table 16). Such a statement shows the enduring nature of trust within the PC. Accordingly, it may take some time for those with long service to perceive a PC breach, despite the current changes to the employment deal, particularly because affective trust (which can continue after cognitive trust has been lost) (Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007) may prevent PC violation (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Morrison and Robinson, 1997) to maintain engagement. Alternatively, it may suggest that this Senior Manager has experienced less PC breaches than the employee that lost 10 days holidays, thus demonstrating the intensifying effect of frequent breaches and the impact of time highlighted by Griep and Vantilborgh (2018). Furthermore, there was evidence in Non-Professional Team 4 that organisational trust was reduced when co-worker i-deals were refused and it was felt that the co-worker deserved the i-deal given their previous hard work and loyalty (Table 17). This may support Bohle *et al.,* (2017) who consider that obligations may arise not only from promise formations between employees and their line managers, but also from events happening around the employee. As such, perhaps PC research needs to include more aspects of working life to understand the full effect of felt obligations between the employment parties?

Non-professional Team 4 also felt that Management were not meeting their obligations of loyalty and trust towards them by not supporting them when the volunteers that were preparing to take over their jobs were observing them (Table 17). Consequently, as with Yang and Kassekert (2009) and Griep and Vantilborgh (2018), these examples show that whilst affective trust can be enduring, frequent breaches or unresolved breaches are likely to lower trust over time. Employees may feel that this justifies disengagement to address the perceived imbalance (Blau, 1964; Van Der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016).

6.5   Summary

The teams all seem to demonstrate that the macro austerity factors have impacted the employment relationship which was also found in Francis *et al.'s* (2013) engagement LA study. Austerity has also affected the reciprocations exchanged between line managers and employees. Although austerity reduces the levers/reciprocations that can be offered to employees, this study suggests that this does not mean that the employment relationship needs to be one-way. This was demonstrated by the pursuit of low-cost reciprocations in the teams via i-deals, and the expectation to gain favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust. Consequently, the experience of these engagement practices from both the manager and employee points of view will now be discussed further, followed by a theoretical examination of the reciprocations to more fully answer both research questions.

6.6   Research Question 1 – How is Employee (Behavioural) Engagement Fostered and Experienced During Austerity?

The cross-team comparison has shown that a range of formal/informal methods are used to foster employee (behavioural) engagement within the austerity context. However, many of these have hardened HR to a cost reduction approach given the financial constraints. The comparison of managerial and employee views regarding the effectiveness of these methods, highlighted the difference between actual and perceived practices (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). That said, some employees seemed to recognise that managers have limited options given the reduced levers they have available. Nevertheless, findings appear to show that the manager's attempts to foster employee (behavioural) engagement, including those that are not part of intended strategy such as i-deals and favours, have an impact on employees' psychological conditions (Kahn, 1990) and may foster relational exchanges. Consequently, despite the declining employment deal, managers provided numerous employee (behavioural) engagement examples. These included the two teams that Senior Management perceived to be socially disengaged (Professional Team 2 and Non-Professional Team 4), which may show that they were engaged to their profession/job (Saks, 2006). Additionally, whilst there was less indication of organisational engagement, there appeared to be multiple examples of customer engagement (Gourlay *et al.,* 2012). Employees reported they were working harder, but did not appear or say that they felt exploited. Instead, they seemed to see it as an opportunity to learn from experience and boost their employability. Furthermore, disengagement in reciprocation for previous engagement (Klotz and Bolino, 2013) was not reported.

Interestingly, the restructure process was selected by senior managers for each critical incident. The emotional impact from the restructures (Table 13) indicates the link between organisational change and engagement demonstrating the relevance of context, thus highlighting and complicating the line manager's role in fostering employee (behavioural) engagement, perhaps because of the impact on the PC. It may also be because reactions to change may be cognitive, affective and behavioural (Piderit 2000; Oreg *et al.* 2011).

These are the same dimensions that comprise engagement, perhaps because the goals are the same, thus aiming to help employees engage with the change. These dimensions can be mediated by the employee, manager or organisation (Smollan, 2006). Subsequently, some of these issues may have been reduced or avoided if the affective impact to organisational change had been acknowledged and supported for example, by celebrating past achievements to give a sense of closure (Beattie and Crossan, 2015). Failure to address such issues may reduce the employee's psychological availability as suggested by their low morale and reported uncomfortable feelings, reduce their psychological safety as suggested by their lack of social engagement, and reduce their psychological meaningfulness and understanding of the change which may lead to behavioural disengagement (Kahn, 1990). This may have been shown when some employees reported that certain employees were doing less, and felt resentful about having to do more because of this, supporting Menguc *et al.'s* (2013) view that disengagement can spread throughout the team. This also shows that the power balance in engagement rests firmly with the employee who can choose how much (or not) of themselves they bring to work in terms of their cognitive, emotional and physical effort (Kahn, 1990; Rich *et al.,* 2010; Cole *et al.,* 2012; Francis *et al.,* 2013). That said, managers may influence this with their interactions with employees as shown in Non-Professional Team 4 where the Middle Manager explained that communication is more frequent with employees that are interested in the work (Table 8d), thus creating the conditions for psychological presence (Kahn, 1992). This highlights the reciprocal basis of engagement as noted by Arrowsmith and Parker (2013).

Moreover, there were numerous employee reports of not being listened to, which appeared to make employees feel that they were not valued or respected. This may extinguish psychological availability leading to disengagement (Kahn, 1990). Alternatively, the reduced employment deal may make employees feel that they are not fairly rewarded (Spector and Fox, 2010a). This may be why some employees within Non-Professional Team 4 stopped volunteering once overtime was ceased, potentially restoring the perceived imbalance (Blau, 1964; Van Der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016).

That said, it must be noted that not all disengagement was disruptive. Sometimes deliberate disengagement was used as a coping mechanism for example, the emotional hardening and cognitive distancing by Middle Manager B in Professional Team 2 during team redundancy discussions, which was also found in Ashman's (2013) envoy study. This may suggest that rather than considering engagement as a continuum (Wollard, 2011) shown in Figure 3, it may be better displayed on two axis ranging from engagement to disengagement thus recognising fluctuating levels of engagement and disengagement, and constructive to destructive to recognise that not all engagement is beneficial, and not all disengagement is negative (Figure 7). Active disengagement would be represented through more severe destructive disengagement. No engagement/disengagement, would be positioned at the centre point where the axis cross, thus providing the opposite to engagement and disengagement if the factors leading to them are different. This also suggests that if engagement occurs beyond the individual's tolerance, it is likely to extinguish psychological availability (Kahn, 1990) and lead to burnout as supported by the Yerkes-Dodson (1908) law which explains that continuously working to optimal performance can be harmful to health.

Figure 7 - Engagement to Disengagement
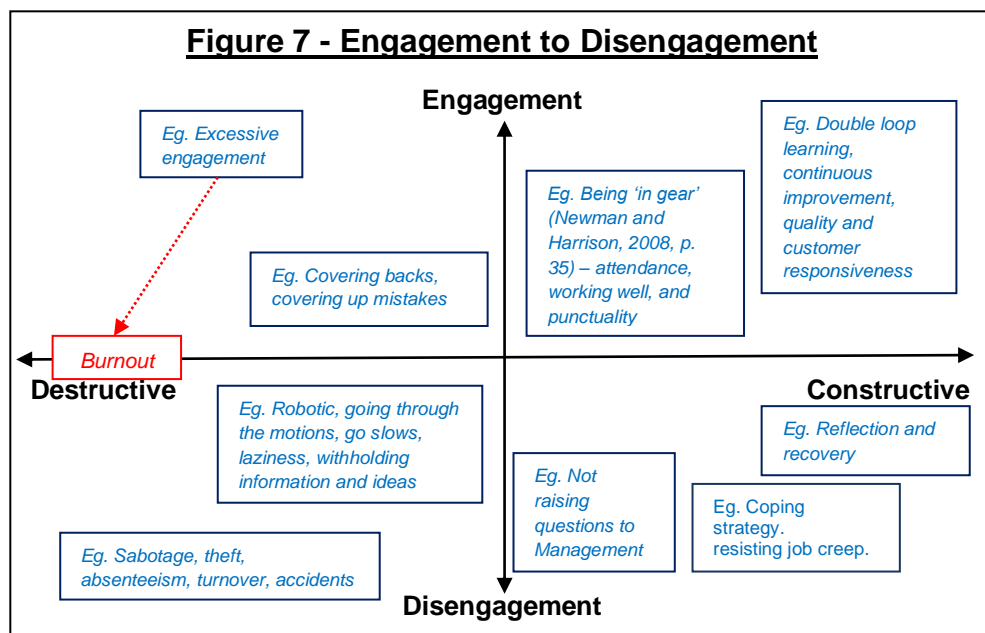
Furthermore, managers expressed difficulty in fostering employee (behavioural) engagement in austerity (Table 12). In particular, there were concerns about the lack of reciprocations that managers can offer staff, especially development.

More positively, the transparent authorisation process of developmental task i-deals may overcome some of the problems with workplace learning such as preventing the learning of bad habits/attitudes from others (Billett, 1995; Dale and Bell, 1999). They may also support employees in creating their own learning paths (Poell, 2017) and provide relevant on-the-job learning that formal training cannot achieve (Hicks *et al.,* 2007; Cunningham and Hillier, 2013).

Concern was also expressed regarding the one-way nature of appraisals (PPDs) where the reduced opportunities for open discussion between line managers and their employees have been legitimised, which was also found in Francis *et al.'s* (2013) similar LA engagement study. Consequently, managers reported that it was hard to find the emotional and physical energy (Kahn, 1990) to be engaging in the current climate thus adversely affecting their own psychological availability (Kahn, 1990). To cope with this, reframing and exonerating techniques (Sitkin and Bies, 1993) in particular were used extensively by the Middle Manager in Non-Professional Team 3. That said, these techniques did not always seem to be appreciated by employees, showing the difference between actual and perceived practices (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). Improving communication and employee voice is more likely to foster positive emotions, including trust, thus fuelling employees' psychological availability (Kahn, 1990) and fostering engagement (Ouweneel *et al.,* 2012). This shows how MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) enablers/drivers interact with each other, as improvements to the 'strategic narrative' and 'employee voice' are likely to positively impact 'engaging managers' and 'integrity' too, providing they are based on reciprocal trust (Rees *et al.,* 2013).

These findings provide some support for Guest's (2017) mutual gains model which highlights the ethical case for attending to employee well-being and adopting a more pluralist perspective. In particular, the i-deals and employee voice themes link to the provisional HR practices suggested in Guest's (2017) model (such as engaging work, a positive social and physical environment, voice and organisational support), thus providing a means for mutuality, and fostering a positive (PC) by meeting the employer's support obligation.

That said, it appears that denied i-deals need to be handled sensitively to prevent PC breach and loss of organisational trust. Additionally, there are similarities in this study to Claxton's (2015) findings regarding how business students know they are valued (summarised below in Table 24):

Table 24 - Comparison of Claxton (2015) and Davis (2019) Study

Claxton (2015) – Business Students	Davis (2019) – LA Employees and Managers
Legitimising and supporting individualised need	I-deals Favours ('give and take')
Supportive, responsive and meaningful communication	Communication (meaningful and timely)
Participation and involvement and affirming my voice is counted	Employee Voice
Respectful, upholding relationships	Trust

Claxton's (2015) findings are guiding principles, whereas the findings in this study provide perceptions on what is implemented and/or expected within these teams, so have generated more context-specific detail. Nevertheless, the support for Claxton's (2015) findings suggests that it provides further evidence that feeling valued is a key driver for engagement.

In summary, this study demonstrates that austerity has reduced the levers available to managers to foster employee (behavioural) engagement, and yet employee (behavioural) engagement still appears to be present. Nevertheless, there are some examples of disengagement, and this may be due to the reduced employment deal and job insecurity, and/or it may be attributed to the way people management practices are implemented. It may also be due a range of other factors such as individual, task and customers not explored in this study. Nevertheless, the discussion does appear to show that some employees have pursued alternative resources such as i-deals, and these can provide a number of benefits, in particular in relation to development. Additionally, many employees reported that they expected favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust. As the levers available to managers have been reduced, a more theoretical examination of these reciprocations will be considered to understand how they may have shaped the new PC to foster ongoing exchange.

6.7 Research Question 2 - How has Austerity Shaped the Psychological Contract (PC) in Terms of the Reciprocal Expectations/Promises Between Employees (Non-Management – Professional and Non-Professional) and their Line Managers given the Changes to Jobs, Pay, Benefits, Terms and Conditions (Social and Economic Exchange)?

Since austerity, the employment deal has reduced for employees. Pay freezes, changes to pensions, and declining terms and conditions have been implemented. Such a dilution of the employment deal, job insecurity and reduced staffing levels has brought about a culture where job pressure is the norm (Francis *et al.,* 2013).

Despite this, most employees in this study did not appear to feel that their psychological contract (PC) had been broken. Instead they seemed to consider that the employment deal was reasonable given the pressures of austerity, suggesting that the new PC is well accepted. For example, throughout the interviews with employees and managers, there was little reference to pay freezes. The one line manager that did raise it discussed it from the perspective of having less levers available to foster employee (behavioural) engagement from employees. In particular, reference was made to the disappointment in the one-way nature of the employment relationship, favoured to the organisation, making it difficult to carry out their people management responsibilities effectively. Also, there were no complaints about the adverse changes to pensions which is a key benefit in LAs. No issues were raised about reductions to terms and conditions within the Professional Teams. However, there was evidence in all teams of both employees and line managers seeking alternative reciprocations, or amending obligations between them, possibly making an effort to shape the new PC. These will be examined below.

The most significant change to the PC in all teams in terms of the organisation's obligations to employees, appeared to be the loss of a job for life. This was indicated repeatedly by Management who purposefully communicated this to employees, and also suggested by employees by their concern about the restructure process and outcome.

Additionally, the responsibility to request appraisals/one-to-ones and learning and development, now seems to rest with the employee. This appears to have been most successful in Professional Team 1 where they have implemented a number of low-cost learning interventions, including employability/career development (task) i-deals. Despite this, Professional Team 1 also expressed concerns about the reliance on, and limitations with e-learning, especially given the lack of face to face social learning this entails. Even employees that work on computers find it is not feasible due to their workload, once again demonstrating that time is a prerequisite for resource exchange (Foa and Foa, 1976; 2012). Professional Team 2 appeared reluctant to take responsibility for their development expressed by their apprehension to learn the new work by any other method than shadowing. Non-Professional Teams 3 and 4 also appear to have accepted that they are now responsible for their own development as part of the changing PC, explaining that development is targeted to current rather than aspirational roles. This appears to align to Tomprou *et al.'s* (2015) impairment phase where the new reduced PC is accepted. There did not appear to be any indication of Krause and Moore's (2018) reduction phase where the reduced PC is accepted and compensated with activities outside work. That said, this may be because findings are limited to the small sample.

One disadvantage of such acceptance though is that many employees are not seeking internal career progression given there is no longer a job for life (CIPD/PPMA 2012). This was a particular issue in Non-Professional Team 4 where employees did not apply for higher graded temporary positions, or an opportunity to study for a funded professional degree (Table 12). This shows how austerity may devalue the reciprocations offered making them ineffective. It also highlights some unintended consequences where management have done so well in communicating the loss of the organisation's obligation to provide a 'job for life', it now appears to be at the expense of talent management and succession planning. Given management's active and purposeful actions, it is surprising that they are disappointed that these sampled employees are no longer seeking internal progression.

To explore Tomprou *et al.'s* (2015) thriving stage, where the PC is amended (but in this case, not necessarily improved) and Krause and Moore's (2018) reconstruction stage, where new needs are identified and met to revise the PC, the resources pursued by employees within this context, were examined using Foa (1971) and Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory. The aim was to understand the types of resources exchanged (Gorgievski *et al.,* 2011) and the reasons why to see how austerity had affected these reciprocations and shaped the new PC to foster engagement (Biswas *et al.,* 2013) to enable employees to '*bounce back*' (Solinger *et al.,* 2016, p. 494) from perceived PC breach/violation. This resource theory was especially useful as it aligns well with Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions (Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018), as well as being theory based, empirically tested and includes a wide and relevant range of resources. Findings appear to show that as the employment deal reduces (such as the pay freeze, and reduction in benefits, terms and conditions), these concrete, universal resources appear to be substituted with more particularistic resources (such as i-deals). For example, although employability/career development (task) i-deals are considered soft, an external training course is more concrete and universal than the substituted employability/career development (task) i-deals, such as learning from project work or varied tasks, which will be tailored and vary depending on the parties involved (Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018). Also, benefits, terms and conditions, which again are concrete and universal given they are collectively agreed, are being partially substituted by particularistic resources such as flexibility i-deals where the parties involved will agree the extent of flexibility.

