

“Every man is proud of what he does well; and no man is proud of what he does not do well. With the former, his heart is in his work; and he will do twice as much of it with less fatigue. The latter performs a little imperfectly, and looks at it in disgust, turns from it, and imagines himself exceedingly tired. The little he has done, comes to nothing, for want of finishing”

Abraham Lincoln

September 30, 1859

Address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT:
THE IMPACT OF ROLE DISCREPANCY, PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND
ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE

BY

MARGARET ZELMAN LAW

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Approval of Dissertation

The undersigned certify that they have read the dissertation entitled

"Employee Disengagement: The Impact of Role Discrepancy, Professional Identity and Organizational Justice"

Submitted by

Margaret Law

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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The dissertation examination committee certifies that the dissertation
(and the oral examination) is approved.

Supervisor

Dr. Kay Devine
Athabasca University

Committee members

Dr. Sharon Moore
Athabasca University

Dr. Ann Curry
University of Alberta

Dr. Siobhan Stevenson (External)
University of Toronto

December 10, 2014

This work is dedicated to everyone who pushed and pulled, threatened and cajoled, laughed and dried tears, and helped me to complete this. You know who you are.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Employee engagement has become a popular topic of discussion in both the practitioner and the research literature, yet there is a paucity of empirical investigation. This paper explores the relationship between employee engagement, role discrepancy, professional identification and organizational justice.

Methodology: A national survey of Canadian librarians was conducted, exploring the relationships among the variables.

Findings: The study findings suggest that perceptions of organizational justice, professional identity and age interact to correlate with employee engagement.

Research limitations: The research was cross-sectional so any inferences regarding causality are limited. All responses are from self-report, leading to the possibility of bias. The study was conducted with one professional group so the level of generalizability is unclear.

Practical implications: Suggestions for organizations to improve employee engagement include: a greater emphasis on organizational justice, and options that would increase the level of professional identity.

Contribution: This study adds to the literature about both workplace and personal variables that correlate with employee engagement, and to the literature about the working environment of Canadian librarians.

Key words: Employee engagement, Organizational justice, Professional identity, Role discrepancy, Librarians.

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CHAPTER 1: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Recent studies have suggested that employee disengagement, that is, the loss of passion and energy in the fulfillment of one's work role (Saks, 2006; Tinline & Crowe, 2010; Tomlinson, 2010), is becoming an increasingly common experience among North American workers. It has been estimated that employee disengagement has resulted in the loss of several billions of dollars to United States businesses each year (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Kowalski, 2003), likely as a result of reduced productivity and reduced levels of personal energy applied to work ("Corporate agenda...", 2010; Pech, 2009).

One of the challenges when discussing disengagement is the lack of a definitive definition – it is studied and discussed as a reduced level of engagement, rather than the antithesis of engagement, and there is no agreement about the point on the continuum between full engagement and no engagement that signifies a transition into disengagement. For clarity, therefore, this study will refer to reduced levels of engagement, rather than disengagement, except when quoting others. Engagement is commonly defined as the extent to which an employee is physically, cognitively and emotionally involved in the performance of his or her job, and demonstrates this involvement through energy, dedication and absorption in the job (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Kahn, 1990), and this is the definition that is used as the basis for this study.

While a number of antecedents of engagement have been identified, such as the opportunity to use one's skills (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) and the opportunity to do work that is aligned with one's values (Leiter & Harvie, 1997), the potential negative organizational and personal impacts of reduced levels of employee engagement have resulted in a call for more empirical investigation of its antecedents (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004; Saks, 2006). This study addresses that call by examining both workplace experiences and individual differences that are proposed to influence this phenomenon.

Employee "disengagement" is also attracting considerable interest in the practitioner and popular literature, which provides examples of the proposed damage caused to organizations by reduced levels of engagement, and offers programs intended to increase these levels to an optimum level. Many of these articles, in fact, seem to confuse engagement with other constructs such as satisfaction (Bart, 2011), motivation (Kelleher, 2011), organizational culture (Swindall, 2010) and mental health (Phillips, 2003). In this study, a specific definition of engagement is used that allows for comparison of the results with other findings, and examines it in a specific work environment, in order to limit the possibility of confounding variables. It is based on the most commonly used definition (as used by Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Kahn, 1990), in order to add to the existing body of research in this area. The purpose of this approach is to evaluate ways in which an organization could understand and potentially mitigate the negative effects of reduced levels of engagement.

There were two main objectives of this study: 1) to examine the extent to which role discrepancy, that is, the gap between an individual's actual work role, and his or her preferred professional role (Takase, Maude & Manias, 2006) is associated with reduced levels of employee engagement; and 2) to examine potential moderators of the relationship between role discrepancy and reduced levels of employee engagement. These relationships will be studied within the theoretical framework of the psychological contract, which is a stable and enduring mental model of perceived promises and obligations within the relationship between two individuals or between an individual and an organization (Rousseau, 1995). The first potential moderator that will be examined is professional identity, i.e. the extent to which an individual identifies with and exhibits the characteristics common to a particular profession (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). The second potential moderator that will be examined is organizational justice which refers to individuals' perceptions of fairness in their workplace (Greenberg, 1987; 1990). These two potential moderators, professional identity and organizational justice, were selected based on a review of the literature. They also represent two different perspectives – one that is internal to the individual, i.e. professional identity, and one that is part of the workplace environment and therefore can be altered by a manager or supervisor, i.e. organizational justice.

By accomplishing the two main objectives listed previously, the present study can enhance the understanding of employee engagement at varying levels, and provide concomitant implications for theory and practice. As this is a broad

phenomenon, and not well understood, it will be studied in a particular group of professionals, librarians, with the intention that the results will be generalizable to other similar populations.

The level of employee engagement will be examined in a population of Canadian librarians in order to investigate the impact of significant changes in the work environment and the types of work that librarians are currently involved in that result from factors outside of their control. Librarians were chosen because they are a discrete group of professionals who are clearly identifiable, and who are experiencing a high level of ongoing change in their working conditions as a result of environmental changes. The leading cause of this change is the ongoing growth and development of the technological environment, particularly in the areas of information management and sharing (Barlow, 2008; Nussbaumer, 2008; Whitmell, 2006). Technological advances have been coupled with economic pressures, resulting in rapid evolution of information products and services, and changed role expectations for librarians (8Rs Research Team, 2005). While traditionally librarians worked in a print environment, and were responsible for assisting users in finding the information that they wanted, they are now expected to manage, preserve and work with material in new formats such as streaming audio and video, as well as to maintain their former expertise in the preservation and organization of print resources. Additionally, they are expected to demonstrate skill in “entrepreneurialism, creativity, project management, leadership, fundraising, competitive intelligence, ‘marketing on steroids’, and risk taking” (Cawthorne, Lewis & Wang, 2012, slide 14).

While it is clearly documented that the work of librarians has changed, there is little empirical investigation about the impact of this change on practitioners. If, as predicted in this study, these changes are manifesting themselves as an increasing gap between anticipated job roles and reality, and if this is leading to a variety of negative organizational and personal outcomes, there will be a significant management issue to be addressed. This study examines whether librarians are, in fact, experiencing a reduced level of engagement as a result of the changes in their work, and whether there are other factors that are affecting changes in their levels of engagement.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theory which provided the framework for this study was psychological contract theory as developed by Professor Denise Rousseau in her 1995 book Psychological Contracts in Organizations: Understanding Written and Unwritten Agreements. A psychological contract, as defined by Rousseau (1989, 1995, 2001) is a stable and enduring mental model, based on perceived promises and obligations within the relationship between two individuals or an individual and an organization. It is an entirely personal perception, and may not correspond with overt contractual agreements.

In the workplace, a psychological contract reflects an individual's beliefs about what behaviours are expected within the context of the job, such as the tasks to be performed, how hard one ought to work (Rousseau, 2003), and what is expected from an employer in exchange for those behaviours (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). These considerations are not necessarily monetary; they often include other options such as the amount of autonomy the employee is granted, the assignment of workers to appropriate situations or positions (Rousseau, 2003), or expectations of opportunities for growth or advancement (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). For example, the implied commitment of future employment by the employer may be regarded as a promise that is exchanged for the employee's

performance (Rousseau & Anton, 1988, 1991). Rousseau (1995, 1998) has demonstrated that individuals vary in their beliefs about the identity of the other party in the psychological contract; they may perceive the other party to be either their immediate supervisor, top management or the firm itself (Rousseau, 1995, 1998).

Psychological contracts have two distinctive features. First, unlike written contracts, psychological contracts are personal and are based solely on each individual's perceptions (Rousseau, 1995, 1998, 2004). This means that different individuals can have different psychological contracts while in the same position (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998) and working for the same employer. Second, psychological contracts tend to change very slowly. Even as individuals receive new information regarding conditions in their workplace, each person will tend to interpret it in ways that maintain and reinforce their existing psychological contract. For example, Rousseau (2001, 2004) found that a change in management style that does not agree with the existing psychological contract may cause it to be discarded or discounted. There is also change over time. Rousseau (1989) and Robinson, Kraatz & Rousseau (1994) found that as a result of the continuing input of information over a period of time, the number and diversity of the perceived obligations between parties continue to grow slowly and become more complex as new information is added to an existing psychological contract.

The theory of psychological contracts also addresses the nature and impact of contract breach. A psychological contract breach occurs when an

individual perceives that his or her employer has failed to fulfill obligations as expected (Rousseau, 1989; Robinson, 1996). Morrison & Robinson (1997) and Robinson & Morrison (2000) found that because of its subjective nature, a breach of the psychological contract can occur without any actual breach of the employer's formal obligations; and this perceived breach negatively affects emotions, attitudes, and behaviour. An individual's reaction to a breach of the psychological contract is typically emotionally intense and has been described as a sense of violation that goes beyond disappointment to betrayal (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), anger and a sense of injustice (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). It frequently results in individuals seeking ways to restore and maintain their preferred balance in the employment relationship. If, for example, they perceive that the employer has not contributed as much to the relationship as anticipated, they may reduce their own effort, both in activities directly tied to their job responsibilities, and in activities that contribute more generally to the work environment (Robinson, 1996; Robinson et al., 1994; Robinson & Morrison, 1995), or reduce their level of support for the organization (Rousseau, 2004).

The research literature on psychological contracts and their breach supports the notion that perceived discrepancy between one's expectations of the role that is required in a particular job, and the reality of the work that is actually assigned or required on the job is a form of psychological contract breach. Hsiung & Tsai (2009) found that role discrepancy was interpreted as a particular form of psychological contract breach as it represented a gap between the expectations of the employee and the reality of the work experience.

Literature Review

To provide the background for this study, both academic and practitioner literature was reviewed in the areas of employee engagement, role discrepancy, professional identity and organizational justice to provide a basis for the consideration of particular variables. The majority of the literature reviewed is focused on employee engagement, the dependent variable for this study. For the purposes of clarity, in this study employee engagement is defined as the extent to which an employee is physically, cognitively and emotionally involved in the performance of his or her job, and demonstrates this involvement through energy, dedication and absorption in the tasks that make up the job (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Kahn, 1990); role discrepancy is defined as the degree of incompatibility between the role that an individual expects to take in a particular situation, and the actual role in which he or she is actually engaged in (Staudt, 1997; Takase, Maude & Manias, 2006); professional identity is defined as the extent to which an individual defines him or herself as a member of his or her chosen profession (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt & Foreman, 2000); and organizational justice is defined as individuals' perceptions of fairness in an organizational setting (Greenberg, 1987; 1990) .

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement continues to be somewhat ambiguous as a construct, and various definitions appear in the literature. There is no clear first

definition as it appeared as a “folk theory” before it was questioned empirically (Macey & Schneider, 2008). It is generally agreed to be a multidimensional construct which is often not clearly defined in the literature, particularly when it is used by practitioners. (Macey & Schneider, 2008). It is commonly defined as the extent to which an employee is physically, cognitively and emotionally involved in the performance of his or her job, and demonstrates this involvement through energy, dedication and absorption in the job itself (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Kahn, 1990). Other writers include elements of an employee’s ongoing sense of pride and accomplishment in the quality of his or her work (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006), which demonstrates the lack of clarity around a clear definition. For this study, the Gonzalez-Roma et al. (2006) definition is used as it appears to be the most frequently cited, and thus allows for comparison of findings with other works.

Unlike related constructs such as commitment, which reflects attachment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), engagement indicates a level of positive emotion that an individual employee experiences while doing his or her job (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004) and a willingness to expend discretionary effort on in-role performance for the success of the organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In-role behaviour is defined as formally-prescribed job responsibilities (Turnley, Bolino, Lester & Bloodgood, 2003) and is linked, therefore, to the organization’s goals. Overall, engagement has become a topic of interest for scholars and practitioners and has been linked to both individual and

organizational benefits as outlined below (Saks, 2006; Tinline & Crowe, 2010; Tomlinson, 2010).

In terms of individual benefits, a high level of engagement has been related to good health, energy and a strong identification with one's work, which are posited to, in turn, lead to organizational benefits such as reduced turnover intentions and high levels of organizational citizenship behaviour (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008; Sonnentag, 2003). For example, Alarcon and Edwards (2011), in a survey of 227 students employed in customer service or helping professions, found that engagement was a significant predictor of both job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions. Likewise, Shuck, Reio and Rocco (2011) using an internet-based survey of 283 employees in a wide variety of industries found that employee engagement was significantly related to discretionary effort, and that a higher level of employee engagement was a predictor of a lower level of turnover intention.

Laschinger (2012), in a survey of 342 first and second year nurses in Ontario, found that engagement contributed to a significant amount of variance in both job satisfaction and turnover intentions. A low level of work engagement was a significant predictor of intention to leave the profession in first year nurses. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008), in a survey of 587 American employees from a wide variety of occupations, found a significant negative correlation between employee engagement and turnover intentions ($r = -.16, p < .05$), but cautioned that further study is needed to separate the unique contribution of engagement.

In addition, Bakker et al. (2008) found that engaged workers have a positive impact on co-workers, thus improving the overall work environment. Using a meta-analysis of 7939 business units in 36 companies, Harter, Schmidt & Hayes (2002) found that having engaged employees is related to customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability. This meta-analysis demonstrated that employee satisfaction and employee engagement were related to these outcomes at a level that was important to many companies and that the relationships were generalizable across many companies.

In a study of 245 firefighters and their supervisors, Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) determined that employee engagement was the most significant mediator found when examining the relationships among several individual characteristics, organizational factors and job outcomes. They suggested that practices that engender engagement will enhance workplace performance, whether it is in-task or in the form of organizational citizenship behaviour, and recommended further studies to better understand this mechanism.

Further, a survey of 191 people employed full and part-time in various industries, found that employee engagement was significantly related to three performance criteria: positively related to task performance and organizational citizenship behaviour, and negatively related to counter-productive work behavior (Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel and LeBreton, 2012). This study demonstrates one of the challenges in this field: the particular measure of employee engagement used was one that was specifically designed for this study and is therefore not comparable with other studies.

The role of employee engagement in mediating the relationship between perceived organizational resources and service climate, which in turn mediated the relationship between perceived organizational resources and employee performance has also been examined (Salanova, Agut and Peiro, 2005). A questionnaire was administered to both employees and customers of 114 hotels and restaurants, with a resulting sample of 341 employees and 1140 customers. A significant correlation was found between employee engagement and a positive service climate. This positive service climate in turn predicted an increased level customer satisfaction.

In sum, engagement has been examined in light of a number of workplace outcomes, in a variety of occupations, and overall, is associated with positive results. Consequently, employee engagement is to be desired in a work environment.

Engagement is also discussed in the negative as "disengagement," defined as the loss of passion and energy in the fulfillment of one's work role (Saks, 2006; Tinline & Crowe, 2010; Tomlinson, 2010), however there is no definition of how much reduction in engagement is necessary before it is defined as disengagement. Generally, when individuals begin a job, they are fully engaged, have high levels of enthusiasm and involvement, and are ready to commit their time and energy to the work role that they will be enacting (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). If this level of engagement does not continue, the organization may be affected in terms of a negative financial impact and/or the employee may experience decreased energy levels, as stated above. Therefore, understanding the antecedents and moderators

of reductions in employee engagement has the potential for significant organizational and individual benefits (Fasoli, 2010; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003).

Role discrepancy

A role is conceptualized as a pattern of behaviour that is enacted in a particular social context (Biddle, 1986). Role theory reflects the understanding that individuals behave in predictable ways, based on their own identities and the particular situation in which they find themselves. This behaviour includes and reflects expectations both about their own behaviour, and about the behaviour of the people around them. Although there are many variations in role theory, in general the theory is based on the understanding that expectations are the foundation of roles that expectations are learned through experience, and that people are generally aware of their own expectations (Biddle, 1986).

An individual develops beliefs about the tasks that are required in a particular role, such as a job role, through social learning experiences (Brennan & Khinduka, 1970; Goldenberg & Iwasiw, 1993). This social learning may occur during formal education, participation in professional activities, or during orientation to the work environment (Marcum & West, 2004). The result is a role conception that is best understood as a set of beliefs about the obligations and privileges that are associated with the particular role (Corwin, 1961; Corwin & