

## Workplace alternatives – confront, conform, capitulate

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### Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to review, critique and contextualise the theories, models and frameworks on value congruence, person-organisation (P-O) fit and theories on person choices/alternatives in the workplace. The paper is based on social learning theory, the attraction-selection-attrition model, theory of work adjustment, cognitive dissonance theory, and theory of self-determination as well as other social psychological theories. These theories are applied and discussed within the domain of P-O fit, with the focus on supplementary fit, with particular reference to climate (culture)/ethical climate (EC) and antecedents of EC (specifically leadership behaviour). It is also the intention to conceptualise, contextualise and operationalise the constructs in terms of individual reactions to the P-O fit phenomena (conform, confront and/or capitulate), and lastly to identify areas for future research.

**Key words and phrases:** ethical climate, person-organisation fit, ethical leadership, leadership, voluntary turnover, job search behaviour

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The debate regarding human behaviour being driven by innate personality traits in the individual (function of persons) or the fact that the situation and environment play the key role in affecting behaviours has been raging for some time (Godrich 2010; Kammeyer-Mueller 2007). The most compelling evidence appears to be the interaction between individual traits and the situation; an individual's experiences are likely to affect their behaviour (Lewin, 1951). This view has been supported with empirical evidence from various researchers.

This study is therefore conducted from an **interactionist approach**, postulating that behaviour is determined by the interaction between individual traits and the situation (Rottinghaus & Van Esbroeck 2011; Schneider 1983). The interactional approach emphasises that in order to understand human behaviour, we must know something about the person and the situation (Magnusson & Endler 1977; Ostroff & Schulte 2007; Rottinghaus & Van Esbroeck 2011). It further suggests that behaviour is cued by each individual's perception of the situation and not

necessarily the situation itself (Kammeyer-Mueller 2007). From the social cognitive perspective, the interaction between person and the environment (situation) is fluid and bidirectional (Bandura 1986).

Terborg (1981:570), as far back as 1981, wrote that “interactional psychology, however, is much more than an empirical search for variables that influence predictive validities. It is a set of propositions that emphasize factors that need to be considered when we conceptualize and conduct research on individual behaviour. Although the ideas are rooted in psychology, they have direct implications for research on the behaviour of individuals in organisations”.

The specific match of the interactional variables (person-situation; person-organisation) or congruence between the individual and the equivalent characteristics of the environment will to a large extent determine the individual's reaction or behaviour. Good fit will lead to satisfaction, while poor fit will lead to frustration (Ostroff & Schulte 2007). This study further considers fit from the social identity perspective, where value congruence is considered to be more important than the job itself, as it refers to the employees' relationships with the organisation as a whole and not only with the job which represents a narrow viewpoint (Cable & Edward 2004).

Terborg's modification of the basic propositions of interactional psychology as formulated by Endler and Magnusson (1976) is as follows:

- (i) Actual behaviour is a function of a continuous process of multidirectional interaction or feedback between the individual and the situation encountered;
- (ii) the individual is an intentional, active agent in this interaction process, being both changed by situations and

changing situations; (iii) on the person side of the interaction, cognitive, affective and motivational factors and individual ability are essential determinants of behaviour, and (iv) on the situation side, the psychological meaning of the situation for the individual and the behaviour potential of situations for the individual are essential determinants of behaviour.

**Social learning theory** (SLT) is a very general theoretical scheme that can account for a wide range of social phenomena (West & Wicklund 1980). In the workplace, it suggests that when there are role models in the work environment, individuals will strive to emulate these models. Such role models include the leader and other employees in the work group. Further, employees in a work group are affected similarly as they witness sanctions for inappropriate behaviour and rewards for positive behaviour. Thus, employees will tend to model the behaviour of their supervisor and other employees to ensure that their behaviour is in line with accepted behavioural norms within the organisation.

Relevant fundamentals of cognitive learning theory as summarised by Mahoney (1977) were employed in this study. However, the ensuing treatment of the fundamentals includes rationales from several cognitive social learning theories and reviews of interactional psychology, namely:

- (i) Individuals respond primarily to cognitive representations of situations rather than the situations *per se*;
- (ii) cognitive representations of situations are related to prior experiences and learning - most human learning is cognitively mediated, and
- (iii) cognitions, feelings and behaviours are causally interactive.

The interactional approach and social learning theory have had a significant

impact on various theories, perspectives on work behaviour and work life in general. This includes the reconceptualisation (and rethinking) of the attraction-selection-attrition model as well as the theory on work adjustment.

The **attraction-selection-attrition** (ASA) model suggests that people are attracted to and selected into organisations and/or work groups based on the fit between their personal preferences and characteristics and the attributes of the organisation/group. An individual assesses the degree of congruence (or cognitive balance between dyads – balance theory of Heider (1958)) of their own values and personality in relation to the values and tasks of the organisation; this determines whether or not a person will apply for and accept an offer of a position from a given organisation. This process is the *attraction* component of the model, and the first reduction in the range of personalities and values within an organisation occurs here. The organisation then does its own assessment of the people who apply, and invites those who are likely to "fit" to join the organisation. This is the *selection* component of the model, and the second wave of range restriction in personality and values. Finally, those who do join the organisation and find that they were wrong - that the fit is poor - are likely to leave the organisation to find another place where the fit would be better. Poor fit will result in dissonance, a state of tension and the need to search for alternatives according to the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957). This is *attrition* and the third wave of range restriction occurs here. As a result of this process, organisations become more homogeneous on individual level variables (Schneider, Smith, Taylor & Fleenor 1998), something that according to the balance theory (Heider 1958) is often sought after by individuals.

The **theory of work adjustment** (TWA) is in its simplest form a matching theory. The individual brings skills and abilities to the workplace and they have values which must be met (Dawis & Lofquist 1976, 1978,

1984). Correspondence exists when there is a match between the individual's needs and skills and the organisational realities (norms and values) and ability requirements of the organisation.

The TWA (Lawson 1993) was largely one dimensional with the emphasis on the matching of the person to the organisation, but was transformed by placing more emphasis on the dynamic interaction between workers and their work environments; individuals and environments are mutually responsive (Dawis & Lofquist 1976, 1978, 1984). It was this mutual responsiveness and dynamic nature that led to the seminal work by Dawis and Lofquist (1976, 1978, 1984) on the interaction between the organisation and the individual, and ultimately to the development of the TWA. According to the TWA, both the individuals and the work environment are constantly changing through a continuous and dynamic process (Rottinghaus & Van Esbroeck 2011). The rationale for these changes by the individuals is to maintain correspondence with the working environment (Ostroff & Schulte 2007), as cognitive dissonance theory suggests that the individual employs ways to reduce dissonance (and subsequently the state of tension). According to Blustein (2006), the central pursuit among people interacting with the occupational context (work life) is to seek out satisfaction and ideally correspondence in the experience (through a good fit) by both person and the work context.

Four very important aspects of adjustment behaviour to ensure correspondence between the individual and their workplace are identified by the TWA (Dawis & Lofquist 1976, 1978, 1984). Firstly, flexibility can be defined as the tolerance for discorrespondence. This is seen as the threshold to the point at which the individual reaches their limit, necessitating action/adjustment. Secondly, activeness is described as adjustment behaviour that involves acting on the environment to

achieve closer correspondence. Thirdly, reactive adjustment can be described as the individual's adjustment behaviour changing something about themselves to achieve closer correspondence. Lastly, the length of time is the actual time an individual will spend on adjusting and reaching correspondence, also an indication of the individual's perseverance. These four aspects are considered to be orthogonal and are, at most, minimally related.

Other social psychological theories also studied and incorporated are the *theory of cognitive dissonance* (Festinger 1957), *similarity-attraction paradigm* (Byrne 1971), *reactance theory* (Wortman & Brehm 1975), *balance theory* (Heider 1958) and *equity theory* (Adams 1965). These theories have to do with the individual's interaction with their external world (perceived balance, dissonance, equity), the rational evaluating of their actions (alternatives and decisions) and lastly, the analysis of attitudes, values and abilities related to the conditions (organisational realities) under which the behaviours are performed where different perceived levels of balance and equity exist (West & Wicklund 1980).

These perspectives suggest that organisational behaviour researchers should focus more attention on person factors that might be expected to mediate the effects of situation factors, and vice versa. They draw attention to the complex transaction in which individuals select, interpret and change their situations.

## **2. PERSON-ORGANISATION FIT**

Organisational fit will be discussed based on the seminal work of Lewin (1951), value congruence (Chatman 1989; Kristof 1996; Schwartz 1992), theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), social identity perspective (Cable & Edward 2004), value image perspective (Lee & Mitchell 1994) and types of fit (Cable & Edward 2004).

Lewin (1951) emphasises that behaviour is a function of the person and the environment, as expressed in his equation  $B = f(P,E)$ . In this formulation,  $B$  represents the individual's overt, publicly observable behaviour. According to the person–environment ( $P-E$ ) fit paradigm, attitudes and behaviours result from the congruence between attributes of the person and the environment (Endler & Magnusson 1976).  $P$  stands for all the causal factors that reside within the individual person, including all the individual's mental (cognitive, emotional and motivational) states, as well as traits, attitudes and other behavioural dispositions.  $E$  represents all the causal factors that reside in the world outside the individual, including aspects of the physical ecology and the sociocultural ecology (e.g. the presence and behaviour of other people, constraints imposed by social structures, social roles, situational demands and expectations, social incentives). Lewin (1951) emphasises that the environment includes the social aspect of the situation, the behaviour of other people, as well as wider social and cultural forces which impact on social behaviour.

Research that focused on the fit between a person and their work environment has been prevalent in the management literature since the early 1900s (Parsons 1909), and has drawn considerable attention throughout the years. Person-organisation ( $P-O$ ) fit between a person and their organisation has been researched extensively (Arthur, Bell, Villado & Doverspike 2006; Garavan 2007; Meyer, Hecht & Toplonysky 2010).

$P-O$  fit is defined as “the congruence between the norms and values of organisations and the values of persons” (Chatman 1989: 339). Value congruence and  $P-O$  fit are often treated as equivalent terms (Kristof 1996). Values are trans-situational goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz 1992). Individuals use their personal values as criteria to select and justify actions and to

evaluate people and events (Schwartz 1992).

Kristof (1996: 4-5) defines P-O fit as “the compatibility between people and organisations that occurs when (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both”.

Human beings possess the unique psychological ability to self-reflect, the capacity for introspection or reflexive consciousness (Hartung & Subich 2011; Vondracek & Porfeli 2007), also in terms of their work and the fit that exists between the individual and their organisation.

One can also approach P-O fit from the perspective of the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957). It states that, within the work environment, in those situations in which employees perceive a meaningful discrepancy between their norms and values and those of the company (dissonant cognitions – Festinger 1957), the dissonance would result in negative work and organisational outcomes. A high degree of overall P–O fit, on the other hand, has the potential to satisfy human needs, desires and preferences. This is supported by the principles of balance theory (Heider 1958) where there is a positive relation between two elements, in this case the individual and the organisation.

Fit is not a static process, as it is extremely dynamic, unfolding over time (Ostroff & Schulte 2007). Holland’s theory (1997) emphasises the fact that individuals can change to suit the environment and the environment can change through the changing demand of those operating within it (Savickas 2011).

Cable and Edward (2004) differentiate between complementary and supplementary fit, as it represents two distinct traditions within the P-E fit paradigm. They articulate the theoretical

underpinnings of the two traditions, using psychological need fulfilment and value congruence as prototypes of each tradition. Ostroff and Schulte (2007) support Cable and Edward (2004) with the notion that complementary fit means that an employee has a skill set that an organisation requires, or it can mean that an organisation offers the rewards that an individual wants. Supplementary fit exists when a person and an organisation possess similar or matching characteristics. Supplementary fit tradition is most typically represented by research examining value congruence between employees and organisations. According to Van Rensburg (2013), it is often competence (the complementary fit) that ensures hierarchical advancement in organisations, without considering the person’s character (supplementary fit), as he refers to it.

Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007) differentiate between subjective (perceived) fit and objective fit, which is the actual fit between the person and the environment. They are of the opinion that the perceived fit often determines behaviour, even though it is the subjective valuation of the congruence of fit. The subjective fit (e.g. value congruence) will most probably be more associated with the supplementary fit of Cable and Edward (2004), while the objective fit would be associated with the complementary fit (e.g. congruence of skills confirmed through performance assessments). Blustein (2006) is of the opinion that work has the potential to allow for expression of one’s inner attributes (values, beliefs and interests) and not only one’s skill and ability in the work context. It seems thus from a social identity perspective that psychological need fulfilment represents a narrow viewpoint because it is tied to a particular job (Cable & Edward 2004), whereas value congruence transcends jobs by referring to employees’ relationships with the organisation as a whole; however, the two types of fit are not independent. The most popular approach to measure P-O fit is to assess the

congruence of individual and organisational values (Sekiguchi 2004).

Lee and Mitchell (1994: 58) refer to value image (as well as strategic and trajectory image) as a very important component to fit in an organisation. They describe value image as “a set of general values, standards and individuals principles that defines a person”. They further emphasise that an individual is constantly screening their environment to evaluate the kind of dissimilarity (incompatibility) between the characteristics of the environment and the private criteria of the person. This is consistent with Rottinghaus and Van Esbroeck’s view (2011) that scanning or self-exploration is a continuous process individuals embark on, especially within the work environment. The importance of the value congruence is accentuated by Lee and Mitchell (1994), as they suggest that the screening sequence is firstly done in terms of the value image, followed by trajectory and then strategic image.

Although P-E/P-O fit is a relatively old concept, it is so imbedded within career theory that it will remain omnipresent (Rottinghaus & Van Esbroeck 2011). The self has, however, evolved from a very static to a relatively dynamic component. This is complementary of self-determination theory (Blustein 2006), although certain limitations in total self-determination and autonomy exist, e.g. lack of alternatives and other workforce realities. Scanning, self-exploration as well as the manner in which an individual interprets and reacts to their environment have been studied in terms of individual dispositional constructs such as *locus of control* (Spector et al. 2002), *self-efficacy* (Bandura 1986) and *sense of coherence* (Antonovsky 1985, 1987). The basic idea is that an individual who believes that they have some control over what happens is likely to have a more positive set of attitudes and a more effective set of coping strategies.

### **3. ORGANISATIONAL AND ETHICAL CULTURE/CLIMATE/VALUES**

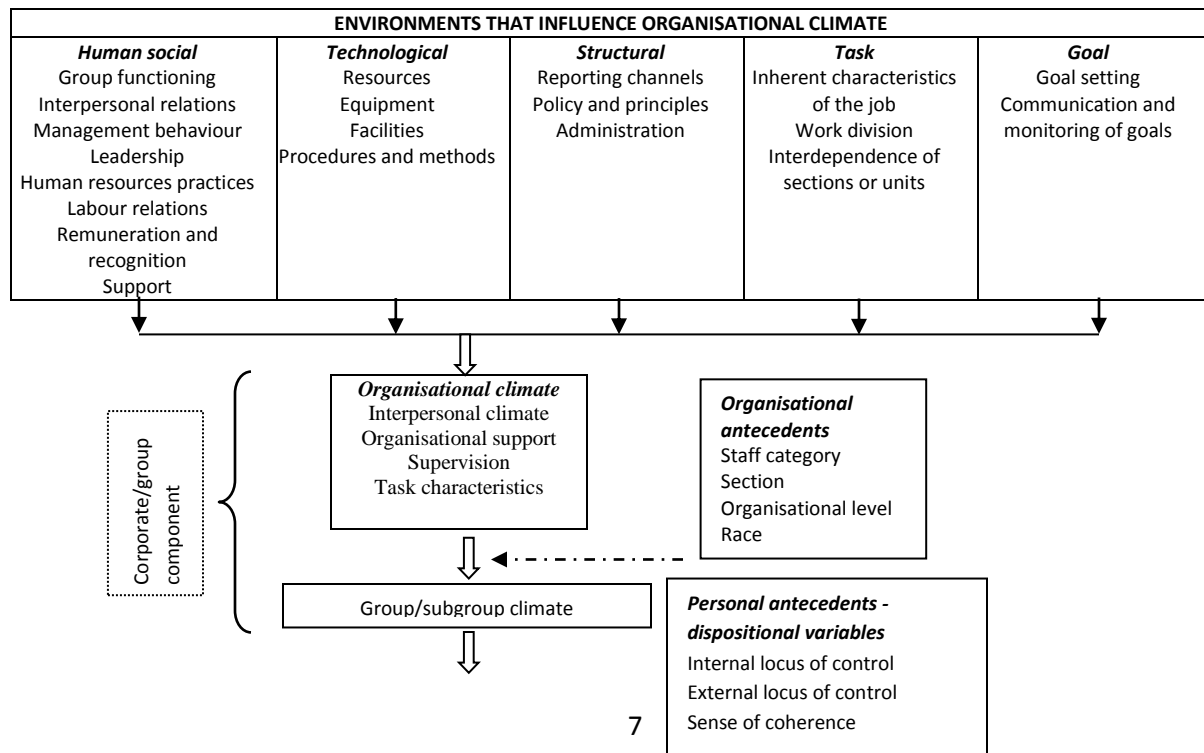
The construct of organisational climate/culture will be approached and discussed from the underlying perspectives and assumptions of cognitive social learning theory and interactional psychology. However, as recommended by James, Hater, Gent and Bruni (1978), a distinction is made between climate regarded as a situational attribute (organisational climate) and climate regarded as an individual attribute (psychological climate). The distinction between organisational “culture” and “climate” remains subject to some ambiguity, but certain fundamental differences emerge in the literature (Denison 1996). Researchers tend to discuss organisational cultures as fairly stable, value-based, organisation-specific outcomes of symbolic interaction between individuals and environments, while organisational or “work” climates are more temporary, better defined, easier to measure and more controllable (Denison 1996; Eisenberg & Riley 2001). According to Appelbaum, Deguire and Lay (2005), an organisation’s climate is part of the organisational culture.

There is, however, to a large degree an overlap between the constructs of organisational climate and culture. Although the two constructs developed from distinctly different disciplines and are based on substantially different assumptions, they do overlap and have certain similarities (Reichers & Schneider 1990). Both the constructs attempt to explain the process by which formal and informal rules developed to guide and govern behaviour in organisations. Patterson et al. (2005: 381) argue that organisational climate is a “surface manifestation of culture” which, in turn, is anchored in shared values. Parboteeah and Cullen (2013: 491) support this notion, and suggest that organisational climate is a reflection of the organisational culture.

Organisational climate entails the perceptions of members in the organisation and/or work unit, including organisational policy, practices and procedures, formal and informal. These perceptions manifest in patterns of behaviour, attitudes and feelings that are repeatedly exhibited and experienced and that characterise life in the organisation (Field & Abelson 1982; Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall & Britz 2001; Lawrence et al. 2008; Merkys, Kalinauskaitė & Eitutyte 2007; Parboteeah & Cullen 2013; Tsai & Huang 2008; Weber, Unterrainer & Schmid 2009).

According to Dickson, Smith, Grojean and Ehrhart (2001), the organisational climate is not an assessment of what members believe the organisation should be like, but rather an assessment of the shared perception of what the organisation actually is like. They further highlight the fact that climate is defined locally, in other words, the climate of an organisation is what the people inside the organisation say it is, rather than what people outside the organisation say or think it is, or wish it would be. It is also important to note that organisational climates vary in both strength and direction. Climate strength depends on

the degree of agreement among the members of the organisation about the climate, and one would expect at least a certain level of agreement (e.g.  $r_{wg}$  of .70 or greater) that this climate indeed exists. Climate direction, on the other hand, refers to whether the members of the organisation share a perception that a high or low level of the variable in question is appropriate (Dickson et al. 2001). The norm- and value-based evaluation of the climate will determine whether the climate is positive or negative. The structures and policies, the social climate and the culture of the organisation are determined by the people who are attracted to, selected by and remain within an organisation. This is particularly true with regard to the founders of organisations and the top management people who run an organisation (Schneider 1987). The following schematic representation is based on an empirical study, an illumination of the fact that the organisational climate is based on the human social, technological, structural, task and goal sub-systems, and that it consists of factors related to interpersonal relations, organisational support, supervision and the task (job) itself (Grobler 2011a).



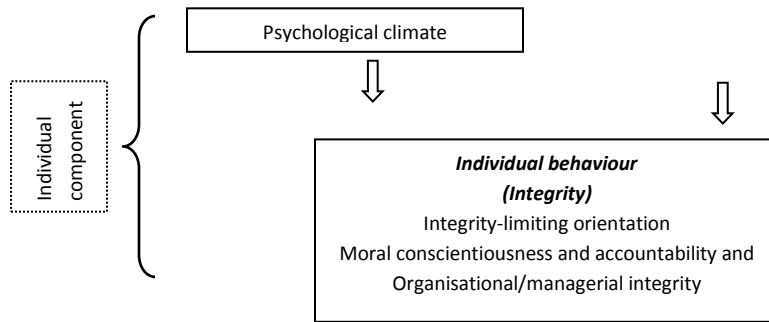


Figure 1. *Organisational climate, dispositional variables and integrity* (adapted from Grobler 2011a)

Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2013) propose that ethical culture and climate are strongly related, which supports the preceding discussion on organisational culture and climate. This relation can be subsumed under the rubric of ethical behaviour, and will for the purpose of this paper be dealt with as one construct.

Victor and Cullen (1987) are considered to be the founders of the concept of *ethical climate* (EC), with their typology of ECs having been employed by many scholars in

research on the construct. They used philosophical and sociological perspectives in developing a theoretical basis of the construct by combining Kohlberg's work (1984) on moral development and Schneider's work (1983) on sociocultural theories of organisation. EC is defined as “the shared perceptions of what is regarded ethically correct behaviours and how ethical situations should be handled in an organization” (Victor & Cullen 1987: 51).

Table 1: Theoretical Strata of Ethical Climate (Victor & Cullen 1987)

ETHICAL THEORY	LOCUS OF ANALYSIS		
	Individual	Local	Cosmopolitan
Egoism	Self interest	Company profit	Efficiency
Benevolence	Friendship	Team interest	Social responsibility
Principle	Personal morality	Company rules	Laws and professional codes

According to the theoretical typology of EC proposed by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988), the shared ethical perceptions are identified along two dimensions. The first dimension is related to three ethical criteria used for decision-making, namely egoism, benevolence (both more related to the utilitarian approach) and principles (deontological approach). Parboteeah and

Cullen (2013) state that this axis represents the party that will benefit directly from the decision. The other dimension (axis) concerns the three loci of analysis used as a reference in ethical decisions (groups that are considered when making decisions, according to Parboteeah and Cullen (2013)), namely individual, local and cosmopolitan.



Table 2: Adjusted Theoretical Strata of Ethical Climate (Victor & Cullen 1988)

ETHICAL THEORY	LOCUS OF ANALYSIS		
	Individual	Local	Cosmopolitan
Egoism	Instrumental		Efficiency
Benevolence	Caring		Social responsibility
Principle	Independence	Company rules	Laws and professional codes

Further work by Victor and Cullen (1988) suggests a collapse of cells within the EC structure, with an *instrumental climate* occurring in an organisation that has norms that encourage people to define right and wrong in terms of the consequences to oneself (utilitarian). The *caring climate* is present in an organisation that emphasises the impact of a decision on the welfare of others, particularly for team members and those within the organisation (Parboteeah & Cullen 2013).

EC is one specific type of work climate. The construct of “ethical climate” or “ethical work climate” has taken a few related forms in the literature. The common threads running through these definitions are the notions that (1) EC involves shared perceptions of group norms related to organisational policies, procedures and practices and (2) these norms deal with distinctions between right and wrong behaviour (i.e. ethics) within the organisation (Victor & Cullen 1988). Research concerning ethical behaviour in organisations has grown dramatically since the mid-1990s (Kish-Gephart, Harrison & Treviño 2010; O’Fallon & Butterfield 2005; Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas 2014).

In their meta-analysis, Kish-Gephart et al. (2010) hypothesise a negative relationship between EC and the intent to behave unethically. Specifically, various organisational elements (e.g. top management leadership, reward and disciplinary policies) were seen as having the potential to guide and support ethical behaviour.

EC refers to the holistic impression that individuals have regarding ethical policies, practices and procedures within a unit or organisation (Mayer, Kuenzi & Greenbaum 2010b; Victor & Cullen 1988). P-O fit and EC - internal incongruence either among the values of the individual or among the values expressed within the organisation – were seen as detrimental to ethical decision-making. This is consistent with the notion that perceived value differences between the employee and the organisation as reflected by poor overall P–O fit could translate into lower ethical intent (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas 2014).

From a social learning theory perspective (Bandura 1986), it is reasonable to expect that EC would play an influential role in P–O fit, specifically in terms of modelling. The research findings of Sims and Keon (1997) in their investigation into the effects of EC on the P-O fit concluded that persons whose ideal preferences of EC matched with the actual EC in their organisations were more likely to be committed to their organisations. This particular finding in terms of P-O fit and EC was verified by later studies (Ambrose, Arnaud & Schminke 2008; Valentine, Godkin & Lucero 2002).

Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2014) demonstrated in their study that overall P–O fit moderates the relationship between EC and ethical intent. This finding is consistent with the notion that various components of EC (e.g. ethical models, training efforts, rewards and sanctions) are most impactful when their directionality is aligned with the existing values of the employee. This is also consistent with previous findings

demonstrating that perceived differences in ethicality between the employee and the organisation can negatively impact outcomes such as turnover intentions.

Based on social learning theory (Bandura 1986), expectations concerning ethical behaviour could be learned via role models and/or observing the differing consequences (i.e. reward and disciplinary policies) of various types of behaviour. This is supported by the research findings of Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005), Kalshoven, Den Hartog and De Hoogh (2011) and Walumbwa, Mayer, Wang, Wang, Workman and Christensen (2011). In an article called “Monkey see, monkey do: the influence of work groups on the antisocial behaviour of employees”, Robinson and O’Leary-Kelly (1998) emphasise the role of the “significant others” on pro- or anti-social behaviour, using the principles of the social learning theory of Bandura (1986).

#### **4. ORGANISATIONAL ANTECEDENTS TO ETHICAL CULTURE/CLIMATE WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP**

EC has been reported to have several antecedents, and can be divided into two broad categories (Mayer, Kuenzi & Greenbaum 2010a): firstly, the characteristics of the individual, including demographics such as gender, age, education and personality traits, and secondly, organisational factors, e.g. organisational leadership (Bolman & Deal 2008; Dickson et al. 2001) and organisational career stage (Barnett & Karson 1989).

According to O’Fallon and Butterfield (2005), ethical leadership is the most important component of EC. It is defined by Brown et al. (2005: 120) as “the demonstration of normative appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promoting of such conduct to followers

through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision making”. The findings of Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2013) suggest that management efforts should be heavily focused on creating an EC, since it is likely that the effects will be felt, irrespective of the personal tendencies of individual employees. Ethical leadership as an antecedent to EC will be discussed in the following section.

As far back as the 1960s, a commonly held view of management was that it included both an efficiency component and a moral/ethical component (Cullen, Victor & Stephens 1989). Schein (1996, 2004) suggests that managers can utilise many practices to embed the priorities and values they hold in the day-to-day decision-making of their subordinates, and this in turn creates the climate (in this case the EC) of the organisation. This view is supported by Aronson (2001), Kanungo (2001) and Treviño, Brown and Hartman (2003) in terms of the impact of ethical leadership on individual and organisational behaviour. Victor and Cullen (1987) identify leader characteristics as one of the major antecedents to EC. Individuals in leadership positions play a greater role in influencing the EC in that they set the ethical “tone”, serve as visible models for behaviour and establish formal ethics programme elements for the organisation (Treviño, Weaver & Brown 2008).

Brown et al. (2005: 120) have defined ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making”. Their conceptualisation of ethical leadership has two main aspects: (1) the moral person component (e.g. integrity, concern for others, justice, trustworthiness), and (2) the moral manager component (e.g. communicating, rewarding, punishing, emphasising ethical standards, role

modelling ethical behaviour). According to Ostroff and Schulte (2007), individuals desire consistency in their environment and organisational life, especially in terms of the espoused and inferred values.

Leadership behaviour has a definite impact on the behaviour of individuals. It has been studied by scholars in different organisational settings (Erben & Güneşer 2008; Gottschalk 2007; Grobler 2011a, b; Huberts, Kaptein & Lasthuizen 2007). Mayer et al. (2010a) report a negative relationship between ethical leadership and employee deviant behaviour and workplace behaviour in general (including job satisfaction, commitment, turnover intentions, etc.).

The lack of ethical leadership will lead to cognitive dissonance and other negative attitudes and behaviour in individuals (Cable & Edward 2004). Scholars have identified the actual behaviour of top management, what top managers do and the climate they establish and reinforce as the most important factor in the organisation's EC; it determines to a large extent the way lower-level employees' act and the organisation as a whole acts when ethical dilemmas are faced (Sims 1992; VanSandt, Shepard & Zappe 2006). Kish-Gephart et al. (2010) as well as Mayer et al. (2010a) found that ethical leadership and ultimately EC are generally associated with lowering employee intentions to behave unethically and reducing the likelihood of misconduct.

One can further draw on SLT (Bandura 1986) to explain the effects of ethical leadership on EC. SLT posits that individuals learn appropriate ways to act through a role-modelling process by observing the behaviours of others (Bandura 1986). This theory further suggests that individuals are likely to pay attention to and emulate behaviours from credible and attractive role models. Leaders in organisations are often considered legitimate models for normative behaviour. According to Mayer et al. (2010a), direct

observation leads to employees being influenced by their supervisor because they have the power to hand out both punishments and rewards for ethical and unethical behaviour.

Consistent with SLT, ethical leaders influence their followers to act ethically in at least two ways. The first is to the extent that the decision-making processes and actions of leaders are visible to others in the organisation. By virtue of their position, leaders serve as legitimate models of behaviour (ethical or otherwise) to followers (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes & Salvador 2009).

The second is that a positive ethical leadership and EC create positive emotional reactions in employees, including a positive attitude towards the organisation and the work, respect, feeling of being safe, trust, etc. (Parboteeah & Cullen 2013). Giacalone and Promislo (2013) indicate that ethical leadership promotes normative and affective commitment, follower optimism and job satisfaction, while unethical leadership leads to job tension, family undermining, psychological distress, workplace deviance, counterproductive behaviour and dysfunctional resistance.

##### **5. SEARCH FOR P-O FIT, THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT AND THE THREE WORKPLACE ALTERNATIVES**

P-O fit was previously discussed as a static concept. Profound scholars such as Furnham (2001) suggest, however, that Lewin's initial equation of organisation-environment fit of  $B = f(P, E)$  be adjusted to  $B(\text{over a period of time}) = f(\Delta P/t, \Delta E/t)$  to ensure that the component's dynamic nature is accommodated. Fit may also change over time, and it may improve or worsen as either the organisation or individual changes (Kristof-Brown & Jansen 2007). These scholars are further of the opinion that people and organisations seek to attain higher levels of fit which include

conforming (individual and/or the organisation) or leaving the organisation to seek a higher level of fit somewhere else.

Based on the general assumption underlying P-O fit, individuals strive to maximise value congruence with an organisation, that is, organisations in which they could attain their personal attractive values and avoid their personal aversive values.

Savickas (2005) postulates that individuals who are responding to their environment possess four key qualities, namely (i) concern for their future; (ii) control over their future (linked to the individual dispositional constructs such as locus of control (Spector et al. 2002), self-efficacy (Bandura 1986) and sense of coherence (Antonovsky 1985, 1987); (iii) curiosity to explore alternatives and (iv) confidence in their goals (also linked to the dispositional factors mentioned before). According to Lawson (1993), the aspects that are important in the reaction to the environment are flexibility (tolerance for discorrespondence/congruency), the mode of adjustment, with active adjustment being behaviour to achieve closer correspondence with the environment, and reactive behaviour which involves changing something about themselves to achieve closer correspondence, with the last aspect being the length of time of the adjustment, which is basically the individual's perseverance. The active and reactive model of reaction to the environment will be discussed in terms of the workplace alternatives, *i.e.* conform and confront.

Another contextual framework proposed to explain the decision between workplace alternatives is self-determination theory, which entails that individuals engage in activities that are self-regulated, and they relate these activities to their broader life goals (Blustein 2006). In the workplace, it is assumed that individuals who share their work values with those of the organisation will be more likely to become self-

determined in their workplace decisions and in their working lives in general.

Both Holland's theory of vocational choice and the theory of work adjustment (TWA) (Dawis & Lofquist 1984) propose that incongruent interactions between individuals and their environment are likely to stimulate different types of reactions. The choice of alternative (reaction) is determined mainly by the distinct differences between individuals in terms of flexibility as well as their tolerance for incongruence (Dawis & Lofquist 1984).

A factor often neglected by scholars is volition, which in this case is the availability of alternatives, and not the willingness to choose an alternative as typically found in psychological literature. According to Blustein (2008) as well as Sachs (2005), very few individuals will ever experience total volition, in other words, the ability and freedom to make choices about their careers.

Equally, Schneider (1987) in his seminal paper regarding ASA theory suggested that it was individuals' attraction to an organisation and the organisations' selection of individuals who would fit in (on more than a simple knowledge and skills basis) which was key. From a social cognitive career theory perspective (Lent, Brown & Hackett 2002) individuals interact with their situations by selecting environments that fit their interests (Blustein 2006) and dispositional tendencies (Kammeyer-Mueller 2007). De Goede, Van Vianen and Klehe (2013), however, caution that P-O fit perceptions do not stem from an overall comparison of the individual's own values with those of the organisation, but rather focus on a specific set of values at the cost of others.

From a social identity perspective Cable and Edward (2004) suggest that value congruence should be more fundamental than psychological need fulfilment as a predictor of employee attitudes. Joining a

particular organisation is a concrete, public expression of a person's values. Thus, what is important to the organisation to which a person belongs sends signals to society about that person's self and therefore has implications for self-definition, regardless of the job level. Many scholars, e.g. Super (1957), Furnham (2001) and Holland (1997), have taken this argument to vocational and occupational level. Although this is often related to the organisation within a certain industry (De Goede, Van Vianen & Klehe 2011), the focus of this research is only on the organisation. Even though Schneider, Goldstein and Smith (1995) argue for separating the occupational from the organisational issue, as some occupations may be associated with specific types of organisations or industries, many other occupations can be pursued in more than one type of industry. This paper focuses on the organisational level only.

According to Cable and Edward (2004), it is important for the organisation to which a person belongs to send signals to society about a person's self and this therefore has implications for self-definition. A schema could be an organisational image which represents a general, overall impression of an organisation and its characteristics that is based on the facts, beliefs and feelings associated with this organisation (Schneider et al. 1995). Montgomery and Ramus (2011) report that job seekers will likely prefer companies with good reputations related to ethical standards.

Vondracek and Porfeli (2007) are of the opinion that identity is based on the individual's self-referent cognitions and is considered to consist of coherent psychological structures. Identity is defined by a subset of self-descriptions that are often bound by life domains or roles (Vondracek & Porfeli 2007: 54), in this case organisational and vocational identity. It is formed by behavioural episode schemata within the individual's work life. This identity is used as criteria to compare oneself with

the external environment (organisation, vocation, others) in an effort to establish commonalities and differences, based on a process of self-reflection.

A key finding of Meglino and Ravlin (1998) suggests that value congruence is positively related to affective outcomes. They point out that value congruence leads to lower employee turnover (and, by implication, associate this with outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright 2012)).

Caplan (1983) as well as French, Rogers and Cobb (1974) regard coping, adaptation and defence as the dynamic components or options for individuals as well as organisations to establish or maintain fit or congruence. The individual's reaction to the congruence assessment will be discussed in terms of the three workplace alternatives, with specific reference to conform and confront, with capitulate being discussed as a result of the first two alternatives. The brief discussion will be structured in terms of the active/reactive models of adjustment (Lawson 1993), with active adjustment being behaviour to change the environment and reactive adjustment changing something about the individual themselves to achieve closer correspondence.

## **5.1 CONFORM**

The workplace alternative can be divided into normal adjustment (as part of the evolutionary process) and dysfunctional conforming.

Conforming to workplace realities in terms of normal adjustment is a normal process for any working individual, according to the ASA theory; people self-select themselves into and out of organisations (Schneider et al. 1995). Therefore job seekers are attracted to organisations where they perceive congruence between their personal characteristics and the characteristics of the organisation (De Goede et al. 2013), resulting in an ideal P-O

fit, with only minor adjustments required initially. As with any organisation and individual in a process of consistent change and evolutions, fit may change over time [ $B(\text{over a period of time})=f(\Delta P/t, \Delta E/t)$ ] and normal adjustment is required from both the individual and the organisation (Kristof-Brown & Jansen 2007).

Ryan and Deci (2000) feel that individuals are more inclined to adjust to this normal and dynamic change if there is a high level of internalisation to external regulations, provided that three specific needs are fulfilled, namely autonomy, relatedness and competence. Autonomy (the freedom from excessive external pressure toward behaving or thinking in a certain, prescribed way) is fulfilled when the individual is allowed and able to grasp the meaning of the external regulation and to synthesise meaning with regard to their own goals and values. Relatedness is similar to the need for social connection within a specific context, in line with social identity theory (Cable & Edward 2004). Competence is the experience of achievement associated with greater internalisation of self-regulating functions; this is in line with the complementary and supplementary fit types of Cable and Edward (2004). Blustein (2006) adds and emphasises value congruence (as supplementary fit) as an essential component of mutual adjustment (P-O).

One problem or shortcoming of the ASA is the fact that it ignores change in the individual and the organisation to ensure or maintain fit. The researcher postulates that individuals who find themselves working in an environment that conflicts with their personal values may change their value hierarchies so that they fit better with the values prevalent in their occupations. Otherwise, such individuals are likely to voluntarily or involuntarily change careers.

According to Kammeyer-Mueller (2007), the interaction between a relative newcomer to an organisation and the organisation itself is

fairly one way initially, especially in terms of the formalisation of behaviour (Mintzberg 1993), also called structured socialisation tactics. In organisations, socialisation procedures, both formal (e.g. training, supervision) and informal (e.g. organisational norms), explicitly attempt to modify employees' values, attitudes and behaviours to fit those emphasised by the organisation (Chatman 1989, 1991). Chatman (1989) highlights the fact that people will be more likely to change their personal values when confronted with organisations with strong cultures.

Dysfunctional conforming from an individual's perspective is when they behave in a way that is not normatively appropriate but practised and reinforced by an organisation. A relatively new construct within the business ethics domain has been developed by Morrison (2006), called pro-social rule-breaking, explaining rule-breaking that is not motivated by deviant intentions (and on-sight value not impeding on value congruence). Instead, it is motivated by a desire to assist the organisation in meeting its objectives. Pro-social rule-breaking is thus defined as "any instance where an employee intentionally violates a formal organisational policy, regulation, or prohibition with the primary intention of promoting the welfare of the organisation or one of its stakeholders" (Morrison 2006: 6). Pro-social rule-breaking represents a trade-off between deontological and utilitarian approaches toward decision-making. Other authors such as Blount (2003) and Hertzog (2000) even refer to it as occupational crime (if it is linked to a specific occupation), and is in essence personal violation that takes place for self-benefit during the course of a legitimate occupation. Deontological ethics ascribes moral value to rule-following, while utilitarianism ascribes moral value to the consequences of the decision.

When a pro-social rule-breaking climate is dominant, employees are less likely to be concerned about the consequences of

breaking a formal rule and more interested in advancing the interests, productivity and profitability of the organisation. Because maximising the interests of the organisation is imperative in instrumental climates, behaviours that increase productivity and profitability are often promoted, sometimes leading to a competitive environment in the organisation (Parboteeah & Kapp 2007).

One response is analogous to the selection and adaptation of evolution. Here, an incongruent individual changes or adapts to become like the dominant people or attributes in the environment (Ostroff & Schulte 2007). Hoyk and Hersey (2008: 44) also mention that organisations (and groups) often select members based on their attitude not to disturb the peace ("rock the boat"), in other words, total conformity.

Active adjustment occurs when an individual interacts with and becomes an established part of an organisation (and organisational life in general). A predisposition to collaborate, share and accept organisational activities then emerges that results in a narrowing of the range of workplace reactions and behaviours that are deemed acceptable by the collective (Feldman & Pentland 2003).

Victor and Cullen (1987) postulate that once in an organisation, employees learn how to behave through formal and informal socialisation. They learn which values are held in high esteem, and which are rewarded. The organisational values dealing with ethical issues, those that determine what is considered ethically correct, make up the EC of an organisation (Victor & Cullen 1987).

The mere presence of a person in an environment alters that environment, independent of their traits and attitudes, described by the TWA as mutual adjustment (Rottinghaus & Van Esbroeck 2011). In evocation, the physical appearance of the individual unintentionally evokes behaviour from others; behaviour which, in turn,

changes the situation for the evoking person. Many aspects of intergroup relations seem to involve evocation as a central mechanism (Wagner, Tropp, Finchilescu & Tredoux 2008). The mere presence of an out-group member in an environment populated by in-group members (or, for that matter, the reverse) can alter the environment by eliciting behaviour from the in-group members that would not occur but for the presence of the out-group member. From a true interactionistic approach, Kammeyer-Mueller (2007) is of the view that interactionism is an equally valid concept for explaining how the organisation, including culture, climate, systems, etc., responds to pressures from the individuals that are functioning within it.

## 5.2 CONFRONT

When the values of the person are incongruent with the values of the employing organisation, the person will experience cognitive dissonance and will confront the situation in order to restore the congruence (Cable & Edward 2004). Confrontation can be on an active or reactive level (TWA - Dawis & Lofquist, 1976, 1978, 1984). The active reaction, in other words to change the environment/organisation, is always initiated by the individual, and includes employee-initiated actions such as whistle-blowing.

*Whistle-blowing* is defined by Noe et al. (2012) as an action initiated by an employee to make their grievances public, or by using the internal protocols (e.g. anonymous complaints procedures and systems) to expose an employer's wrongdoing to outsiders (Freadrich, Ferrell & Ferrell 2013; Larmer 2002).

Going external is often a result of frustration due to the unresponsiveness of the internal systems, but has serious implications for the relationship between the individual and the organisation, should it be discovered.

Following the internal route also has implications for the individual, especially if the identity of the individual is made known. This may lead to subjective and unfair labour practices, such as demotion, lower performance assessment, punitive transfers, loss of jobs, etc. (Larmer 2002). It further has a negative impact on the trust and cooperation between team members, as it is often seen as a lack of loyalty. Rothwell and Baldwin (2007) suggest that benevolent climates have a positive association with employee willingness to engage in whistle-blowing, indicating that it is done with the intent to improve the organisation, and not with an egoistic motive, e.g. revenge and for own benefit. This is supported by Freadrich et al. (2013).

*Turnover* is considered to be a more dramatic response, according to Ostroff and Schulte (2007), to incongruent interaction between an individual and the environment. It is analogous to extinction – individuals leave the organisational environment when they do not fit. According to the TWA (Dawis & Lofquist 1976, 1978, 1984; Eggerth 2002), an individual will opt to leave the organisation if the threshold point necessitates action. Leaving the organisation is seen as being reactive and an individual will often leave the environment if time has been spent on reaching correspondence without success (Lawson, 1993). While evolutionary psychology focuses on the selection of behaviour by the environment, selection of the environment occurs as well, in this case an alternative organisation. The choosing of alternatives is reactive in the sense that it is to enhance P-O fit between the individual's own personality, supporting and promoting their own preferences and tendencies (Emmons, Diener & Larsen 1986).

Noe et al. (2012) have a very realistic view of employees staying with an organisation because they do not have alternatives for other employment. This will activate a process of looking at alternatives, often called job search behaviour. Job search

behaviour is described by Boswell, Roehling, LePine and Moynihan (2003) as a dynamic process where individuals consider two sets of interrelated factors, job and organisational attributes, and recruitment experiences.

Voluntary turnover as a reactive adjustment to the environment is defined as any individual-initiated action to end the employment at a specific organisation (Erasmus, Grobler & Van Niekerk (in press)). According to Lee and Mitchel (1994) as well as Lee, Mitchell, Wise and Fireman (1996), voluntary employee turnover has been researched and discussed based on two very distinct approaches, namely the push and pull theories. The focus on the push theory is more on the desire to leave (from a psychological base) and is relevant to reactive adjustment, whilst the pull theory focuses on the ease of leaving the organisation and the options available to an individual (market origin).

Lee et al. (1996) are of the opinion that the decision to leave an organisation depends on two aspects, namely the perceived ease and the desirability of movement. It includes basically two components, firstly a shock to the system (after an assessment of congruence) which is the events that initiate the psychological decision processes and, secondly the availability of alternatives.

Lee et al. (1996: 6-8) elaborate on four decision paths of voluntary turnover. This is basically an extension of the seminal work on voluntary turnover by Mobley (1977). These paths are as follows (the first two are specifically relevant to this study):

- A shock prompts an employee to reassess the quality of their basic attachment to an organisation. The focus is on how much the person wants to be part of the organisation (also see social identity theory). It happens without any job alternatives available. The decision involves two basic psychological processes, firstly



the shock is judged against the images of compatibility and fit, in the sequence of value, then trajectory, followed by strategic image. Secondly, if a misfit is perceived, the individual simply leaves. The essential features of this path are a shock and a violation of images.

- A shock to the system prompts an employee to assess the possibility of attachment to another organisation. This path differs from the previous path in that at least one alternative is available. The decision is then based on leaving the current organisation for the alternative, or to stay.
- No shock is involved, but the individual gradually outgrows the organisation or their job. The evaluation therefore occurs gradually. This may lead to a person just leaving without alternatives, or it prompts an individual to start looking for alternatives. When these alternatives are found, the individual compares and evaluates them (in accordance with their frame of reference (Noe et al. (2012)), then leaves.
- The last path is where a shock is anticipated (not serious or unexpected) and there is a pre-existing plan, e.g. reaching a self-determined early retirement age.

Blustein (2006: 188), in response to Super's classic text on career theories (1957), mentions that congruency is not equally available to and prevalent for all people – in other words, “the good life of a satisfying career is not available to all workers”. Schneider (1987) argues from an ASA perspective (as discussed earlier) that P-E fit will be weaker in times of high unemployment, and among groups of people who have fewer alternatives available to them.

The research linking EC and turnover intentions found that egoistic climates tend to encourage turnover intentions (e.g.

Ambrose et al. 2008; Sims & Keon 1997), and principled and benevolent climates tend to reduce employee turnover intentions.

### 5.3 CAPITULATE

Literature clearly indicates the negative impact of poor P-O fit for the individual (as well as the organisation). Poor fit at a complementary level (e.g. poor performance, insufficient remuneration) has a natural way of either restoring the congruence or leaving the organisation. It is more objective than supplementary fit, which is based on the subjective, less tangible and definable fit components, e.g. value congruence (Kristof-Brown & Jansen 2007).

Blustein (2006) emphasises value congruence (supplementary fit) as an essential component of mutual adjustment (P-O) as it may enhance or *detract the ability to work in a self-directed way*. Blustein (2006) is also of the opinion that more complex issues such as value congruence may not always be feasible, especially for those with few and limited options.

*Staying in an organisation where poor P-O fit manifests*, mainly in the absence of alternatives, has various effects, such as job withdrawal, including physical (e.g. absenteeism) and psychological withdrawal (lower commitment) (Noe et al. 2012). According to Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2013), it has the potential to negatively impact on the emotional psychological states and well-being of the individual.

It may also lead to disengagement of moral control, which can lead individuals to disconnect the self-regulatory systems that typically govern moral conduct (Bandura, 1990, 1991). This may lead to “context acceptable behaviour”, called pro-social behaviour by Morrison (2006) and occupational crimes by Blount (2003) and Hertzog (2000).

There is a direct relationship between workplace unethical behaviour (even if the behaviour is contextually justified) and the well-being of the individual (Giacalone & Promislo 2013). The impact of unethical behaviour ranges from the undermining of social relationships, inside and especially outside the workplace and, importantly, the diminishing of morality in general.

Non-conformity has an effect on *organisational life in general*. Co-workers and especially managers can use sarcasm and punishment to enforce conformity, and those who resist conformity may meet sharp opposition, isolating them from the normal interpersonal processes in the organisation (Hoyk & Hersey 2008). Hoyk and Hersey (2008: 78), in studying ethical dilemmas in the workplace, and the individual, group and organisational response to it, mention that *whistle-blowing* can be “career suicide”, especially when the direct line manager is implicated.

A further permutation of the workplace alternatives that can potentially lead to capitulation is the decision to leave the organisation (after a shock) *without alternatives*; see the first path of Lee et al.’s model of voluntary turnover. This is often regarded as an irrational and impulsive decision, which will have serious consequences, not only at financial, but also social levels. Unemployment, even for a short period, has psychological, social and even physical consequences for the individual. This situation often leads to desperate job search behaviour, which may also have a negative impact on the individual. Desperate, erratic and subsequently unsuccessful job search behaviour can lead to negative affect, distress and lowered self-efficacy, and in turn, job seekers who have low confidence in their ability to find and secure a job, and who put less effort into searching. These individuals are expected to have fewer and overall less successful interviews, and ultimately fewer job offers (Crossley &

Stanton 2005) – a vicious cycle with low prognosis for the individual.

Job search behaviour impacts on the well-being of the individual, which impacts on the success of the job search. Traditional perspectives argue that unsuccessful job search leads to decreased physical and mental health (Murphy & Athanasou 1999); the reverse causation hypothesis (Kasl 1982) posits that poor psychological well-being negatively influences employment outcomes.

## 6. CONCLUSION

P-O fit seems to be an important aspect, not only for the individual, but also for the organisation. The interactionist approach was followed in the study of P-O fit, as it is a construct consisting of two role players, i.e. the individual and the organisation. The relationship is dynamic, fluid and bidirectional. P-O fit comprises complementary fit which is more related to the utilitarian approach (need fulfilment), as well as supplementary fit, more related to the deontological approach (value congruence). Complementary fit is simpler to assess, as it relates to the contract between the individual and the organisation in terms of skills, knowledge, ability and ultimately performance from the individual’s side, and the remuneration and acknowledgement from the organisation’s side; a true transaction.

P-O fit at supplementary level is more complex and dynamic, as it is based mainly on value congruence and correspondence; it is very subjective and the fit is assessed by an individual, based on their subjective experience.

In reviewing the theories, models and frameworks on value congruence, P-O fit and theories on person choices/alternatives in the workplace, most of it is regarded as classical work (and subsequently quite old), but it still is very relevant to modern work life. Social learning theory, the attraction-

selection-attrition model, the theory of work adjustment, cognitive dissonance theory, and the theory of self-determination as well as other social psychological theories (balance theory, equity theory, attribution theory as well as reactance theory) were studied within the context of P-O fit, with the focus on supplementary fit, and it is still very relevant.

These theories, models and frameworks have some elements in common. Firstly, there is interaction between the two parties, and the relationship is multidirectional. Individuals consistently evaluate their fit in terms of value congruence, social identity, equity in relation to rewards and adjustment to ensure congruence. Active modes of adjustment imply that the individual changes the environment to enhance congruence, while reactive modes imply that the individual changes to ensure congruence. It is further evident from the literature that leadership behaviour is one, if not the most important, aspect of organisational climate and ethical climate, and therefore impacts on value congruence and P-O fit in general. Ethical leadership and climate need to be developed and maintained in terms of the on-going display of moral virtuous behaviour by top management, supervisors and peers, combined with formal ethics mechanisms, which are required to build a strong ethical climate.

The three workplace alternatives as proposed by the title of this paper are directly related to the individual's perception of P-O fit and specifically supplementary fit, based on value congruence or correspondence. Conform alternatives include normal adjustment, which is a continuous process, as the organisation and individual change over time (something that the ASA neglects to address). There are various ways of ensuring congruence and alignment at this level, which include active as well as reactive modes of adjustment, e.g. socialisation, in-house training and development, skilling and reskilling of individuals. The concerning aspect of

conformance is where individuals become involved in pro-social rule-breaking, occupational crimes and deviant behaviour in general, as a result of conforming to the organisation and/or its components. This leads to a range of negative outcomes, at a psychological, social and physical level – culminating in the final workplace alternative, namely capitulation.

The second alternative is to confront the situation from an active adjustment mode, namely whistle-blowing. This may be effective in an ethical climate of benevolence, in other words where parties act with the intention to improve the environment for both. However, it has been labelled by some authors as “career suicide”, and it was indicated that it will drastically impact on perceived loyalty to the organisation, social relationships with colleagues and even victimisation, marginalising and isolation of the individual, also culminating in capitulation.

A further reactive mode of adjustment is for the individual to leave the organisation. This is usually seen as a drastic step that has two main components attached to the decision: firstly, a “shock” which may be an incident, or a gradual realisation of incongruence between the individual and the organisation, and secondly, the availability of alternatives, also called freedom of choice and volition in social psychology. The decision to leave the organisation (after an incident of perceived incongruence over time), with alternatives, is seen as a rational decision.

Capitulation (the third workplace alternative) will most probably be the result of leaving the organisation without an alternative, leading to unemployment with all its negative consequences, not only financially, but also in terms of the negative impact of job search behaviour when it is unsuccessful (self-efficacy, sense of coherence, etc.), interpersonal relationships (family, friends), overall well-being and also at a physical level (stress, depression and even coronary heart diseases).

To conclude, P-O fit and all the fit theories and models related to work life, although old, are still very relevant. P-O fit in terms of supplementary fit is especially influenced by leadership behaviour as it will have an impact on perceived value congruence. Conforming to an organisation is a normal process (evolutionary process) but it may lead to capitulation of an individual in certain instances when it is taken to the extreme. Confronting the situation is also seen as an active mode of adjustment when the individual intends to change the situation (organisation) for the better. Confrontation (as a reactive mode of adjustment) has a normal level (normal voluntary turnover based on a rational decision), but also a negative side, with the individual taking an irrational decision (to leave the organisation without any alternative).

The availability of alternatives and the freedom to make choices (volition) were included in all the classical theories and models and have been identified as areas which are even more relevant today. Alternatives (in terms of alternative employment) have become very scarce as a result of the economic meltdown, the automation of work processes and the focus on lean processes. A further aspect that impacts on the availability of alternatives is demographics, with differentiated employment practices in terms of race, gender and educational level.

The third workplace alternative, capitulate, is the result of poor P-O fit, the choice to conform (in a negative way), or to confront the reality (unprotected whistle-blowing) or to leave the organisation without alternatives.

It is therefore the responsibility of organisations to ensure good P-O fit, by means of effective selection systems, ethical leadership and climate and ethical induction, training and development of employees. Organisations also need to enhance P-O fit by creating alternatives for individuals within the organisation.

## Future research

The research that has been done on ethical climate and ethical leadership has mostly been reported in ethics journals, and was done mainly from an ethics perspective. A contemporary, business management, organisational behaviour research lens should be placed on the theories and models discussed in this paper to determine their relevance to the modern work life, especially in terms of why individuals join a specific organisation and why they stay (or leave) the organisation with specific reference to P-O fit, congruence, perceived ease of leaving, desire to leave, etc. A further demographic lens should be placed on the research to identify the impact of differentiated workplace practices on individual behaviour, in order to empower organisations and practitioners to develop need-based strategies and processes to enhance P-O fit.

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