This is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, it seems that as the employment deal reduces, rather than employees lowering their contribution to balance their exchange relationship (Blau, 1964; Van Der Voet and Vermeeren, 2016), some employees appear to have reassessed the employment deal and actively sought alternative low-cost benefits in the form of i-deals to reshape their PC. This may indicate acceptance of the new PC by employees, in particular taking responsibility for their own development (Hiltrop, 1995) via pursuing employability/career development (task) i-deals.

Secondly, it has already been highlighted that particularistic resources are informal ways of rewarding employees by adding particularistic non-monetary rewards to the employment deal (Rousseau *et al.,* 2006). However, this study has provided further empirical evidence to show that this may replace elements of a declining reward package (Rousseau *et al.,* 2016), including monetary or equivalent elements. Whilst Foa and Foa (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) argue that when a resource is not available for exchange, it is more likely to be substituted by a less particularistic resource partly because it's easier to ask for, and that neighbouring resources are more easily substituted than more distal ones, the opposite has happened in this study. Here, employees are substituting universal and concrete resources (as demonstrated by pay freezes, reductions to benefits, terms and conditions) for a range of more particularistic resources in the form of explicit i-deals. The sampled teams showed that employees also expect particularistic, and in some cases symbolic resources such as favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust, thus forming implicit obligations. Responding to these employee needs and enabling social engagement via employee voice and fostering trusting relationships, may help employees feel valued (Claxton, 2013) to generate further employee (behavioural) engagement through social exchange.

The substitution of universal resources for particularistic resources may be because the context means that money (or equivalent) is not available, so this leads to employees seeking out alternative resources to exchange for their employee (behavioural) engagement and to minimise the adverse effects of thwarting (Foa and Foa, 1976; Wilson *et al.,* 2010). However, it may also be that if a less particularistic resource is available to a satisfactory level [as shown by the employees being paid for their work as the institutional setting dictates (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 2012)], the shortfall [for example, the equivalent of a pay rise, original benefits, terms and conditions] may be substituted by more particularistic resources.

That said, for more particularistic resources to be sufficient to bridge the shortfall, they need to be of good quality. Agreed i-deals are likely to meet this requirement given the emphasis on mutual benefits.

Moreover, the sense of control that obtaining an i-deal may provide (Hornung *et al.,* 2010; Guerrero *et al.,* 2014), may also be a positive way of utilising the 'bargaining' stage of Kübler-Ross's (1969) model, leading to acceptance of organisational change and employee (behavioural) engagement to '*bounce back*' (Solinger *et al.,* 2016, p. 494) from perceived PC breach/violation. Similarly, favours are likely to meet this requirement given they are aimed at benefiting the recipient. However, many employees were critical of communication in that it was not timely, meaningful or sufficiently stimulating, thus failing to improve psychological meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990). Consequently, low quality communication did not appear to bridge the shortfall from the dilution of the employment deal, and this will be explored next.

Foa and Foa (1976; 2012) consider that communication is low on particularism as they consider that the giver of information would not alter its value unless the information is competitive and sharing would reduce its value. However, the teams demonstrated that the giver of information can add/reduce perceived quality to the communication, such as the press reports which seemed to be more 'believable' than management communication (Table 8b). This may also show how proximal resources overlap with each other (Foa, 1971; Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 1980; 2012), in this case information with status (Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018) thus potentially explaining some of the differences between actual and perceived practices. This is likely to be affected by the perceived level of trust between the exchange parties. Trust can also decline when actual events are different to what was initially explained as shown in Non-Professional Team 3 (Tables 17 and 18). Additionally, Professional Team 1 employees felt that much of the workforce does not understand the organisation's strategy (Table 8a), and such misunderstanding may trigger negative emotions and may lead to disengaged behaviour (Perugini *et al.,* 2003). Consequently, communication success depends on the manager's skill and style (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a).

Moreover, it is plausible that communication can increase its value to the giver, if such action fosters learning, as with therapy (Foa and Foa, 1976; 2012).

It is postulated that this may also occur with social capital (Truss *et al.,* 2012) where employee voice could lead to new knowledge to support the enhancement of change plans (Piderit, 2000; Kiefer, 2002). However, given social engagement appears to be less than what management expect in Teams 2 and 4, value does not appear to be sufficiently increased in this way. This may be due to insufficient psychological safety (Kahn, 1990) given the reluctance to discuss issues with line managers and challenge ideas. Furthermore, the symbolic nature of this resource, where meaning is gained from the words, tone and style, makes it quite impactful on employees. This may be positive such as when senior management explained about the organisational restructure in a large meeting with Non-Professional Team 3, where many employees expressed appreciation for this support (Table 9). However, it can also provide a negative impact if the choice of language, tone or body language is not conducive to the message intended, such as when a senior manager allegedly told these employees that they were an 'adviser' not a 'person' (Table 9). Consequently, whilst face to face communication can be favoured due to its richness and personal appeal, it can be damaging if done poorly, providing further support for consideration of the most effective choice of method (Ruck and Welch, 2012) and timing, in addition to the content (Welch, 2012).

Overall, the type of reciprocations pursued and expected suggests that employees tried to foster a relational PC, rather than a transactional PC (Guest, 2007). Such relational exchanges are more likely to foster Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions. This suggests that employees were keen to foster more productive and sustainable employment relations by increasing feelings of obligation and trust (Blau, 1964) thus shaping their PC and fostering emotional engagement (Gourlay *et al.,* 2012). These findings are shown diagrammatically in the revised conceptual framework shown in Figure 8 which combines and extends figures previously discussed, mainly the employee engagement chain conceptual framework (Figure 2), Purcell and Hutchinson's (2007a) people management-performance causal chain (Figure 4), and Foa (1971) and Foa and Foa (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) Resource theory (Figure 5).

Figure 8 - Revised Conceptual Framework – Process of Fostering Employee Engagement

External Environment - Austerity

Internal Factors Including Organisational and HR Strategy

Affective impact of change

Traits

Motivation

Intended Practices → Actual Practice → Perceptions of Practice → Employee Attitudes → Psychological Presence (or state engagement) → Behavioural Engagement → Well-being

Behavioural Engagement → Performance – Unit Level Outcomes

Double Loop Learning

Reciprocity (PC):-
- I-deals
- Favours ('Give and Take')
- Communication (meaningful and timely) and Employee Voice
- Trust

Organisational Culture and Operational Strategies

From [Foa, U.G. (1971) 'Interpersonal and Economic Resources', *Science*, Vol. 171 (3969), pp. 345-351]. Reprinted with permission from AAAS.
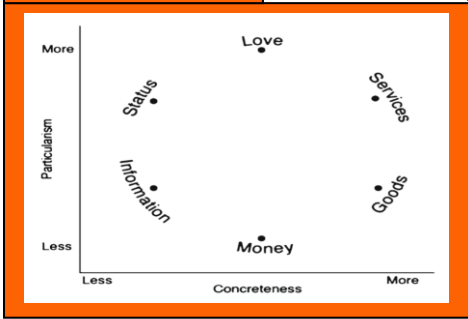
Source: Adapted from Kübler-Ross (1969); Foa (1971); Foa and Foa, (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012); Kahn (1990; 1992); Guest and Conway (2002); Rousseau (1989; 2005); Purcell and Hutchinson (2007a); Macey and Schneider (2008); Saks (2008); Wildermuth, (2010).

This does not mean to say that such a strategy of substituting some universal resources for good quality particularistic resources could be universally applied. Employees in the teams appeared to understand the national austerity constraints which may have made them more accepting of the situation. This understanding may have led them to search for alternative reciprocations as highlighted by Cropanzano *et al.,* (2017), based on their view of the organisation's affordability. This was indicated in Non-Professional Team 3 who accepted the loss of flexi-time, but expected some 'give and take' from managers in the form of favours. It was also suggested with the seeking of low-cost i-deals in Professional Team 1 and Non-Professional Teams 3 and 4. Again this supports the need to examine context in future i-deals (Rousseau *et al.,* 2009) and engagement research (Purcell, 2014b), given the relevance of the institutional setting (Foa and Foa, 1974; 1976; 2012) and the impact of context on resource exchange (Conway and Briner, 2009).

To conclude, by managers considering authorising some of these resources [i-deals, favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust], it may indicate a supportive climate (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a) and foster Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions. This may meet the employer's support obligation to strengthen the PC, cope with organisational change (Hornung *et al.,* 2010), make the employee feel valued (Claxton, 2013) and foster further engagement through these relational exchanges (Biswas *et al.,* 2013) (Figure 8). However, failure to consider these expected resources, may adversely impact the PC and lead to disengagement. This appeared to be demonstrated in the teams where employees felt that they were not getting anything in return. Consequently, it is advised that care is taken when denying requests to prevent/reduce PC breach/violation and loss of organisational trust. That said, it must also be noted that employee (behavioural) engagement examples were evident in Professional Team 2 which did not report any agreed i-deals, provided examples of low trust, and expressed dissatisfaction with communication and employee voice. This may explain their social disengagement, or there may be rival explanations for other dimensions of employee (behavioural) engagement, discussed next after a short summary.

6.8   Summary

While the normalisation of the reduced employment deal has led to (resigned) acceptance, some employees appear to be shaping their PC by seeking alternative reciprocations thus re-evaluating the employment deal based on their view of the organisation's affordability in the context of austerity. Although Foa and Foa (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) posit that resources are not normally substituted for more particularistic resources, this empirical study suggests that this happens when the universal resources are provided to a particular threshold. Consequently, whilst pay (universal) may not be substituted entirely by i-deals, favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust, small elements of pay such as inflationary pay rises, and reductions to benefits, terms and conditions (universal) may be replaced by more particularistic resources to compensate for reductions in the employment deal, thus extending Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory.

Of further interest is that some of the substituted reciprocations that employees expected were not only particularistic, but in some cases were also symbolic (such as communication and employee voice, and trust). In addition, these particularistic resources seem to increase employees' resilience possibly due to their ability to meet Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions, and strengthen the PC to foster employee (behavioural) engagement through relational exchange (Biswas *et al.,* 2013). This may be because i-deals in particular provide a positive way of utilising the 'bargaining' stage of Kübler-Ross's (1969) model to gain acceptance of organisational change from the control gained from the negotiation (Hornung *et al.,* 2010; Guerrero *et al.,* 2014). Potentially, it may demonstrate that employee (behavioural) engagement, which may be constructive or destructive, drives i-deal requests as engaged employees are more likely to identify i-deals with mutual benefits due to their knowledge of the business. Furthermore, the individual attribution of why the i-deal has been agreed may influence the exchange relationship formed more than the content of the i-deal, and subsequent attitude, thus providing empirical support for Rousseau *et al.'s,* (2016) proposition.

Finally, it is in both the organisation's and employees' interests if i-deals are negotiated to a successful conclusion, or the reasons for denial are adequately explained in order to mitigate the risk of PC breach/violation, prevent loss of co-worker's organisational trust, provide further learning, and respect employee voice.

In conclusion, the seeking of alternative reciprocations by employees to shape their PC, and the need for line managers to consider these requests and respond appropriately, highlights the importance of the line manager's role in fostering employee engagement (Alfes *et al.,* 2010; Lewis *et al.,* 2012; Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2013; Holland *et al,* 2017), thus extending the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) to incorporate engagement and the external context. This suggests that even in austerity, reciprocity matters.

6.9   Rival Explanations:

Whilst the reciprocations are likely to help with fostering employee (behavioural) engagement given their potential to enhance psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability (Kahn, 1990), and feelings of obligation, gratitude and trust (Blau, 1964), there may be other reasons for employee (behavioural) engagement, discussed below.

If employees believe in the purpose of the service they are providing, then exchanges may not feature in their motivation or subsequent behaviour, as engagement may be driven by individual values (Perugini *et al.,* 2003). For example, employees with a benevolent orientation (Huseman *et al.,* 1987; Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman, 2004) may be content with giving more to the organisation than what they receive. This also supports Georgellis *et al.,* (2010) who found that public sector employees are more attracted to the intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards, and that the voluntary nature and positive action of being engaged may meet employees' self-esteem needs (Spector and Fox, 2002). Consequently, employee (behavioural) engagement may be attributed to the positive feelings that engagement provides (Perugini *et al.,* 2003).

Similarly, employees and managers may be engaged due to their concern for the organisation, referred to as the communal perspective (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2003). It could also be pride in their work, commitment to customers (Gourlay *et al.,* 2012; Bal *et al.,* 2013; Francis *et al.,* 2013) and engagement to the job and/or organisation (Saks, 2006). Employees' commitment to public service (Perry, 1996; Brewer *et al.,* 2000; Rayner, *et al.,* 2011) may also moderate employee behaviours following PC breach (Conway *et al.,* 2014). This may be providing resilience to employees, either in the form of engagement, or possibly 'resigned acceptance' or '*TINA (there is no alternative)*' (Francis *et al.,* 2013, p. 2716) whilst continuing to do their jobs to the best of their ability. Many of these reasons were cited in Non-Professional Team 3, in particular their commitment to customers and a sense of achievement.

It was also apparent with the first line manager in Non-Professional Team 3 that perceived organisational injustice with the redundancy selection procedure and outcome (Table 18). Although the manager expressed anger about the restructure process and outcome, their individual drive for engagement, in particular to their team (Saks, 2006) and customers (Gourlay et al., 2012) seemed to continue, although the long-term impact is not yet known.

Alternatively, continuing employee (behavioural) engagement may be due to the previous accumulative effects of reciprocity - where previous discreet events accumulate and employees then behave based on their view of their 'global reciprocity' (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002). This appeared to be demonstrated in Professional Team 2 where the Senior Manager spoke very favourably about the organisation's previous provision of professional training and qualifications (Table 16). However, as a senior manager, it may be that this was reported acting in their role as an ambassador for the LA. Nevertheless, for those employees with long service, it may take some time before they perceive inequality (Molm et al., 2006; 2012), especially given affective trust can continue after cognitive trust is lost (Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007). Additionally, it may be that employees who have reacted adversely to the PC violation may have already left the organisation, perhaps facilitated by redundancy. Consequently, the employee participants in this study may be those that show less intense reactions to employer actions (Bal et al., 2013).

On the other hand, it may be that employees continue to offer good contributions despite the declining deal due to habit (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2004). That said, unrewarded habits may be extinguished over time (Pavlov, 1927) making over-reliance on this a risky tactic. Although, continued engagement may prevent feelings of guilt from failing to reciprocate perceived obligations adequately (Perugini et al., 2003).

The acceptance of the reduced deal may also be attributed to supervisory power demonstrating the unequal distribution of power in the employment relationship (Vigoda-Gadot, 2006; Spector and Fox, 2010b).

That said, all the sampled teams demonstrated some engagement to the immediate line manager, and such good exchange relationships can also provide a buffering effect (Bal *et al.,* 2010). Whilst the employee-management relationship was less positive with higher levels of management, this is consistent with other studies (such as Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012; van Wanrooy *et al.,* 2013; Worrall and Cooper, 2013). Moreover, there can be delays between effort and reward, and multi organisational agents may be involved in determining if the employee has fulfilled their obligations, thus complicating the relationship. The employee's sensitivity to this may be magnified or minimised depending on the factors involved. For example, a pay freeze may have a minimal impact on pay in times of low inflation [1.6% CPI in July 2014 at the time of data collection (ONS, 2017)], but if the employee perceives this to be unfair, the impact may be higher. This was indicated in Non-Professional Team 4, where an employee felt that their colleagues should have had their i-deals approved, thus intensifying the effect of a colleague's PC breach (Bal *et al.,* 2010) and reducing their own organisational trust (Table 17).

Another reason that the reduced employment deal did not appear to adversely impact employees may be because the austerity conditions are due to external difficulties that the organisation cannot control, which has a less negative effect on PC breach (Rousseau, 1995). Success in this may be attributed to social discourse (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006) where the austerity context was widely discussed in the media and may result in employee acceptance of a reduced employment deal due to the understanding this generates. The perceived parity (Adams, 1965) across the public sector may also contribute to this acceptance of the reduced employment deal. This seemed to apply to Professional Team 2 and some participants in Non-Professional Team 4 as they were less vocal about the current employment deal, as they appeared grateful for being able to continue with the job they enjoy which is only available in a LA or social enterprise. That said, the 'resigned acceptance' of the diluted employment deal may be due to the continual threat of redundancy (Legge, 2005; Macey and Schneider, 2008), the age profile of the participants and their length of service, potentially making it hard to find alternative employment (Crush, 2013).

Additionally, other external threats including legislation (such as the introduction of universal credit which would reduce the number of other benefits available and therefore the number of enquiries the team receives from the public), and technological advancement (such as self-service where customers access the service online rather than via the current method of face to face thus reducing the number of staff required) may affect resigned acceptance. This imbalance of power is likely to make employees more dependent on the organisation (Molm *et al.,* 1999). This was suggested by the resigned acceptance reported in Non-Professional Teams 3 and 4. That said, as employees still feel supported by their line manager, suggesting that the employer obligation of support was met, this may maintain the affective trust (Robinson, 1996; Atkinson, 2007) and may explain the acceptance of a lesser deal.

Furthermore, the opportunity to request i-deals (Marescaux *et al.,* 2019) may be sufficient to foster some elements of engagement, even if the i-deals are not authorised, providing interactional and procedural justice is appropriately addressed. Alternatively, it may reflect that the resource substitutions discussed in this study are just some of the many ways of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement.

Despite these rival explanations, new reciprocations in the form of i-deals, do appear to have been negotiated by some participants within the sampled teams, along with the reported expectation for relational reciprocations such as favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust. This is likely to reshape the PC and foster engagement (Biswas *et al.,* 2013) given relational exchanges are more likely to provide psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability (Kahn, 1990). The practical and scholarship implications will now be considered.

6.10   Implications for Practice

The fostering of engagement is an ongoing process (Shuck *et al.,* 2012) so it is recommended that organisations support managers and employees with this matter. Fairlie (2011) has already suggested that HRD practitioners may do this by promoting development as a way of enhancing Kahn's (1990) psychological meaningfulness. These promotional efforts may include encouraging the use of employability/career development (task) i-deals across the organisation as a way of providing low-cost workplace learning, rather than relying on employees taking the initiative to identify and prioritise learning (Lohman, 2006; Choi and Jacobs, 2011; Crouse *et al.,* 2011). Emphasising the line manager's role in facilitating learning may also help with this task (Jeon and Kim, 2012). Although, in making engagement a management rather than a HR responsibility, managers may need convincing of this, along with the value in soft skills training (Matthews, 2018) discussed next.

The discretionary nature of authorising new reciprocations means that the extent they will be used by different managers will vary, potentially making them a source of employee frustration (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007b). Line managers will therefore need to be skilled in identifying appropriate reciprocations within their limited resources, and in identifying individual orientations to exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005), be able to manage issues of organisational justice (Rousseau, 1995), and make employees feel valued (Claxton, 2013). This entails being sufficiently skilled in negotiating i-deals within their limited resources, positively explaining the reasons for denied i-deals to employees to prevent frustration and PC breach/violation, and fostering a climate of psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). A blended approach may be more suitable than e-learning alone to develop these softer skills. This action may mitigate the risk of PC breach/violation, maintain organisational trust, respect employee voice and provide further learning for the employees with denied i-deals which may then lead to them proposing mutually beneficial i-deals in future. An 'i-deal request form' may be a lower cost way of helping employees articulate their request if they lack the confidence/skills to negotiate, to enhance their psychological safety (Kahn, 1990).

Sustainability of engagement is also an issue to prevent harm to well-being (George, 2010). As mentioned earlier, the threat of redundancy may mean that employees feel that they have no choice but to be (or appear to be) engaged (Legge, 2005), which is not sustainable as fear will not change individual values. Similarly, employees suffering from burnout will not be creative, a particular concern given the context of transformational change presents a need to learn new skills, take on new types of work, and improve quality/productivity under time pressures (Schaufeli *et al.,* 2009). Consequently, it is advisable that managers are trained to prevent, identify and reduce workplace stress.

Alternatively, as employees seem to be accepting of the declining deal, it could be argued that there is no need for line managers to foster engagement unless destructive behaviours are exhibited. However, this would be a risky strategy because as well as the difficulty in assessing the right time to intervene, engagement is not a static state (Sy *et al.,* 2005; Nielsen and Gonzalez, 2010). It takes a long time to foster engagement and seconds to lose it, so regaining it may be complex. Consequently, managers appear to have to master a delicate balancing act to create the conditions for employees to give their energies (Kahn, 1992) whilst also coping with resource constraints and increased workloads. As a result, the LA may need to be more 'savvy' in how they provide that support and ensure they meet the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability (Kahn, 1990) and foster a relational exchange relationship. I-deals appear to achieve this and provide an active form of coping to deal with organisational change (Hornung *et al.,* 2010). Communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice may also help the LA proactively manage factors that trigger employees' sensemaking regarding organisational change and their PC (Chaudry *et al.,* 2009). It may also develop trust (Holland *et al.,* 2017) to contribute towards psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). Additionally, the provision of favours ('give and take') may increase psychological availability and safety (Kahn, 1990). In summary, whilst many reciprocations within LAs are no longer affordable, other low-cost reciprocations, may still be exchanged. However, this requires conscious thought and acts from line managers (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a).

6.11 Implications for Scholarship

In relation to scholarship, this research has provided further support that social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is a useful lens to understand how employee (behavioural) engagement may be fostered by line managers via demonstrating the importance of reciprocity. For example, it shows how i-deals provide alternative low-cost interventions to enhance psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability (Kahn, 1990) and foster social exchange (Blau, 1964) when higher-cost levers for fostering employee (behavioural) engagement, such as external training, are constrained.

Additionally, given the lack of academic agreement in relation to the employee engagement concept, and the number of engagement terms in use, this study has demonstrated the value of the term employee (behavioural) engagement, and shown it is useful for studies where it is important to incorporate context and multiple voices. Such an approach may make the link between HR practice and engagement more explicit to aid assessment of outcomes to gain interest from multiple stakeholders (HR scholars, practitioners, and practising managers) thus facilitating the transfer of knowledge between academic and practitioner discourses (Cole *et al.,* 2012; Lee *et al.,* 2016).

Furthermore, the use of the critical incident technique within a Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach provided further support that this technique facilitates interpretivist investigations on a specific issue, thus providing the required focus and highlighting linkages such as the impact of context. It also enables data to be collected entirely from the participant's point of view (Chell, 2004) thus providing insight on the lived experience.

Despite these benefits, as with all research, the study does have limitations which need to be acknowledged. These will be considered next, and suggestions for future research will be made.

6.12 Limitations and Further Research

The contribution of this thesis is to demonstrate empirically, through the lens of social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), how austerity has impacted the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement and shaped the new PC given the demise of the public sector's notion of a 'job for life', along with the diluted employment deal (CIPD/PPMA, 2012). The limitations will now be considered.

The use of phenomenology as a research approach given the absence of an agreed overall process/procedure (Bann, 2009), coupled with the researcher's lack of prior research experience, may be viewed as a limiting factor. However, a phenomenological approach was suitable for the research questions which aimed to understand the line manager and employee experiences within the austerity context. Such process type questions required insight of socially constructed realities (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2012) that could not be gained from a quantitative study. The use of semi-structured interviews and critical incident technique also enabled focus to address this limitation.

Additionally, the researcher has prior LA experience which provided an understanding of context. Nevertheless, this also provided challenges with addressing the double hermeneutic (Brogden, 2012). To reduce this and to contribute to qualitative rigour (Anderson, 2017), the study was conducted in a LA unknown to the researcher, findings were supported with interview quotes, and respondent validation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) was gained by inviting participants to provide amendments to interview transcripts and/or provide supplementary information, accepted by fourteen participants.

The need for voluntary participation means that the study may overstate the gains that can be made by genuine reciprocity, as individuals with less engagement may not have wished to participate in the study (Ichniowski *et al.,* 1996). However, the teams sampled provided insight into teams that were perceived by management to be engaged and teams perceived to be socially disengaged. There may be some gender/age bias given two-thirds of the participant profile were either female or over 40 years of age. Consequently, the understanding gained is constrained by the samples (Rosen *et al.,* 2013).

Moreover, as the study's purpose was to understand experiences, the research philosophy and cross-sectional research design means that the findings only show associations rather than causality (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). This means that the findings are not generalisable to larger populations, although context has been provided for transferability to be assessed. Views on employee (behavioural) engagement were obtained from all levels of management and employees, which is superior to relying on employee self-report alone. To achieve this, the study examined employee (behavioural) engagement rather than psychological state engagement. The critical incident technique used to obtain the data may be criticised due to the problems of recall and bias (Flanagan, 1954; Kandola, 2012), although it is argued that the salient issues raised by the participant suggests good recall (Chell, 2004). Additionally, it is these partial/modified employee perceptions that inform engaged/ disengaged behaviour, thus limiting this disadvantage (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a). Furthermore, it helped to ensure that the data gathered was post managerial intervention (Wright and Gardner, 2003) thus avoiding the need to estimate the 'lag' effect where any number of factors may have affected (Khalji and Wang, 2006) employee (behavioural) engagement. That said, relevant and considered probing was necessary with some participants given that success is dependent upon the participants' ability to articulate critical incidents. Follow-up interviews with line managers to enhance credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), and repeated interviews with staff would have been advantageous to see if employee (behavioural) engagement was maintained, and is in line with the requirements of phenomenology (Reiter *et al.*, 2011). However, this was not pursued given the risk of inadvertently breaching employee confidentiality.

Further research could investigate quantitatively whether results are replicated across wider samples, and the longevity of substituted reciprocations effect on reciprocity by a longitudinal study with multiple time points (Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012), and to see whether engagement is maintained or changes to work intensification. This should be collected on at least 3 time points in order to see trajectories of change (Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2010), and would be useful to include co-workers' long-term reactions (Marescaux *et al.,* 2019).

Watkins and Marsick (2014) have already suggested that more research is needed on how people are informally learning at work. So far, less attention has been given to the role of frontline managers in facilitating learning (Cohen, 2013) and employability/career development (task) i-deals may provide a useful way to explore this further. This could include how learning effectiveness is (or could be) assessed, along with the impact on other outcomes such as employee satisfaction/commitment. It would also be interesting to investigate whether the formal i-deal authorisation process reduces the likelihood of learning bad habits/attitudes from others (Billett, 1995; Dale and Bell, 1999).

Additionally, further exploring the link between i-deals, engagement and performance may be useful (Fuller and Shikaloff, 2017; Reijseger *et al.,* 2017), and whether i-deals are more prominent during organisational change given the dependency on context. Implications for the line manager-employee relationship afterwards if other organisational agents approve or deny i-deals may be interesting to explore. Additional focus on denied i-deal outcomes would also be useful given the potential for PC breach/violation (Rousseau, 1995). A larger study to investigate whether i-deals are less biased by traditional sources of power in organisations such as gender/race (Rousseau, 2001) may be revealing as this may explore if i-deals are a reflection of workforce diversity, and highlight the resources expected/desired by men and women, and the impact on their psychological availability and meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990). In addition, research to see if denied i-deals reflect issues of agency/structure (Heugens and Lander, 2009), use of influencing tactics (Yukl and Falbe, 1990) during i-deal negotiations, along with the impact on intrinsic motivation (Georgellis *et al.,* 2010), workplace trust (Battaglio and Condrey, 2009) and justice are of interest, given the extent of managerial flexibility. Multiple case studies within specific contexts to further understand employee engagement in particular industries and organisations (Lemon and Palenchar, 2018) may also be revealing. Moreover, the long-term sustainability of the line manager's ability to foster employee (behavioural) engagement within the austerity conditions would be worthwhile, and could be examined from a PC, self-efficacy, stress/burnout or an emotional perspective.

Interest is now gaining on combining other theoretical frameworks such as social comparison theory (Vidyarthi *et al.,* 2016; Singh and Vidyarthi, 2018) with SET to gain a more complete picture of i-deal effects by examining i-deals beyond individual level variables. Building on this, examining the exchanges between group members to demonstrate the role of reciprocity within horizontal PCs between group members (Akkermans *et al.,* 2019), and the impact on engagement (Kahn and Heaphy, 2014) would be worthwhile. This could include other aspects of job insecurity such as employees on atypical contracts (Purcell, 2014b), and incorporate wider aspects of organisational life to more fully understand the felt obligations between employees and their organisation (Bohle *et al.,* 2017). This may also involve exploring the team-level PCs to recognise the impact of social context (Laulié and Tekleab, 2016). This may be interesting given the austerity budget cuts may be distributed across organisational teams to different degrees, depending on the nature of the work such as statutory/non-statutory services, and/or services vulnerable to automation. This may be achieved via a hybrid approach direct consensus model where individual perceptions of the PC are aggregated to the team level creating a multi level and higher order construct, or a referent shift model which examines individual perceptions of shared promises to the team which are then aggregated to the higher order team level (Akkermans *et al.,* 2019).

Chapter 3 also indicated other areas for further study such as whether people may be engaged on one or two dimensions rather the simultaneous application of all three, and whether double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Argyris, 2002) is a form of employee (behavioural) engagement, or the outcome of engagement? Also of interest is whether some psychological conditions are more important than others and if the strength of one may offset the weakness of another (Kahn, 1990). Furthermore, more consideration of whether the opposite of engaged is disengaged or not engaged (Claxton, 2015; 2016), perhaps by replicating Herzberg's (1968) study and applying it to engagement to identify the factors leading to engagement/disengagement. Finally, the tightening of the i-deals definition to preclude favours and make i-deals more clearly identifiable would be worthwhile.

6.13   Summary

Consequently, whilst the research has limitations, these have been addressed to provide a credible contribution to knowledge. Further research has also been identified from the literature review and the empirical study to further understand employee (behavioural) engagement and the ways to foster it. The final chapter will now conclude the contributions to knowledge and methodology.

Conclusion

7. Conclusion

This study explored how austerity has impacted the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement and shaped the new psychological contract (PC) given the demise of the public sector's notion of a 'job for life', along with the diluted employment deal in terms of pay freezes and reductions in benefits, terms and conditions (CIPD/PPMA, 2012). This was achieved by a Heideggerian interpretative phenomenological study in four teams within one LA (Local Authority). Social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) was the lens used to understand the effects of managerial actions on engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a) within the austerity context. The contribution to knowledge is as follows:

1. By exploring the lived experience of both managers and employees, the study helps understand how employee (behavioural) engagement is fostered when the levers available to managers are constrained due to austerity. This extends the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) to incorporate employee engagement [psychological state/presence and employee (behavioural) engagement] which was not previously shown. It also illustrates employee (behavioural) engagement in the form of double loop learning. Moreover, the revised model now incorporates the external context which affects both the levers available to managers to foster engagement, as well as the employee perceptions of such interventions within that context.

2. In doing so, this study has also extended Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory by showing that whilst Foa and Foa (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) stated that universal resources (such as inflationary pay rise, reduction in benefits, terms and conditions) cannot be substituted by particularistic resources (such as i-deals), this study has found this to be the case. Here, it was shown that elements of universal resources may be substituted by good quality particularistic resources, providing the universal resources are provided to a certain level. It also demonstrates that some employees expect more particularistic and symbolic resources to make up the reduced employment deal shortfall such as favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust.

3. Additionally, the study provides further support that SET is a useful theoretical framework to understand engagement (Saks, 2006; Biswas *et al.,* 2013; Rees *et al.,* 2013), particularly in understanding managerial efforts to foster engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a; Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018) to shape and accept their changing PCs. This brings together the engagement, organisational change, PC and i-deals literatures, and extends the engagement, PC and i-deals literatures.

4. The study contributes specifically to the engagement literature in demonstrating how engagement and disengagement may be constructive or destructive. It also promotes the relevance of the term employee (behavioural) engagement, as an alternative to studying psychological state engagement, which Kahn (1992, p. 322) refers to as psychological presence.

5. Finally, the study contributes to methodology by providing further support for exploring the lived experience via the critical incident technique using a phenomenological approach (Chell, 2004). This provided focused insight from multiple voices, thus adding to the engagement literature largely dominated by quantitative methods (Truss *et al.,* 2013). In particular, this qualitative insight on the lived experience gathered data from the participants' own point of view on issues most salient to them (Chell, 2004) thus sharing their socially constructed reality (Wilson, 2014). This helped to understand the managerial actions in the fostering of employee (behavioural) engagement, and how the context of austerity affected this process. It also helped to ensure that the data gathered was post managerial intervention (Wright and Gardner, 2003) thus avoiding the need to estimate the 'lag' effect, where any number of factors may have affected (Khalji and Wang, 2006) engagement. By exploring the process via the People Management-Performance Causal Chain theoretical model (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a), it has provided a theory-based intervention study which has been notably lacking within the nascent research (Bakker and Leiter, 2010; Guest, 2014a). Using an established framework is consistent with a Heideggerian phenomenological approach (Lopez and Willis, 2004).

Consequently, the study suggests that employees appear to re-evaluate the employment deal in accordance with what they perceive the organisation can afford. Accordingly, the resources that employees pursued during austerity were low-cost reciprocations. By managers listening to these requests, and responding constructively, it appears to give employees some control which may help them '*bounce back*' (Solinger *et al,* 2016, p. 494) from perceived PC breach/violation thus reshaping their PC.

This may suggest that i-deals are a low-cost way of positively utilising the 'bargaining' stage of Kübler-Ross's (1969) model to gain control and reach acceptance. Low-cost interventions such as an 'i-deal request form' can help employees of all levels articulate the business reasons for their i-deal request, which may enhance psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). However, not all i-deals may be agreed, particularly within an austerity context, so it is recommended the reasons for denial are respectfully explained to the individual to prevent/reduce PC breach/violation, foster learning and promote employee voice. Such action may lead to a future i-deal which provides the business benefits required. Findings also indicate that the individual attribution of why the i-deal was agreed, may be more important than the i-deal content in forming an economic or social exchange relationship, and subsequent attitude, thus providing empirical support for Rousseau *et al.'s,* (2016) proposition. There also appears to be some commonality between resources expected by employees with a career or instrumental orientation to work (Goldthorpe *et al.,* 1968) which may demonstrate acceptance of the new PC due to the focus on employability. Employability/career development (task) i-deals also appeared to afford numerous benefits that alternative methods may not provide.

Summary

To conclude, by examining the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement through the lens of SET (Blau, 1964) via the critical incident technique adopting a Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach, this research demonstrates the role of reciprocity to foster employee (behavioural) engagement and accept the new PC. The study extends Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory by demonstrating how some employees attempt to shape their PC by seeking alternative particularistic resources (such as i-deals) to make up the shortfall from constrained universal resources (such as inflationary pay rise, adverse changes to benefits, terms and conditions). Additionally, other low-cost particularistic and in some cases symbolic resources are expected by employees in this context such as favours ('give and take'), communication (meaningful and timely) and employee voice, and trust.

Consequently, this study has provided rich, qualitative and contextual empirical evidence on subjects currently dominated by quantitative methods. In doing so, it has brought together the engagement, organisational change, PC and i-deals literatures, provided some insight into the process of fostering employee (behavioural) engagement in adverse financial circumstances, thus demonstrating that SET is a useful theoretical framework to understand managerial efforts to foster engagement (Shuck *et al.,* 2014a; Cooper-Thomas and Saks, 2018). This has extended the People Management-Performance Causal Chain (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007a) to incorporate employee engagement and the external context. It has also shown the merit in researching employee (behavioural) engagement, and how employee (behavioural) engagement and disengagement may be constructive and destructive. Moreover, it has empirically highlighted the reciprocations important to the sampled employees within the austerity context to extend Foa and Foa's (1974; 1976; 1980; 2012) resource theory. It is hoped that this may help move the debate of engagement to a more pluralist discourse (Bailey *et al.,* 2017) recognising that even in austerity, reciprocity matters.

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Chapter Eight

Reflection

8.　Reflection on my PhD Learning Journey

Completing the PhD has been one of the steepest learning curves I have experienced so far. The training year in the first year was particularly difficult as I was overwhelmed with the amount I had to learn including academic knowledge of the subject matter, research methodology and philosophy. Nevertheless, the learning gained has not only helped me produce a thesis and a publication, but it has also helped develop my critical thinking skills and ability to develop an evidenced argument which I am now able to apply to other aspects of life.

Many elements of the programme have gone well in terms of passing the first year and annual reviews, gaining two out of three possible symposium awards, meeting experienced academics at the UFHRD conference and gaining feedback on my study, coming second in the 3MT MMU institutional final and eventually getting my first article published. Moreover, it was such a privilege having the opportunity to discuss working life with participants which has led to the understanding and contribution to knowledge, and I am very grateful to them and their colleagues that covered their work whilst they were talking to me.

The most difficult part of the PhD has been the handling of other people. Many of my family and friends found the time I had spent studying difficult, and no doubt felt neglected. In particular, as they are not in this line of work, I think they found it hard to understand why I spent so much time editing drafts that I produced months ago! Another part I found hard was understanding the value of language and just how much the choice of words matters. For example, at the beginning of the study, I used the word 'leader' rather than 'line manager' and received so much criticism and at the time, I could not understand why. When pondering over this, another academic very kindly explained that it is about managing audience expectations – if you use the term 'leader' and then say the thesis is not about 'leadership', you lose their interest and your own credibility. That advice has been extremely useful.

If I had my time over again, I would do a number of tasks differently. First of all, I would have delayed my start date so that I could become more familiar with the academic literature on employee engagement prior to starting the course. That would have enabled me to discuss matters more meaningfully with my supervisory team at an earlier stage to develop my ideas. Second, I would request that a subject specialist join the supervisory team at least during one year, in order to have a like-minded individual to facilitate conversations and develop my ideas more accurately and at an earlier stage. Third, I would be to be more determined in conducting the data analysis and discussion chapters before writing the literature review given summaries of all reading had been made and organised. This would have developed my contribution to knowledge prior to the studentship funding ending and re-entering full time work. This is especially important given writing the earlier chapters whilst working full time would have been significantly easier in comparison to the latter chapters. I also think I should have fully analysed data from my first two teams before collecting any more from the third and fourth teams to determine if it was really necessary. However, I was so tempted by the opportunity to meet with teams that were considered socially disengaged, thus providing the opportunity to learn from something considered to be not working well, justified the extra time this would take. However, if I had not have done that, an earlier submission date would have been achieved. Finally, it would have been useful to learn a recognised standard transcription convention to prepare me for future team research possibilities.

Overall, the PhD journey has been full of highs and lows, but regardless of the Viva outcome, it provides a foundation for the next part of my learning journey, transfers to more aspects of life than I ever imagined, and it has given me a learning experience that is not readily gained elsewhere. I hope the thesis and publication(s) adds further support to academic and practitioner discourses to value reciprocity in fostering engagement to create fairer working relationships. I also hope it inspires my students and delegates to pursue their own chosen career(s), and not let prior or current setbacks dictate what they will become.

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Appendices

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Interview Consent Form

I understand that the information given provided during this interview will be treated confidentially, and I agree to it being used in current/future research and publications.

Anonymity will be maintained in all academic work/publications.

My participation in the interview is voluntary and the interview may be terminated at any point.

Recordings and transcriptions will only be listened to/read by the researcher, the supervisors and relevant academic staff involved in the research (eg. examiners).

All recordings and documentation will be stored securely on the researcher's premises and disposed of in line with university guidelines.

Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Tel. No.: _____

Email: _____

Number of Years Service with [this LA]: _____

Number of Years Service with Local Govt: _____

Number of contracted weekly hours: _____

I wish to check the interview transcription: Y / N

I may be contacted for interview queries: Y / N

Are you a member of the trade union? Y / N

Signed: _____

PTO

Voluntary Information

Gender: M / F (circle as appropriate)

Age:

☐	16 - 24 years	☐	50 - 64 years
☐	25 - 39 years	☐	65+ years
☐	40 - 49 years		

Please indicate your <u>highest level</u> qualification:

☐   GCSE / NVQ Level 2

☐   NVQ Level 3 or 'A' Levels or equivalent

☐   NVQ Level 4 or BTEC Higher National Certificate (Level 4) or equivalent

☐   NVQ Level 5 or BTEC Higher National Diploma (Level 5) or equivalent

☐   Undergraduate Degree (Level 6)

☐   Masters Degree (Level 7)

☐   Professional Qualifications

☐   PhD (Level 8)

Nationality: _____

Ethnicity:

Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	White	Mixed	Other
Bangladeshi ☐	African ☐	British ☐	African ☐	Other Ethnic ☐
Chinese ☐	Caribbean. ☐	Irish ☐	Caribbean ☐	
Indian ☐	Other Black ☐	Other White ☐	Asian ☐	
Pakistani ☐			Other Mixed ☐	
Other Asian ☐				

Prefer not to disclose ethnicity ☐   or if you wish, please specify your ethnicity in more detail:

………......

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Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interviews with HR Manager (one-to-one):

1. Do you have employee engagement policies?

2. How do line managers know that you expect them to foster employee engagement?

3. What do you expect line managers do to maximise employee engagement?

4. How do you support line managers in their engagement efforts?

5. Do line managers implement their people management responsibilities - how do you know?

6. How effective is HR implementation by line managers?

7. Are line managers sufficiently skilled in employee engagement?
   - Do they know what it means, do they buy into the concept and do they have the skills to be engaging?

Semi-Structured Interviews with Line Managers (one-to-one):

1. Critical incident - Can you give me an example of when you have fostered engagement with individuals within your team (explain get the best out of people by helping them to think about and focus on their work, care about their work, and enable them to share and implement ideas/improvements with others) and the outcome was very positive? I will be asking your employees about this later

2. How do your efforts in fostering engagement differ from pre-austerity? (Explore examples)

3. How do you feel about fostering engagement / trying to get the best from people?
   - Is it easy/hard? Restrictions/difficulties? Right in this climate? (Explore difficulties).

4. Have any of your employees, negotiated aspects to their employment that were not available to their team peers? (Explore new reciprocations, process, outcome).

Semi-Structured Interviews with Employees (one-to-one and focus group):

1. What is it like working here? Do you enjoy the job? Why/Why not? Do you take pride in your work? What are the main reasons you work (instrumental/career/social)? Are you engaged (explained as whether they think about and focus on their work, care about their work, and enables them to share and implement ideas/improvements with others – ask for examples)?

2. Given the changes brought about by austerity, how do you feel about the employment deal now - has it changed? Is it fair? Ask for examples.

3. Critical incident - Can you tell me about a time where it made you feel engaged? (Explore what happened, their thoughts, feelings and the outcome)

4. Critical incident (if not covered above) - How did you feel when your line manager did (refer to critical incident explained by line manager). Did it make you think more about your work? Did it make you care more? Did you put effort into your work? Did you work with others to achieve the task? (Explore how line manager actions made them feel, their thoughts, what happened and the outcome)

5. Critical incident - Can you recall a time when you negotiated aspects to your employment that were not available to your team peers? (Explore the types of resources negotiated, why they chose these resources, the process of negotiation, their thoughts, feelings and the outcome).

Coding Templates

Coding Template v1 - 8/5/2015

1. **INTENDED PRACTICES**
   - 1.1 Strategic Narrative
   - 1.2 Engaging Managers
   - 1.3 Integrity
   - 1.4 Employee Voice

2. **ACTUAL PRACTICES**
   - 2.1 Strategic Narrative – Actual Practices
   - 2.2 Engaging Managers
   - 2.3 Integrity
   - 2.4 Employee Voice

3. **PERCEPTIONS OF PRACTICES**
   - 3.1 Psychological Contract
   - 3.2 POS

   - 3.4 Exchange Resources Expected
     - 3.4.1 Love (Social)
     - 3.4.2 Status
     - 3.4.3 Information
     - 3.4.4 Money
     - 3.4.5 Goods
     - 3.4.6 Service

   - 3.6 I-deal agreed critical incident

   - 3.7 I-deal denied critical incident

4. **EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES**
   - 4.1 Commitment
   - 4.2 Job satisfaction
   - 4.01 Instrumental Orientation to Work
   - 4.02 Career Orientation to Work

5. EMPLOYEE RESPONSES
5.1   Constructive Responses
5.2   Neutral Responses
5.3   Moral Licensing
5.4   Destructive Responses

6. EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR

6.1   Recovery/Reflection

6.2   Engagement
     6.2.1 Physical/behavioural
     6.2.2 Social
     6.2.3 Cognitive
     6.2.4 Emotional
     6.2.5 To job/role/profession
     6.2.6 To organisation
     6.2.7 To line manager
     6.2.8 To team
     6.2.9 To customer
     6.2.10 Pride

6.3   Disengagement
     6.3.1 Uncoupling of selves from work roles
     6.3.2 Withdraw/defend
     6.3.3 Withhold suggestions

7. INDIVIDUAL WORK FACTORS
7.1   Enjoy Task
7.2   Commitment to Customer

8. UNIT LEVEL OUTCOMES
8.1   Superior Performance
8.2   Sufficient Performance
8.3   Under Performance
8.4   HR metrics
8.5   Performance metrics

Coding Template v5 - 31/8/2015

0. Context Nodes
010.1 Context – Organisational structure
010.2 Context – Organisational Restructure
010.3 Context – Volume of Work
010.4 Context – Customers
010.5 Context – New Challenges
010.6 Context – Policies
010.7 Context – Procedures
010.8 Context – Systems
010.9 Context – Service Quality
011.1 Context – Accountability for Performance
011.2 Context – Constraints to Innovation
011.3 Context – Risk to Employment

1. INTENDED PRACTICES
1.1 Strategic Narrative
1.1.1 Communicate Vision_Mission_Aims_Objectives
1.1.2 Communicate Organisational Change
1.1.3 Communicate New Initiatives
1.1.4 Visionary Leadership
1.1.6 Generate Excitement

1.2 Engaging Managers
1.2.1 Appraisals, PPDs, One-to-Ones
1.2.2 Development
1.2.3 Feedback
1.2.4 Honest Conversations
1.2.5 Support Staff
1.2.6 Informal Approach
1.2.7 Respect Staff
1.2.8 Inspirational
1.2.9 Visibility

1.3 Integrity
1.3.1 Trust
1.3.2 Follow-up on Promises
1.3.3 Take an Interest in Staff
1.3.4 Role Model
1.3.5 Mutuality
1.3.6 Give Opportunities to All

1.4 Employee Voice
1.4.2 Feedback on Suggestions
1.4.3 Focus Groups with Staff
1.4.4 Team Meetings
1.4.5 Management Meetings

1.7 Organisational Change
    1.7.1 Restructures
    1.7.2 Redundancies
    1.7.3 Policies
    1.7.4 Support For Survivors
    1.7.5 Support for Redundant Employees
    1.7.6 Coping
    1.7.7 Reduction in T&Cs
    1.7.8 Attract and Retain Staff
    1.7.9 Celebrate Success And_Or Closure

2. ACTUAL PRACTICES

2.1 Strategic Narrative – Actual Practices
    2.1.1 Communicate Vision_Mission_Aims_Objectives
    2.1.2 Communicate Organisational Change
    2.1.3 Communicate New Initiatives
    2.1.4 Visionary Leadership
    2.1.5 Disengaging eg. dry communication
    2.1.6 Generate Excitement

2.2 Engaging Managers – Actual Practices
    2.21 Appraisals, PDPs, One-to-ones
    2.21 Motivate Staff
    2.21 Well-being
    2.21 Accessible
    2.21 Instruct and Guide
    2.22 Development
    2.23 Feedback
    2.23 Praise
    2.24 Honest Conversations
    2.24 Ongoing Conversations
    2.25 Support Staff
    2.26 Informal Approach by Management
    2.27 Respect Staff
    2.28 Visible leadership
    2.29 Physical and Emotional Energy

2.3 Integrity – Actual Practices
    2.31 Integrity (or lack of)
    2.32 Withhold Information (Mgrs perceive legit)
    2.33 Exonerating
    2.34 Reframing

2.4 Employee Voice – Actual Practices
    2.41 Listen to staff and Involve Staff
    2.42 Feedback on Staff Suggestions
    2.43 Focus Groups
    2.44 Team Meetings

2.8 Employee I-deals Considered (not manager's own i-deals)
2.83 I-deals Agreed (Employees)
- 2.831 I-deal Type
  - 2.8311 Career Development
  - 2.8312 Employability
  - 2.8313 Flexibility
  - 2.8314 Redeployment

- 2.832 I-deal Process (Employees)
  - 2.8321 Initiated by Employee
  - 2.8322 Initiated by Manager

- 2.833 Feelings (re employee)
  - 2.8331 Appreciated
  - 2.8334 Frustrated

- 2.834 Thoughts (re employee)
  - 2.8342 Benefits one party

2.84 I-deals Denied (Employees)
- 2.841 I-deal Type
  - 2.8411 Career Development
  - 2.8412 Employability
  - 2.8413 Flexibility
  - 2.8414 Redeployment

- 2.842 I-deal Process (Employees)
  - 2.8421 Initiated by Employee
  - 2.8422 Initiated by Manager

- 2.843 Feelings (re employee)
  - 2.8434 Frustrated

- 2.844 Thoughts (re employee)
  - 2.8442 Benefits one party

- 2.845 Behaviour (what happened next?)
  - 2.8454 Other

2.9 Organisational Change – Actual Practices
- 2.91 Restructures
- 2.92 Redundancies
- 2.93 Loss of Expertise
- 2.94 Support for Survivors
- 2.95 Support for Redundant Employees
- 2.96 Coping
- 2.97 Reduction in T&C
- 2.98 Attract and Retain Staff
- 2.99 Celebrate Success and_or Closure

3.   PERCEPTIONS OF PRACTICES

3.1   Employee Views MacLeod and Clarke Drivers

3.11   Strategic Narrative

3.12   Engaging Managers

   3.121 Motivate Staff
   3.121 PDPs etc
   3.121 Well-being
   3.121 Approachable
   3.122 Development
   3.123 Feedback
   3.123 Praise
   3.124 Ongoing Conversations
   3.125 Informal Approach by Manager
   3.126 Support Staff
   3.127 Managers show they care
   3.128 Conflict Mgt Resolution
   3.129 Autocratic Mgt Style
   3.129 Democratic Mgt Style
   3.129 Disengaging Approach
   3.129 Provide Resources
          3.1291   Environment
          3.1293   Allocate Work Fairly
          3.1294   Meaningful_Varied Work
   3.129 Visible Leadership

3.13   Integrity

   3.131   Integrity (or lack of)
   3.132   Mgrs withhold Information
   3.133   Exonerating
   3.134   Reframing

3.14   Employee Voice

   3.142   Involved with Decisions
   3.143   Suggestion Schemes
   3.144   Team Meetings_Employee Views
   3.145   Perceived lack of EV (Employee Voice)

3.2   **Psychological Contract**

    3.21   Trust (PC)
    3.22   Fairness
    3.23   Breach or Violation
    3.24   Job Insecurity
    3.25   New Employment Deal
    3.26   Lack of Career Progression
    3.27   Organisational Trust
    3.28   Other Mistrust
    3.29   Favours (give and take)

3.3   **Affective Impact**

    3.31   Kubler-Ross
        3.31.1   Denial
        3.31.2   Anger
        3.31.3   Bargaining
        3.31.4   Depression
        3.31.5   Acceptance

    3.32   Resigned acceptance
    3.33   Self-efficacy
    3.34   Impersonal
    3.36   Disappointed
    3.37   Coping
    3.38   Negative/Distressing Experience
    3.39   Able to vent feelings

3.6 **I-Deal Agreed Critical Incident**
    3.65   **I-deal Type**
        3.651   Career Development
        3.652   Employability
        3.653   Flexibility
        3.654   Redeployment

    3.66   **I-deal Process**
        3.661   Initiated by Employee
        3.662   Initiated by Manager
        3.663   Reasonable duration
        3.664   Long drawn out process
        3.665   Barriers
        3.666   Assistance (Intervention)

    3.67   **Feelings**
        3.671   Appreciated
        3.676   Satisfaction
        3.677   Fair

    3.68   **Thoughts**
        3.681   Mutuality (includes business reasons)
        3.682   Benefits one party
        3.684   Voluntary

    3.69   **Behaviour** (what happened next?)
        3.691   Work harder

3.7 **I-Deal Denied Critical Incident**
    3.73   **I-deal Type**
        3.731   Career Development
        3.732   Employability
        3.733   Flexibility
        3.734   Redeployment

    3.74   **I-deal Process**
        3.741   Initiated by Employee
        3.745   Barriers

    3.75   **Feelings**
        3.758   Unfair
        3.759   Anger

    3.76   **Thoughts**
        3.763   Understanding of organisational constraints
        3.764   Voluntary

    3.77   **Behaviour** (what happened next?)
        3.771   Work harder

4. EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES
- 4.1 Commitment
- 4.2 Job satisfaction
- 4.3 Frustration
- 4.5 Pride
- 4.6 Blame
- 4.7 Low Morale
- 4.8 High Morale
- 4.9 Willingness to Co-operate
- 4.01 Instrumental Orientation to Work
- 4.02 Career Orientation to Work

5. EMPLOYEE RESPONSES
- 5.1 **Constructive Responses**
  - 5.15 Communal Perspective
  - 5.18 Relational Exchange
  - 5.19 Economic Exchange
- 5.2 **Neutral Responses**
- 5.3 **Moral Licensing**
- 5.4 **Destructive Responses**
  - 5.42 Uncooperative
  - 5.44 Limited Contributions
  - 5.45 Working too slow/skiving
  - 5.46 Chatting (social)
  - 5.48 Lack of Customer Care
  - 5.49 Unintended Consequences

6. EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR
- 6.1 **Recovery/Reflection**
- 6.2 **Engagement**
  - 6.2.1 Physical/behavioural
  - 6.2.2 Social
  - 6.2.3 Cognitive
  - 6.2.4 Emotional
  - 6.2.5 To job/role/profession
  - 6.2.6 To organisation
  - 6.2.7 To line manager
  - 6.2.8 To team
  - 6.2.9 To customer
  - 6.2.10 Pride
- 6.3 **Disengagement**
  - 6.31 Uncoupling of selves from work roles
  - 6.32 Withdraw/defend
  - 6.33 Withhold Suggestions
  - 6.34 Lack of Customer Care
  - 6.35 Want to move jobs
  - 6.36 Disengagement - Other

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Appendix 4 – Rigour

Anderson (2017) has suggested that the criteria shown in the first column in the table below should be considered and addressed (second column) to demonstrate rigour within qualitative research.

Criteria	Met by:
Reflexivity	- Field notes maintained to aid reflection and reflexivity - Author's background declared - Procedures documented to provide an audit trail - During the interviews, the researcher did not attempt to resolve organisational problems.
Methodological coherence	Research design and methods selected were coherent with an interpretivist approach, which was appropriate to capture the context and answer the research questions. Justifications for selection explained.
Sampling and data access issues	- LA selected was unknown to the researcher to reduce the likelihood of participants giving socially desirable answers - LA was purposively selected as pursuing an employee engagement agenda within the austerity context - Teams theoretically sampled to answer the research questions - Individuals nominated by managers given time away from normal duties to attend interviews had to be granted - Four teams were sampled as no new codes were generated in the third and fourth teams suggesting data saturation.
Member checking of data collected	- All participants asked to check transcripts - Four participants provided additional information by email and one participant requested an additional interview to provide further information.
Transferability	Although generalisation is not claimed, the findings may relate to other contexts with similar conditions such as other parts of the public sector and third sector. It may also impact private sector organisations experiencing economic difficulty and uncertainty.
Ethical Issues	- Aim was to ensure the study did not cause any negative consequences for the participants - Compliance with University guidelines - Participation was voluntary and consent sought - Participants controlled the recording device - Purpose of the study was explained to all participants at the start of the interview - Assurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity given - When the critical incident was requested, prior to the participant providing it, it was explained to managers that this would be discussed with their employees - Participants invited to ask questions at the start and end of the interview - Safe and secure storage of transcripts and related documents (articles, thesis, reports) along with back-up copies safely and securely stored off site - Retention and safe disposal of all hard and soft copy documents planned within University guidelines and timeframes - Articles, thesis and reports thoroughly checked to ensure identities were not inadvertently revealed.
Prolonged Engagement/ Strategies for Persistent Observation	Although the data was collected at one point in time making it cross sectional, the research design incorporated the critical incident technique in order to capture behaviour, thoughts and feelings after any engagement interventions discussed. Although this is criticised for retrospective bias, recall is likely to be good regarding issues of salience to that individual. Also, it is these perceptions that inform employee engagement thus reducing the limitations of the chosen method and enabling 'how/why' questions to be answered.
Theoretical positioning	Problem to be investigated and findings positioned with the existing literature base in relation to employee engagement, social exchange theory, psychological contract theory, resource theory and i-deals theory.
Triangulation	Given the interpretivist approach of this study, triangulation was not sought as the study's purpose was to identify different meanings and understandings. Consequently, although managers' interviews were compared with employees, this was to obtain different stakeholder perspectives and views.
Peer Debriefing	Feedback from article reviewers, experienced academics at external conferences, internal symposiums, and by email, along with peer discussions.

Researcher's Prior Assumptions

HR Capacity:

- HR may not have the capacity to sufficiently support managers given the increased work caused by redundancies

- Lack of attention to line manager behaviour due to competing service pressures.

Managers:

- Managers may find it hard to manage in the current climate - unlikely to have experienced this level of downsizing

- Managers likely to be worried about their own future, so this may stretch their acting ability

- Some managers may be promoted into that position before they are ready following early retirements/voluntary redundancies

- Less emphasis on engagement and more focus on austerity pressures and service users

- Autocratic leadership style likely to be adopted and disinterest in fostering relational exchange given the level of resources available.

Employees:

- Questionable whether employees will still engage once the employment deal is diluted

- Older employees may accept the deal if they perceive that they have fewer alternative options but too young to retire

- If funding for learning and development is reduced, will employees take responsibility for learning or will this lead to a skills deficit?

- Disengagement likely given the perception of the reduced employment deal.

All (HR, Managers and Employees):

- Burnout is a risk

- Overall, expecting a lot of negativity amongst managers and employees given the challenge of meeting statutory service requirements within such significant budget cuts.

Appendix 6

The Critical Incidents

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Professional Team 1

Critical Incident

Professional Team 1 - Critical Incident (Pilot Study)

As this was the pilot, the critical incident question asked was to describe a time when the organisation treated an employee better than they needed to, and another time when they felt an employee was treated worse than what they should have been. The intention was to understand the reciprocations between managers and employees as per Herriott *et al.'s,* (1997) study, within the current context of austerity. These will now be discussed.

Treatment of Employees:

When asked if there were any employees treated better than they needed to be, the participants explained that a small minority of employees who had served their redundancy notice and could legitimately be made redundant, were given a temporary post:

> "*I know of a couple or maybe 2 or 3 people that have been displaced, but they have been offered temporary contracts until the end of year. Now I think that is very generous - that wasn't necessary. They've just served their redeployment* [notice] *period*". (Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs).

A similar example was given by the employees in the focus group interview:

> "*Somebody has been given a role*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*Nobody else was given the opportunity to apply for it*".
> (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Consequently, whilst it was good that this small number of employees avoided redundancy, it appears that other employees are aggrieved that the redeployment policies were not applied. This meant that this small number of redeployed employees gained a job that no other 'at risk' employee could apply for (distributive injustice). More positively, managers and employees were not able to give examples of unfair treatment:

> "*... so I am struggling of thinking of anywhere that we haven't been fair, or we haven't treated people consistently*". (Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs).

That said, employees did highlight how difficult it is managing people during the consultations and redundancy notice period, and highlighted the importance of procedural and interactional justice, and the difficulties in employees maintaining their performance during this time due to the stress of facing redundancy:

> "*And the expectations of the organisation as well. I mean, for example we have people who in 9 months time are going to be unemployed. But they are expected to work - carry on for that 9 months*".
> (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*Turn up and carry on*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*And they are not going to manage it, because psychologically they are not going to able to cope for 9 months of knowing that after that 9 months is up that they will be unemployed. You know, and I think that is very very difficult. You know, it really is for people to cope with that. ... I don't think they treat people fairly in doing that to them, I think that it is very poor*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*I think it's about the process isn't it. Because whilst people will never be happy about being told that they haven't got a job as part of the restructure, if you feel that the process has been fair and communicated fully to you along that way, and you have been given clear justification as to why you didn't get that job, you might not like the outcome, and then if you have applied the redeployment policies appropriately and supported them, then that's fair. And that's you know, that is how we have treated everyone consistently. It's when we do things that are different and outside of that that causes the issues really to make you think 'I have been treated less favourably than somebody else!'* ".
> (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

In addition, managers and employees reported on how different working life is since austerity. First, the Senior Manager explained how people change during austerity by being wary of each other and withholding information suggesting undesirable engagement and reduced trust:

> "*I think people's behaviours change during austerity, I think people do more things to cover their own back if that makes sense. So there is a little bit of errm, wariness about people, and people are not quite as open as perhaps they would have been if we had not been in these times - people are a little bit more suspicious*".
> (Senior Manager, age not declared).

Furthermore, the Team reported changes in communication, PPDs (Personal Professional Development), and development, reported next.

Communication:

One employee explained how in comparison with pre-austerity, communication is perceived to have reduced:

> "*I just feel it's very different cos I've had a short break from being at work, and the kind of difference from well, shortly prior to that, it is quite considerably different. And I think, having worked in a different team prior, the information that was coming about you know, the organisation, what we did, budgets, and everything else, was just so comprehensive. And probably to the point of overload. And yet now it's it's more, say more focused. I wouldn't say diluted. But not as frequent maybe. I don't feel as clued up about. I know what I need to know I think*".
> (Employee, 25-39 yrs).

It was suggested that part of the reason for this perceived reduction in communication was due to the communication procedures being complex, time intensive and impersonal resulting in late and dry communication:

> "*And this authority is atrocious at communication. We spend too much time thinking about 'is that the right message and how are we going to send it out, when should we send it out, and who should it go to?'. Cos by the time we send it out it's past and everybody knows anyway because the rumour mill has made it up*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*The general communication tends to be by global email which is ... flat and impersonal and not at all readable - really it is all very .... dry*". (First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, participants estimated that the majority of the workforce does not fully understand the strategic narrative:

> "*But I would say 80% of our workforce out there have no idea what these things are, and yet these are the strategies that are shaping the way this organisation will move*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

This is a particular concern when employees' jobs are affected and they are not informed until it is published externally, thus reducing employee voice and genuine consultation:

> "*Errm certain parts of our service will possibly cease from March and it will get decided next week, and we didn't know until it was going onto the public domain, as part of council protocols*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Changes to PPDs (Personal Performance and Development process) have also reduced employee voice, discussed next.

Team Meetings, PPDs (Personal Performance and Development Process) and One-to-Ones:

Employees also stated that time pressures due to staffing reductions and increased workloads have reduced the frequency of team meetings and one-to-ones:

> *"... we seem to have moved away from the team meetings which were absolutely regular, and one-to-ones were regular. And now it's kind of like 'do we need one? No we don't, well we don't set them. So we'll call one if we need one'. And so there isn't that those channels and that structure for just basic communication, so we are reliant upon global emails. We seem to be. Cos everything comes out in a global* [email]*".* (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*What I do hear around the Council is that lots of people don't have time for line management, don't have times for one-to-ones, to see staff, etc*". (Middle Manager, 50-64 yrs).

Furthermore, the PPDs and one-to-ones are now task/job based, rather than development based as they were before austerity. Not only does this stifle employee development, but it also adversely affects managers' people management capability given it lowers the reciprocations that they can offer to employees:

> "*..., effective learning and development, professional learning and development is just so scant, appraisals have have more or less ended up with objective setting and allocating work, and that is not really the great thing for me. You know errm, they'd do that anyway. You know. Errm, there is no carrot in there - for me - it's all one-way - you know, we want you to do this and this, and we want you to improve this and we want you to do that, and all the rest of it. But you could do some learning and development from this list, and as long as it costs nothing, then that's fine. And it's it's errm, you know, it's errm there is no way of rewarding people because to some extent letting people go on a 2 day course with a stay in a hotel, you know, it it is in a way a reward and to say you are worth investing in, you're, you know. But all of that's gone - so it makes the process a little bit dry and oh well here we go. I'll give you some jobs to do over the next year, and by the way you are doing really well. And by the way you are not going to get a pay rise. And by the way you are not going to get any learning and development - it is a one-way street*". (First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

The one-way nature of PPDs was also acknowledged by employees:

"*Well I think, I mean, my one-to-ones are very, its its very job based rather than skills and future development based. But I think again that is just the sign of the times, what and you know, how busy everybody is, and the team, and the work, the service areas priorities really. So it tends to be about you know are you ok with everything, what do I need to look at, these are the things that we've got the heads up on that are coming on board, this is what we need to plan for. Errm, whereas the old PPDs and the one-to-ones used to be about, you know, objective setting and in six months time your training priorities*".
(Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Consequently, the impact austerity has had on development will be explored further next.

Development:

It seems that the organisation has passed responsibility for personal and professional development from shared responsibility between the employer and employee, to the responsibility of employee. Participants cited instances where they do not have time to complete any training during working hours due to increased work demands, and the difficulties in keeping up-to-date with professional development which may adversely affect their expertise:

"*I don't get any time in works time for personal development and even professional development, you have to do that in your own time. Cos there just isn't, the tasks are so enormous and there are so many of them, that it is very difficult to keep on top of it*".
(Senior Manager, age not declared).

"*... accessing specialist errm, post graduate training and development, updating, has become almost impossible. And I worry about that because it is about your expertise, it's about keeping up-to-date and so on. So, severe limitations on that. ... 'You can have what you want as long as it's free'. [Giggles]. If you want to go to an update seminar for a day that costs £60, then 'oh no'. You won't be doing that!*".
(First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

That said, e-learning is widely available, although concern was expressed regarding the over-reliance on this method. In particular, issues raised included the lack of time to study online given the decreased staffing levels, not all jobs have IT access such as home carers and refuse collectors, and the loss of social learning through not meeting other trainees/colleagues:

> *"... whilst it* [e-learning] *does mean it is open to just about everybody, errm there are still for us quite large pockets that don't have access on a daily basis to a terminal that they could do it. But also, even for us who are sat in front of a pc all day, doing e-learning at your desk just isn't feasible. So it's it's difficult because I think it has its uses, but I don't know if we are maybe becoming a bit over reliant on it because of the cuts we needed to make to the services in order to deliver what we need to deliver, I don't think e-learning is the complete solution but it is about all we have got at the minute".* (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*And having that, you know, 'And what did you do?'. And share your experience. 'Oh and that's a good idea' and take that away. Cos there is none of that - you lose that human interaction really because everything is electronic*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Consequently, whilst there appears to be (resigned) acceptance to the new psychological contract (PC), which has passed joint responsibility for requesting one-to-ones and development to the individual, dissatisfaction was also expressed about procedures not being uniformly applied, reduced communication and developmental opportunities, making the employment deal to be perceived as one-sided, favoured to the organisation.

The critical incident question was changed for the other three teams following a review of this pilot study. Managers in Teams 2-4 were asked to explain a time when they fostered engagement and the outcome was positive. Employees were then asked about this incident and their experiences of it. These critical incidents will be reported after provision of a brief background.

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Professional Team 2

Critical Incident

Professional Team 2 - Critical Incident - Restructure

The Senior Manager selected the restructure process to discuss as the critical incident. This was useful as it demonstrated the process of fostering engagement in adverse financial conditions from multiple perspectives, especially as for the last six years, restructures occur every other year within this team. The process of the restructure was distressing for everyone as many were at risk of redeployment/redundancy. One manager had to attend an interview to reapply for their job immediately on return from holiday:

> "*We had to apply for our own jobs, errm, and that was, really difficult the way, the way it was done. I mean, I don't want to blame anybody or anything like that. But we were joined with departments, and I had been on holiday, came back on the Sunday. We knew sorta something might happen, [named Middle Manager A] had said 'check your emails'. I checked my emails and we had an interview on the Monday. We came back on the Sunday and on the Monday at 1 o'clock, I had to go for an interview".* (Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

The experience of competing for jobs between their closest co-workers reportedly adversely affected the level of trust between them, and it has taken about 18 months to regain that trust. This highlights the negative effects organisational restructures may have on workplace relationships where workplace knowledge becomes a competitive resource:

> *"Because you get into that, mistrust sounds wrong, but it is mistrust - you just tend to keep everything to yourself as you don't want to pass anything on, because you are hoping you have got the job. You do it without realising really don't you? You just don't pass things on and keep it all to yourself. ... you sort of pick up on things that people say and you start to think, mistrusting what they are saying, or are they telling me the truth? ..., but I think it took about 18 months after the result for us to actually feel that we were functioning as we should have done again".* (Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

In addition to dealing with their own concerns with applying and competing for their own jobs, managers also had to interview staff within the team for redundancy. These 'envoys' (managers) reported difficulties in hiding their own job insecurity so that they could support employees, although they also felt that employees were empathetic recognising that they were in the same situation:

> *"The senior [professionals], there were 4, and we had to reduce them to 3. Errm, myself and the other Principal [professional] did those interviews. Errm, we had to do the interviews, we had to tell the person that he/she was on redeployment, and we still didn't know whether we had a job or not. ... That was hard because you're trying to maintain a front if you like for the other staff, because you know that they are all going through it as well. .... But I think there was that understanding, because he/she knew I was in that position where I didn't know, so at any moment, somebody could be doing exactly the same with me as I was having to do with him/her. ... So he/she was maybe not as rebellious as he/she could have been".* (Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

However, not all affected employees had such empathy. For example, when one employee was told that they would be redeployed or made redundant, the meeting was very difficult, and the employee just walked out of the meeting without following signing out procedures, thus presenting a health and safety risk. Following that, the employee repeatedly wiped their name off the signing in board meaning that they would be on site, but not recorded as such. This appears to be a rebellious attempt to express that they felt that the organisation had not met their support/loyalty PC obligation towards the employee:

> *"Very difficult. Errm, his/her first response when he/she was told, was he/she actually got up and walked out, and just walked out the building. So, a) not knowing where he/she had gone was difficult. Errm, we have, a board as you come in through the back door for fire regulations, so you mark yourself in or out. So, he/she kept taking his/her name off that. So he/she would be in, but no-one would know. And so we said 'well you really need to be on there'. [Employee replied] 'Well nobody cares about me, so it doesn't matter'. [Manager replied] 'Oh we do care about you, but sorry we are in this situation and there is not a lot I can do about it' ".* (Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, this process of downsizing and job loss appeared to adversely affect the line manager-employee relationship. This was also indicated in the following example of trust reduction:

> *"But I, and I quite innocently, errm went across to Boots and bought myself a drink, and I thought 'oh he/she likes these drinks, I'll take him/her one back'. So I took him/her one back and put it on his/her desk and he/she said, you know 'what's that for?'.*
> [Manager replied] *'I got myself one and I thought you'd like one'. But he/she was really suspicious that I'd actually bought him/her a drink.*

And that is when I sort of cut myself off if you like. You know, I sorta took that back myself, from being that, trying to be that more caring person, to well we will just go through the processes then".
(Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, the manager above appears to have disengaged from the situation and restricted their managerial support to just complying with policy and procedure. Unfortunately, the employee has since left the Council given the team he/she was redeployed to had another restructure, and apparently he/she did not wish to compete for their job again.

Despite the initial managerial concern, three of the surviving employees were interviewed and one of them reported that they did not feel supported during the restructure. They felt the lack of employee influence on the process, perhaps because of the perceived lack of communication, was frustrating and emotionally draining. This and the threats to job security over several months had an adverse impact on the employee's health and well-being:

"*No. I think there is gaps. I think there is selective information dissemination in a way. Sometimes, I feel like I ask a question, and it's kinda 'no - you don't need to know this, you are too low down. ... Yeah - we don't want to worry your pretty little heads cos, you know, if we tell you this you will start worrying and it might never happen'. Ok. I feel there is a bit of that sort of thing. I'd like to, I'd like to know how decisions are made. But we don't. We are presented with, you know, 'This [site] is going to be shutting and its going to Cabinet'. But why? Why has that one been chosen? You know, it may be something really simple like the lease of the building has come up for renewal and it's terribly terribly expensive. Well just tell us! ... And a lot of them were close friends. It was awful. No. I wouldn't have said we did* [get support with dealing with the process]. *It was, you know, keep calm and carry on. ... you just had to get on with it. ... I mean the problem is that we were fighting for our own jobs, so you, you really didn't have time to think almost. You had to decide do you want this job or don't you, are you going on VET now or not, if you don't are you going to fight all your other friends and colleagues for your, for this job. ... Yeah - it was awful. My hair was falling out. ... Yeah it was awful. Cos it went on for such a long time and that really annoyed me, because we were sort of not told things all the way through that process. You know, 'oh no, you'll not be having to apply for your jobs, oh no no, that won't happen, you know there will be the same number of posts'. Well there weren't. You know, and that went on, ohh, for a good 6 months or longer*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Similarly, another employee was reportedly so distressed by the organisational change, it resulted in erratic/rebellious behaviour at work, in this case repeatedly retrieving items which had been disposed of as part of the restructure changes:

> "..., and we were disposing of them, and one [professional] kept going and retrieving them from the disposal. And following the member of staff [that was disposing the items] round to check what was being disposed of. And it's not that it is ill-considered what is being disposed of. And I think probably when somebody gets to that stage, there is a real concern there about the way they are feeling about their job, and how threatened they are feeling". (Middle Manager A, 50-64 yrs).

Additionally, another employee felt it was inappropriate to discuss organisational change issues with their line manager, or challenge their policies, perhaps indicating either introverted personality traits, lack of confidence/skill, and/or a culture not conducive to employee voice:

> "The trouble is, you are not meant to change somebody's policy, are you, I don't think". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Following the restructure, resistance continued because the reduced staffing levels meant that the team had to become functionally flexible across the specialist and generalist roles given the extent of downsizing:

> "And there was a day that, the 31 March, when all of this experience walked out of the [named site], never to come back. And we became quite paranoid about it really, because we were suddenly aware that most of our younger members of staff were within the [generalist] side. Our entire Management Team is within the [generalist] side".
> (First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Line managers felt that most of the resistance to this change came from the specialist staff being reluctant to work on the generalist areas:

> "The main resistance came from the [specialist staff] who found the idea of suddenly being launched into the [generalist] spectrum to be quite intimidating". (First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Specialist employees confirmed that they were apprehensive about working in the generalist areas given their lack of experience in this type of work, particularly given they have worked in their own field for 19-45 years.

Additionally, as they are serving the public directly, they felt that customers would expect the professionals to have expert knowledge in the generalist work, and of course, they do not have this given they do not work in the generalist area very often. Furthermore, they also had to support the non-professional staff working on this area, which is difficult when they themselves are learning:

> "*I spend a lot of time working on [named the specialist area]. I am also now expected to be a [generalist professional]. The two are very different. And I haven't been a [generalist professional] for about 20 years. So I am completely out of touch. ... it's frightening. .., because I haven't been doing it, ..., I just maybe do it maybe once per week. ... It [referring to one aspect of the generalist work] is probably the most complicated bit of err, [named profession] that you are ever likely to come across*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

> "*Well I think most of us would rather that we could stick to our expert field*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

> "*I think it was tougher for the [specialist] people, I think, really. Because they are very specialist, ... I mean [named 3 x experienced specialist colleagues], have been in there a long time. ... They have got a huge amount of knowledge, and, you know, you have to appreciate that is what they know. They are very good at it*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Despite these employee concerns, the first line manager felt that the professionals should be able to self-develop more effectively, suggesting that the responsibility for development and employability now rests with employees. The functional flexibility also presented a number of additional issues that Management had to deal with, which initially seemed to cause irritation to all affected. This included an apparent lack of trust and frustration between co-workers, with one employee reportedly feeling that they were 'observed' by co-workers when working on the specialist area, the difficulties learning by shadowing due to reduced staffing levels, along with a reluctance to undertake self-directed learning:

> "*So, we tried to do some shadowing, but it was incredibly hard because we'd had this cut in our team, and doubling people up is time consuming, you know it it eats up the resources that are available. So the shadowing was very very patchy and it was largely pushed in here at the deep end.*

And we would have lots of talks about things, and we would talk about it together errm in team meetings, we would talk about it in corridors, on the phone, by emails, about how people were dealing with things. And it was quite agonising. Errm, and some people coped better than others. And as a manager I got very frustrated with people, because I felt people weren't helping themselves. And, it took a long time to squeeze these people into feeling confident. And still there are issues with it, ..., I have one member of staff who gets very frustrated, because he/she feels, when when he/she is on duty in the [named specialist work area], other people appear and hover. And he/she feels he/she is not being trusted to do the job. But he/she actually feels confident in his/her knowledge. ... Because these people are professionals, and my personal feeling is that as a professional you have a personal responsibility to educate yourself and to train yourself. ... You know, do it for yourself. Find somebody else who can do it. Don't rely on a training course being set up for you, to spoon feed you with this information. ... So I have got really frustrated about that and with some people. And so I think probably that has probably shown. ... I come from the perspective, that I really enjoy variety. So that's made it difficult for me to help the people that have resisted. Errm, and I have had to really think about how I speak, and how my tone is, and what my body language is doing. And I am quite sure that people get frustrated. .... I don't think I managed it particularly well at the beginning. And it's easy to say that with hindsight isn't it?". (First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

This shows the extra burdens on line managers and how this may have impacted their ability to be an 'engaging manager' (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009). The employees also confirmed that the lack of shadowing opportunities was problematic, and that was the preferred way of learning given their previous experience:

"*I'll tell you a real problem now is that you used to learn an awful lot when [named profession] worked alongside [named profession], whereas now that hardly ever happens on the timetable. And this is, this is one reason why I think it is difficult downstairs, in the [generalist work area], because I am the only [professional] on duty. ... But in the past, you know, that is how I learnt, in my early years, with more experienced colleagues, side by side. ... I would say, you, they* [as in the Management] *wouldn't, they wouldn't regard it* [shadowing] *as a good use of professional time*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

"*I don't feel that we have necessarily had sufficient training to just go from one place to another*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

However, it must be noted that these employees have 19-45 years service, so it may be quite intimidating as experts having to learn a new, albeit related, work area to be functionally flexible. Although employees refer to how resource intensive shadowing is, and the difficulties in doing this within reduced staffing levels, employees appear to fail to see alternative ways of learning. Employees also do not seem to be taking responsibility for learning suggesting the new PC has not been fully accepted by this occupational group.

As part of the restructure, the pressures of austerity have also led to management deliberately trying to change the PC of a 'job for life' to one where both managers and employees consider themselves to be on an annual contract:

> "*And that is the minds that we try to get everyone into. There used to be the old saying that you get a job with the Council, its err, you have got a job for life, that is not the case anymore. You know, it's a more of a company really. There are pressures, financial targets, and the place changes. That means jobs evolve over time*".
> (Senior Manager, 50-64 yrs).

> "*We are all on a year's contract. So, I think that coming to terms with that is quite difficult*". (Middle Manager A, 50-64 yrs).

> "*I think now for me personally anyway, we are down to the fact that we are working on a yearly contract so, if we are here next year, that is really lucky. ... I think we* [as the three managers that had to compete for their jobs] *probably do feel that we are all on a reprieve and that we are lucky to be here, sort of thing, and just take it as it comes to some degree"*.
> (Middle Manager B, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, it seems that Middle Manager B considers that part of the reason for the acceptance of the loss of job security amongst managers is their previous experience of applying for their own jobs. Fortunately, due to a change in Council strategy, all three managers (peers) were retained this time. The First Line Manager and numerous employees were also very concerned about future funding and their job insecurity:

> "*Well obviously, we are in the hands of the National Government, ... the whole thing is out of our hands isn't it? We can't criticise what has been done locally because it is entirely the consequence of national decisions*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

"*They are fighting a losing battle I think here with the cuts. And the trouble is that the things that we are fighting are, are, should be national government things, not local government*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

This suggests that employees do not attribute blame to their employer for the current financial conditions, and recognise it stems from the national level. However, Middle Manager A felt this made it hard communicating that the Service has a future:

"*I think they don't see that [named Service] has a future, and that is one of the things that I have been trying to reverse, people's views about [the Service], and I get involved quite a lot with the national things that are happening, and just trying to translate that, that there is a positive future for the [named service], there isn't any intention of getting rid of the [named service], so it is not all doom and gloom. Cos on a local level there is a lot of doom and gloom*". (Middle Manager A, 50-64 yrs).

It appears here that despite management purposefully communicating the lack of a 'job for life', a conflicting message is simultaneously articulated where there is hope and excitement for the Service. Management did not appear to recognise the contradictions here, but they did seem frustrated that employees are unable to see the positive future.

Despite the difficulties with the process and outcome of the (recurring) restructure(s), and Senior Management's perception of social disengagement, both managers and employees showed that they still enjoyed and engaged to various aspects including the profession, tasks and customers:

"*It is so varied, it is so inspiring. And, just helping people, just helping to make people's lives better in some way, is the most worthwhile thing that you can spend your time doing*". (First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

"*I like the challenge of [named task], ..., we really don't like to admit defeat*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently whilst senior management perceive this team to be socially disengaged, and employees are concerned about the need to work cross-functionally and the perceived lack of training to support this, in addition to the perceived climate of low trust and insufficient communication, they still appear to be engaging with many elements of the job.

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Non-Professional Team 3

Critical Incident

Non-Professional Team 3 - Critical Incident - Restructure

The restructure was discussed for the critical incident as this provided a good example of fostering engagement during negative external pressures which resulted in a closure of 4 sites thus reducing staffing levels significantly. The reduced staffing levels also led to a need to reduce terms and conditions resulting in a loss of flexi-time, an increase in Saturday working, tight centralised control of annual leave arrangements, and a reduction in paid breaks from 20 minutes to 10 minutes twice daily. According to the Senior Manager, the decision-making process for choosing which sites to close was shared with employees, although employees did not concur this view:

> "*And if I say that 'right we need to do this, we need to maybe close down a site, which ones the best? Which ones are used the most? Which ones do you think would have the most impact? Ask the staff for me, you know, which one do they think?'. So they would collate it and get it together and they would go 'well we think it's ...'.* [Senior Manager replied] *'Well ok then, let's go with that'* ". (Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> "*But for us to bounce about those options with the management would be a good idea. To see it from the staff point of view. ... From a management point of view it might work, but from a staff point of view it might not. And I think that's what they need to do*".
> (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

That said, managers made efforts to make the message about closing sites as positive as possible, by reframing it and explaining that the reduction in sites would enable them to focus and strengthen the service:

> "*It's never easy to try and say to staff that errm 'we are moving from 9* [sites] *to 4* [sites]*'. And trying to obviously get that across to customers, because all they see is services being cut. Errm but what we try to say is that 'yes we are losing these* [sites] *because the footfall is not there, but that doesn't mean to say that we don't, the Council doesn't value the service that we provide. And that all we are trying to do is strengthen our services by focusing them at 4 sites rather than diluting them at 9'* ".
> (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Additionally, the Senior Manager spoke directly to the staff about the closures and this face to face support appeared to be appreciated by some staff although the second focus group interview reported concerns about the language used:

"... a lot the information it started off with [named Senior Manager] errm getting staff to the [named Town Hall] and telling them the changes .... We all closed the sites for one afternoon, and we went on mass to the [named Town Hall]. *So and I think that worked well, as everybody got the same message all at once".* (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

"The very top layer, errm, when we had all the cuts, and when we were losing staff, the Head of Service errm was very supportive of us. ..., and we appreciated that as that was what we needed. We needed some sort of confirmation from top management". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

"... we were actually told [by the Senior Manager], *the last major restructure when people were not happy about the mood and everything, 'you are bums on seats, that's what you are ... You are a number' ".*
(Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

Employees within the focus group interview explained how this made them feel worthless and not appreciated, thus highlighting the reciprocal nature of respect:

"You've got to have respect basically for your management, but as I say, they've got to have respect for you as well".
(Employee Focus Group 2, 16-24 yrs).

"They just don't seem interested". (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

"You are an adviser, you are not a person. I think it makes you feel, well you are here for the job. Well yeah, we are all here for the job, but you are also a person, you've got, you know, your own lives, you've got things, you know some people are better at dealing with things than others, and you know, it's not an easy job, and to be told well you are just a number". (Employee in Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs).

This face to face large meeting was followed-up by a series of communication methods such as briefing papers, and a FAQ (frequently asked questions) spreadsheet which was saved so it was accessible to all team employees:

"I meet with the unions on a weekly basis once the restructure consultation opens, and we agree through that process errm how we are going to select the people that we want to keep. From going from 50 to 30 jobs, how do we select the 30, what's the process they will go through? And as soon as I've met with the trade unions, we used to write a briefing paper which used to go to all the staff to say that this is what we've agreed so far". (Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> *"... we did a series of what we call core briefings* [briefing papers], *so we encourage staff to give us, we have got a question and answer spreadsheet, so staff can can ask their questions, we will then put the questions* [to HR/Senior Management]*, we will then receive those at our level, and either myself or* [named other Middle Manager]*, will answer the questions and everybody is in a shared area so all the staff can access it".* (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Whilst this represents good practice as the communication appears continuous, issues are followed-up, it utilises a range of methods which may appeal to different preferred learning styles, and it is accessible to staff working non-standard hours, it does not seem to be effective. This appears to be because many of the staff perceived it to be inaccessible, or because they felt their comments were not considered. They also felt vulnerable when some issues were deferred to their one-to-one meeting with their line manager where they would not have the support of their peers:

> "*I have not looked at it* [the FAQ spreadsheet] *to be honest, because I couldn't tell you where to find it. We have probably been told, but because we are so busy, it just goes out of my head, you know. Errm, I don't even know if our Management has sent a link. They probably have at some point. But yeah, I mean, same again. There is no, there is no personalisation there. It's a spreadsheet. I don't want a spreadsheet. I want somebody's who's face, who is facing me, who can have a proper conversation with. Not a spreadsheet*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*They asked us if, if we have got any comments on the email to email them back. But why would you email again when you have had no response from the first one? And if you say anything, they will just bat it down to the one-to-one, you are not there with your team to hear what everybody actually thinks, everything is done separately so that they can divide and conquer*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).

In addition to the written communication above, all employees and managers had face to face consultation meetings individually with their line managers, and collectively as a team, and managers considered this was implemented really well:

> "[Named Senior Manager] *did our consultations, and then myself and* [named the other Middle Manager] *did the Team Leaders consultations individually and as a group, and then all the Team Leaders then sat with their staff and consulted with them. And then as things changed we all moved on, we consulted with them every step of the way really. This restructure went really really well*". (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Despite management's view of good implementation, employees complained that they never really felt that they had the full picture due to rumours, the vulnerability of the service given it is easily privatised or moved online, and the perceived lack of honesty:

> "*We always feel as though that, you are not being told everything. But then again, you might be being told everything, you just don't know what's going on. And sometimes, you hear things first, like in the local newspaper, yeah. ... And you think 'why couldn't you just tell us instead*?'". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

> "*Honestly, I felt it was very poor. Err, information wise. Errm, we weren't given much. Errm, we had one large meeting. That was for every service that was affected. And, me personally, I just thought it was poor. I just thought, we weren't told much, basically. And everybody was worried about their jobs. And, the stress was unbelievable. ... I know we have to save money, and I know the Council has to make cuts, but then they need to be honest with the staff, and they need to tell us what is going on and what is happening. And we need regular briefings, and we don't get them*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

Although staff felt this way, Management perhaps thought it had been implemented well because they felt that they were being honest with staff, they followed-up queries and made a considered effort to foster trust:

> "*I don't think we had anything really to hide from them. We tried our real damned hardest and we really kind of wore our heart on our sleeves, and I think the staff recognised that we did try to do as much as we could. Errm cos I think we do really value our staff and yeah we, as I say me for one, I I I was out there possibly telling them too much at times just to try and tell them and give them as much where they could trust what I was saying errm and that, if I can't answer your question, I'll get you the answers from HR. And making sure that we did that*".
> (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

One of the outcomes of the redundancy selection process was that one of the Team Leaders that was considered by the study's interview participants to be a high performer, was selected for redundancy because they did not interview well. Both employees and management were apparently disappointed with this, and the Middle Manager that selected him/her for redundancy, was also his/her personal friend as well as his/her line manager:

"*And there was one particular Team Leader, which was displaced and which was quite a surprise, and actually sent some quite shock waves through the service which you know, wasn't nice at the time, but as I say it was dealt with quite professionally and quite well in my mind. ... We wanted to have ... a 3 stage process, so a piece of work, an interview and also assessments leading up to or how they are. The unions said basically that wasn't objective enough, and basically they wouldn't allow us to do the, to do the one-to-ones and errm the PPD kind of work that me and [named the other Middle Manager] did with the Team Leaders cos we might have favourites. ... It was done on a transparent process on the day. ... But, at least I can say that he/she was one of the, the Team Leader who lost, was one of my personal friends and I still take him/her as a personal friend, but I was professional enough to say he/she wasn't good on the day. And that was hard to do*".
(Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Although the Middle Manager leading on this felt the process was fair, the Team Leaders that were subjected to this process (competing for their jobs), had a different view. They were particularly concerned about the perceived lack of fairness of one of the selection methods used, and they felt the actual procedure used was different to what they had been told thus compromising perceived procedural and informational justice:

"*There was 9 of us when it first started out, and there was going to be 6 jobs, and we knew that. Two of the members of staff asked to go voluntarily, which meant there was one. And we unfortunately, we did go through the interview process, and one member of staff did lose their job. Errm, it was awful. It was totally different experience then going for a normal interview, errm, because when you go for a normal interview, you've applied for that job, you are going cos you want that job. ... There was a big debate on whether or not, errm, whether your past performance should be taken into account, ... Errm, and the person who lost his/her job, I think everybody was shocked. We were more shocked about the result. Errm, and it did, I think, come down to the day*".
(First Line Manager, 50-64 yrs).

"*We were in a team meeting at first with* [named Middle Manager]. *.... and there was talk about how the restructure process was going to work, there was more than one option. It was going to either be a desktop option, whereby they look at things like your time keeping, errm things that you do here, sickness, all them type of things. Or an interview base, an informal interview base is what we were told. I would have gone for a desktop option knowing my* [job] *partner was uncomfortable going through an interview scenario. And, but we didn't get the option to be able to vote on that errm for whatever reason that may be.*

So, we went through, what we was told was an informal process, which turned out to be a very formal competitive interview. We had a very what I considered to be, we had to do a written piece of work, beforehand, and that was going to be marked as 50% of the marks, and your interview was going to be the based on the second 50% of the marks. Which was fine. But I think that the question that they gave us was a very ambiguous question. ... Errm when we was in the interview, I think we were told that it was looking to be informal, it wasn't, it was very structured. Errm, there was 3 people in the panel, one of those was brought in as an independent he/she was from [named another team]*, which is fine, I don't have a problem with that. Errm, but it wasn't anything what we were led to believe*". (First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Consequently, it appears that these first line managers were not aware that it was the union that changed the selection process due to concerns regarding fairness. This highlights the need to explain reasons for decisions to prevent or reduce negative feelings forming. Accordingly, the emotional impact of this restructure process still appears to be adversely affecting this First Line Manager, suggested by the articulation of how their existential anxiety made them feel angry about the process and information given, potentially lowering trust. Despite that, resilience and engagement to the staff and customers was indicated:

"*I don't think it's something I'm ever going to get over if I'm honest with you. Errm, not that I won't ever move forward, because you have to do that, but it is something I will always remember. ... I felt as though I was going through a bereavement, that is how I felt at that time, that is how strong the feelings were. ... I was angry with our management team. ... you need to rely and trust on the people that you work with. And that's where I found it very difficult. I didn't. I ended up not trusting them. ... I didn't trust them* [management] *to make the right decisions. ... I am not happy with it, you know, and I'm angry about the way things happened, but I'm realistic to think that things have to move on and you have to move with them. Which is exactly what I did*. I wouldn't want anything to slip because of what's happened. *... Staff need you. Your customers still need you, regardless of what you are going through*".
(First Line Manager 1, 40-49 yrs).

In addition their own emotional issues, line managers also had to deal with the negative emotions from their employees:

"*I had staff crying, I had staff walk out, I had staff that just wouldn't engage at all, err completely closed down. ... We tended to have a few complaints come in re* [staff] *attitudes here at the time*".
(First Line Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Additionally, as part of the restructure, terms and conditions had to change in order to deliver the same service within the lower staffing levels. The three main changes included a loss of flexi-time which was replaced with fixed hours, where lieu time could only be accrued and used with prior line management approval. The booking of annual leave across all five sites was approved centrally rather than within site which made it harder to book at short notice, and an increase in Saturday working:

> "... *we had to take them off flexi time in order for the, for us to deliver the service that we need to*". (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> "*Within* [named service] *to take leave, your annual leave or lieu time, they have taken flexi away from us, which is another bone of contention. Errm, we are limited to the amount of people who have it* [annual leave] *at any one time, because of the needs of the service. Errm, whereas years ago, we used to do it within site. Now it's done centrally. So basically within site, you could have any leave you wanted cos it was organised within your site. Then it went to area didn't it, it was done in 3 areas, which again worked pretty well. And then it went centrally, and it just, you cannot get your leave. People are booking leave a year plus in advance*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

> "*Because we used to work one in six Saturdays and then because we lost some staff, we had to go down to one in five Saturdays. And now because we are that strapped on staff, we are one in four Saturdays*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

The tight centralised control of annual leave booking was implemented because staff needed to be locationally flexible. Whilst this met the needs of the Service, the needs of employees' were perceived to be neglected due to declined holiday requests:

> "*Long weekends are a thing of the past for us ... it's very rare to get a Friday and a Monday off*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

> "*I wanted to book, a, err, a holiday, and there was one day I couldn't have, and so I couldn't book the holiday. And I ended up having to pay an extra £350 and book the holiday at a later time. And I felt well Management could be a bit flexible, and and and it was because I was told that, 'that one of the days that you wanted off, we couldn't let you have it, because it would be a busy day'*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, the employee (earning within the range of £15,207 to £20,253 per annum), considered it was unfair to have to pay an extra £350 to book the holiday at another time because of one day. Additionally, this employee also reported that a holiday request to attend his/her brother's wedding was also not approved:

> "*And it was a Saturday, and I didn't realise I was working that Saturday, and I said 'oh well, we'll take it to management'. And they* [management] *said 'No'. They wouldn't let me have me time off when my brother was getting married*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Such restrictions may also produce unintended consequences, such as taking sick leave when holiday requests are denied, thus demonstrating employee agency and power. This was suggested by the employee below whose daughter was due to have a baby:

> "*I would be having to think 'oh, oh, what if she* [daughter] *goes into labour and I have to take a day off', I'd be off sick, it would be sick wouldn't it?*" (Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

The same employee explained what happened when requesting holidays at short notice to attend to a family emergency:

> "*I was treated like an animal. My grandson had been born and he had a stroke, he had to go into a thing, you know where, they had to give him something to knock him out. My daughter was worried that he would go in and have another stroke again, and so I wanted to be there. Couldn't spare me from* [named building]. *Went to Management Team, and still couldn't spare me. So I remember being in that cupboard talking to a grade 10* [ie. the middle manager], *and I said to him/her 'I'm going regardless'. And so he/she said 'but yeah but you are so good, and you are being a bit awkward and that'. And I said 'no, no, I'm not, this is my grandson, I am going, it's from* [named building] *and it's across the road'. In the end it was agreed that I could go when he was going under, but I had to come back, as soon as he went in*".
> (Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

Consequently, these employees seem to consider it unfair that they are unable to take their annual leave at their preferred/required times, especially when it would help them deal with personal issues. This may be particularly frustrating given holiday entitlement is a key benefit in local authority employment.

Nevertheless, many employees appeared to respond positively to these declining terms and conditions. In these cases, it appeared that employees reassessed the employment deal to what they considered is reasonable in the current financial conditions. For example, having to work more Saturdays seemed to be well accepted, however, employees felt strongly that they should get a full day off in the week in exchange for working Saturdays, and not two half days:

> "*It's just the Saturdays really. Yeah, yeah. We would have liked a full day off during the week. But now we are getting 2 half days. So we are still working a 6 day week. ... There is no work work-life balance. I mean, I have got kids. I wanna spend my time, my weekends with my kids. Whereas if you get 2 half days off during the week, they are at school, you know it's. There is no balance, there is no balance there. I appreciate that we have to work Saturdays, I have no problem with Saturdays. Errm, I would just like a full day off during the week*".
> (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*Cos some people don't want half days, some people want to take a full day*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).

Similarly losing flexi-time appeared accepted, but staff felt that holidays should be covered and approved within site/area rather than centrally to increase the chances of getting the days they wanted:

> "*If we had a choice between getting flexi back, or getting control of the leave back, say within area or within site, I would go for leave*"
> (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs)

> "*Yeah, I think I would*" (Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs)

Despite this apparent acceptance, staff expressed that they expected more 'give and take' within the working relationship. For example, many employees arrive early to work due to difficulties logging onto the systems which can take up to 25 minutes. However, as they are now on fixed hours, this is not accrued as flexi/lieu time as it is not authorised. This means they are not able to use this time in exchange for leaving early when the need arises:

> "*It's a quarter to nine start, if we all didn't log on until quarter to nine, this place would not open at nine*".
> (Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

"*We are all here nice and early in case there are problems logging on*".
(Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

"*But if you leave early on a night, ... , it's noted*".
(Employee Focus Group 1, 40-49 yrs).

More positively, this also indicates the communal concern employees have for the LA. Additionally, what seemed to make this particularly disengaging for staff is that they were apparently asked their viewpoint, but then the decision to reduce breaks to 10 minutes was made without appearing to compromise or more importantly, consider or respond to employee views, making them feel that they were not respected:

"*And they are after reducing our break, from a 20 minute break to a 10 minute break. Errm, fair enough yeah. I think 20 minutes is too long, but I think 10 minutes isn't enough. I think they should meet us half way and go for 15*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

"*... we were all asked about feedback regarding it* [reducing break times]. *And, in the feedback, I said, I think it would be a good idea before you do any changes, to have a meeting with the Team to discuss what has been put forward. Yesterday we received an email back, saying that the breaks had gone to 10 minutes. There had been no discussion, there had been no response from the emails sent by the members of staff, answering their queries, it had just been done. So where then is, the respect for the staff, and response, why ask for something you are not going to respond to?*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).

In addition to this perceived lack of respect, employees reported that they felt observed while they were working and not trusted by Management, giving examples that Management would intervene when they are talking to a colleague. They expressed that this pressure made them doubt their knowledge when they were advising a customer:

"*I think what they* [Management] *are frightened of, is that you might be having a private conversation with somebody, rather than actually thinking 'oh he/she is doing some work'. You know what I mean? And they just jump to this conclusion that 'you are not working, you are talking, what are you talking about?'. You could be discussing a situation at work*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 50 to 64 yrs).

"*I think that's when you start questioning what you are doing. Cos you feel like you are being watched*".
(Employee Focus Group 1, 50 to 64 yrs).

Additionally, austerity also seems to have reduced development, thus restricting it to the current job rather than an aspiring role, and using lower cost methods:

> "*They give you the training for the job, but before, I did a supervisory course, you could do things like that to try and, but now that has all gone. You could look at the courses and say 'oh can I do that?'. It didn't necessarily have to be something that you needed for your job*". (Employee Focus Group 2, 50-64 yrs).

> "*Our training now consists of memo 34, do this, this and this. Memo 35, ignore memo 34.* [Exasperated chuckles all round]. *Now, errm, Memo 36, this has now changed. Now when it comes down to using the systems, you don't want a memo saying this is what it is. You want to be sat down to see the system, to find out what the change is. That no longer happens. So you have a training section, that isn't giving you the training in the method that is needed, it comes out as a memo, a memo update!*". (Employee Focus Group 1, 50-64 yrs).

Job insecurity was felt by many employees as jobs were threatened due to legislative changes causing services to cease (for example, universal credit reduces the number of benefits available), the vulnerability of non-statutory services (which may be ceased to provide financial savings) and the impact of technological/societal change (which encourages customers to use online self-service systems, rather than visiting council offices which of course reduces demand for staffing):

> "*At the minute I don't feel that I have enough people because of the waiting times have come significantly higher. But I know I won't get any more people because there is not any more money to pay. So what I have think about is how I can shift some of the work to self-service so that the people that are coming through the door are the ones that we really need to see*". (Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> "*... and now they see that their role is changing again to try and sit behind the customers and get them* [customers] *using the internet, but once they have done that, where does that leave them? And that is their worry*". (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Nevertheless, there appeared to be (resigned) acceptance of the new employment deal - a normalisation of the declining terms and conditions:

> "*We just had to take it really and just roll over. Just saying well that is how it has to be*". (Employee, 40-49 yrs).

> "*I think it's just the nature of the beast. Yeah. I mean, I think it's, a case of, you've gotta do it, cos that's the way things are going. It's where LAs are changing*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Despite this job insecurity and frustration, it appears that staff do not let this affect their engagement, with very favourable reports cited by Management:

> "*And when we talk about engagement and caring about the job - all of these people* [indicated this team on the organisational structure] *absolutely 100% care about the job - and particularly these as well - and I'm quite, errm, I'm quite lucky really to have a staff group that if, they wouldn't work in* [named service] *and do the job they do if they didn't care about what they do. ... the pay, you know for these staff* [pointed to advisers on organisational structure]*, the pay is not that great, but they are there because they like the job".* (Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Of further interest is how the negative emotions during and following the restructure process, did not appear to create disengagement. For example, during the restructure consultation meetings, the Senior Manager reported how well employees transitioned from feeling and displaying anger in the meetings, to then going out and providing a professional customer service:

> *"But what I saw through some of those difficult meetings, is that they then went out onto the floor and they went 'oh good morning - how can I help you?' You know they switched from being really angry about 'why are you cutting this service? We do a really good job', to suddenly going out. So what I see is that care and that ability for them to not face the customer and say 'I'm sorry that's not my job - you need to ring up somebody else'. They deal with it to the end. And that is absolutely everywhere. ... All that is going on with the Council around budgets and change and job losses you know the customer is always at the heart here which is really really nice for me to see"*.
> (Senior Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> "*Why would you treat the customer crap because you are being treated like crap. Excuse the language, but ... And why should you let it affect your customer? It's not their problem. You know, that is just one part of the bigger picture, I'm afraid, so you do, you do just get on with it*".
> (Employee Focus Group 2, 25-39 yrs).

Consequently, staff appear accepting of the reduced employment deal and job insecurity, and this does not seem to adversely affect their engagement, particularly with the customer. However, they do feel that they want more 'give and take', as employee needs are perceived by employees to be neglected.

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Non-Professional Team 4

Critical Incident

Non-Professional Team 4 - Critical Incident - Restructure

The restructure process was selected by the senior manager for the critical incident given its impact on staff. Management explained how they tried to keep employees informed of the restructure process by different communication methods as they appreciated that employees would want to know the impact on job insecurity:

> *"... the Senior Managers put things in place, such as the FAQs, where people can, you know, share what they were thinking and get answers from it. And there was also,* [named Senior Manager] *did briefings as well, errm, and* [named Senior Manager] *would always ask, you know, 'how do you all feel about it?'. You know, he/she wanted the feedback and he/she tries to reassure people as much as he/she can. But you know, if the good news isn't there, he/she is not gonna lie".*
> (First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs).

> *"Errm* [Named Senior Manager] *is very good at sending out briefing notes if you like as to what is happening, where we are at within certain errm, you know procedures. Like if they are going to close a* [site]*, I believe he/she has just sent one out to say what's happening. Errm, we just make ourselves available really, to answer any of their questions or worries. And I do tend to try and sort of sit with them, and so that they can talk about how they are feeling errm, what they think is happening. And I always promise that I will get back to them, and I always do. ... I make sure that whatever I am doing can just wait while I do that. And I think it makes them realise that I am there for them, and they appreciate it".* (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Despite these communication efforts, employees' views on how the restructure was handled varied. Some employees sympathised about the difficult situation, and felt that it was probably handled as well as it could have been, implying acknowledgement of the reduction in levers available to managers. Whereas, other employees felt that decision-making was unnecessarily slow and/or poorly handled, with their existential anxiety articulated by their feelings of anger or frustration:

> *"You think you are going to get some news* [regarding redeployment]*, and then you don't. Like, to the point when, I was on holiday ... for a week, and at that time you could have access to our emails from home, and I was checking them every single day on my phone, thinking 'well am I going to get an email that says I have been slotted in* [redeployed]*?' ".*
> (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

> *"Errm, I just felt that the way that they handled the restructure, was, erm, appalling. ... And then, on the day of the meeting, quite literally 2 hours before, a member of management came to us and told us they were closing that* [site]. *That it was being announced at that meeting, and, we should prepare ourselves. We were horrified, we were in shock. We went to the meeting, but we were all angry because again we thought 'If you knew that, why didn't you talk to us? Why have you bombarded us with this? Why couldn't you have just sat and talked to us about it?'. Errm, and I suffered vertigo thereafter until they did actually close* [named site that closed]". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

> *"I think they do their best, the best of their ability really, because they have probably got their hands tied".* (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

To meet the budget savings required by austerity, the Council decided that one site would be taken over by volunteers thus enabling the Service to continue, but reducing the costs to the LA. This was achieved by job losses, but despite the sensitivity of this, employees reported that they were informed of this initially by outside parties such as the local press, conversations with customers, or on one occasion, by the arrival of a television crew:

> *"We read it in the* [named local newspaper] *before we were told by management, what they were planning to do. ... Or a member of the public would come and tell us, 'have you seen this morning's paper?'. And we did say to Management, no matter what it is, can you phone us up, send us an email, let us know what it is before we open. Don't allow a member of the public to come and tell us, or to bring us a newspaper. Tell us! And never, on many occasions, it happened every single time. ... it's just good manners. It would have been the professional thing to do. ... and the crowd had gathered and they came with the* [television] *cameras, and we knew nothing about it. And then we got a call from Management, they* [the television crew] *were already there. And it got to be, I think, quite humiliating".* (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

As part of the handover process, the volunteers observed the staff to learn the operational procedures. However, a redeployed employee explained that this was an uncomfortable process, and felt helpless:

> *"They* [the volunteers] *were asking a lot of, quite uncomfortable, we always answered them, but some of them were quite uncomfortable. ... And there was a table not far from the counter, and they sat there and just watched us, and then wrote down what we were doing. It was uncomfortable. But what can you do? ...*

And we asked if Management would, errm, support us a little bit more. They were having meetings with these people, and they could say to the people 'can you just back off a little bit - just leave them out of it cos they can't become involved'. ... And I think by the time we left, I felt as though we were sort of creeping out of the back door. In fact on the very last day, it had been an awful week. ... we were welcomed to go at lunchtime. We stayed - it must have been about quarter to six by the time that I'd left. ... [Named colleague] *knew what we were doing cos he/she was saying 'why are you doing it?'. And we said 'because we want to leave it looking lovely so that when they walk in on Monday, they will know that, you know, we made it nice for them, you know as a handover'. ... Morale was so low, ..., our team had been broken up, and that was the attitude all the way. I think it was quite insensitive, errm, lack of communication and insensitive and no sort of errm, loyalty to us really".* (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

Consequently, this employee felt that Management did not reciprocate their hard work with loyalty, thus breaching (or violating) the PC. The employee considered that this could have been rectified by more timely and honest communication. Additionally, the staff's existential anxiety was articulated by their anger and upset from the disbandment of their team and loss of working relationships.

In addition to closing sites or transferring sites to volunteers, the addition of new services created a need for constant learning to remain up-to-date. Despite this learning need, development opportunities were perceived by employees to have reduced following downsizing due to the increased workload:

"Things are changing and they are changing really fast, whether its procedures, or other things that are coming into the [named Service], *and you have got to be sort of like be on the ball. ... And you have got to sort of like keep up-to-date, otherwise you will get left behind".*
(Employee, 50-64 yrs).

"*But again, because we have lost so many staff, we don't get the same training*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

"*We have folders of like a learning log of what we can do, but we don't always touch it because like I say, we have not got enough staff really to be doing that*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

PPDs and one-to-ones have also been reduced for the same reason:

"*we have the had one not long ago I think, and yeah that was fine, [named First Line Manager] did it, but of course with the restructure, maybe 2 or 3 years got missed out. It just happens like that, do you know what I mean*?". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

"*..., if all 24 of us have one-to-ones or PPDs once a month, no once every 6 weeks, it would, it would take about 6 weeks to do it, because of the staffing. ... And that is why we don't get them very regularly. There is just not enough staff, not enough time in the day. ... And like, unless you go up to* [named First Line Manager] *or anybody and say 'look do you think I am doing alright?', you don't really get that appraisal that you need*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Despite the perceived decline in quality of working life described above, there appeared to be high levels of trust between the lower and higher levels of management:

"*Yeah, I just trust them and, I just, I believe what they say. And their positivity, tends to rub off*". (First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs).

This may be due to the increased communication that lower levels of management will be party to in terms of frequency, detail and being involved in organisational change plans at an early stage. Conversely, trust between employees and managers appeared lower, perhaps lacking this involvement?

"*But I feel like there are maybe things that we don't get told, like they are withholding certain things. ... and sometimes I feel like, are you really telling us everything? ...* [Because they give] *sort of cagey answers to questions. Like we have ... these things on the pc's where we can write questions, and they are anonymous, and then they get answered, ... And some of the answers are a bit, non-informative. And maybe that is just because they don't have the information. I don't know, it always makes me think, err, ok, maybe you are not telling me everything?*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Perhaps linked to reduced trust, the general feeling amongst employees appeared to be that employee voice had reduced since austerity, and they expressed that they felt that this indicated a lack of respect for employees:

"*You know, I think you become very weary really of how management, how, small you are really. And how indifferent they are to you, they don't ask questions, they are really not interested. That's how I feel. And that is how a lot of people feel*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

"*Because when you do put your point across, and it doesn't really get listened to. ... I think the higher up you go, the food chain, the less likely your opinion is going to be taken on board*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Despite this, there seemed to be evidence of employee (behavioural) engagement being reciprocated for favours received from the First Line Manager. The examples below show that one employee takes shorter lunch breaks in exchange for arriving 5 minutes late in the morning, and another employee explains that the team comply with unfavourable requests to comply with management wishes and prevent the first line manager being reprimanded by higher management:

"*But it works both ways, ..., because they are serving, they* [co-workers] *will go into their dinnertime 10 minutes late, and what they will do, they will come back 10 minutes late, and that will just drag things on and you never have enough staff to cover. Or. I don't do that, what I did is I said to* [named First Line Manager] *was as often, because I have got children, I might be 5 minutes late in the morning, ... So if I'm late* [going] *for my dinner, I don't mind. I will come back on time to be wherever I need to be, because I know, if I am late in the morning, he/she will not say a thing to me whatsoever. So, it just, it needs to be working both ways*". (Employee, 25-39 yrs).

"*I like to think that we support him/her as well. ... You know, there are things that maybe he/she doesn't agree with, and he/she will say 'this has not come from me, it has come from Management'. Errm, and you know, it might be something that none of us like, but, because he/she would get it in the neck if it didn't happen, we would all, you know, go by it*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Nevertheless, both managers and employees acknowledged the uncertainty in the future of work. The employee below in particular, appears to consider the job as a central feature in life, but the job insecurity is a huge concern:

"*So it's just the fear of the unknown basically. At the end of the day people have got bills to pay haven't they, and they just want to know that their job is safe. ... it can be quite stressful, errm, not knowing where you stand. Errm, but because I enjoy my job, I sort of get on with it in a way*". (First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs).

"*Yeah, I love my job, but I am, I get a bit bored and I don't like being under threat every year, like wondering if we are going to be cut, I don't like that. ... But, it's like every year since 2011, we have just been cut.*

... But, like, it's just stressful because you can't plan anything. I mean I moved house last year, I moved house twice last year, to save money in case I ended up like unemployed. And moving house isn't cheap either. But I was trying to cut my costs so that I'd be in a position to say well give me 15 hours, and I'll be fine. I didn't want 15 hours, but I'd rather do 5 hours than nothing. ... So really, this is the ideal job for me. But it's just all the stuff that goes with it, like from one year to the next not knowing if you are safe or not. ... if I end up on the dole what am I going to do? ... It isn't, but I make it big, cos like for so long, like, it's [the job] *been the only stable thing in my life apart from when we get threatened with like redundancy again*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Some employees feel that there is nothing they can do about the reduced employment deal and job insecurity, so they accept it and carry on as normal:

"*... there is not a lot I can do about it. Errm, obviously I know a lot of people worry about it and things like that, but I think, I am confident in the fact that I know I am quite good at my job, and if I need to reapply for my job again, I'll do that*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

"*No. Because seven years ago, about seven years ago it started that way. And I think, you either sorta like go with the flow, or you don't.* ". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

This (resigned) acceptance to the reduced employment deal and job insecurity may be because it is affecting LAs nationally:

"*But I think that is in all Local Government really. ... It is a national thing. ... I think it's the Central Government, they are not getting the money, so everywhere is being cut, anything that is Local Government, whether it's the Police, Fire Service, anything like that*". (Employee, 50-64 yrs).

"*Probably more the national situation. I don't think, I think we would be stupid thinking the managers here want this to happen, because they don't. ... I think, knowing everybody is in the same boat, it's not, I don't know if reassuring is the right word but its, you don't feel as, errm, picked on*". (First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs).

Although Management have purposefully communicated the changing PC and reinforced that there is no longer a job for life (see critical incident team 2), they again appear surprised that staff have a lack of interest in progressing within the organisation:

"*We don't seem to have a lot of people that want to get on within the organisation. And we often get comments that there aren't opportunities, but there are opportunities, but they are not always taken-up. And for me, looking around for who is going to be the future me, that's, I can't see enough people wanting to come through*".
(Senior Manager [Middle Manager A from Team 2], 50-64 yrs).

For example, the grade 3 non-professional staff did not express an interest in the higher temporary grade 5 posts that were created from external funding:

"*And the last one we filled outside of the Service. And we have got one at the moment that we didn't get anybody apply for. Which, I mean it's a fixed term contract, but actually a fixed term contract probably has more security than full time permanent contracts do*".
(Senior Manager [Middle Manager A from Team 2], 50-64 yrs).

A similar experience occurred when Middle Manager A obtained funding for two degree courses, but only 3 employees out of 25 expressed an interest:

"*... but we had two places, fully funded places for a University qualification, and I think we had three people that put their names forward*". (Senior Manager [Middle Manager A from Team 2], 50-64 yrs).

Once again, employees confirmed this was due to the lack of job security giving a reluctance to study for a role which may not exist in the near future:

"*I think, it, one, one time ago it would have been a career. But let's face it, while the Tories are in, if they get in, god forbid if they get in next year* [2015]*, there won't be any public* [named service]*. So, yeah, when I first came as an apprentice I thought yeah I wouldn't mind being a* [named profession] *one day. ... And even if I did go and get a degree in* [named profession]*, there is no future in it*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

"*Would it be a degree that I regretted because I wouldn't be able to get anything out of it, because* [named service] *are not seen as being important to some people anymore. You know. But* [now]*, I think maybe I see where* [named the service] *were going before I made any big decisions*". (Employee, 16-24 yrs).

Despite the decline in job security and working conditions following the restructure, both the Middle and First Line Managers felt employee engagement was good:

> *"Errm, and I would say yeah, most of them do focus on the job, they care about what they are doing, errm they know why they are doing it, errm, yeah they, most of them just do put the effort in".*
> (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

> "*They are all brilliant and they work really hard and they work well as a team. ... I see how much stock we get, I see how many customers are coming in the building, and again I know that from the stats, ...*
> *..., we log our enquiries so I can see who has logged what and when. So I can see how many enquiries each person is doing. Errm, and just just from being there and seeing them work hard, and the customers coming back in, and you know, we do get lovely praise from them*".
> (First Line Manager, 16-24 yrs).

However, not all staff were considered engaged and the Middle Manager felt there was a reduction in volunteering for additional tasks since overtime had been replaced with time-off-in-lieu:

> "*They are just reluctant. They don't volunteer for anything. ... Some people will* [volunteer]*. ... Some people will say '... it is not for pay, it is time-in-lieu'* ". (Middle Manager, 40-49 yrs).

Overall, the reduced employment deal appears to be well accepted and engagement levels maintained with most, but not all staff. However, the lack of job security is a source of frustration, which is stifling career development. There also appears to be dissatisfaction with, and an expectation for more communication, employee voice and trust.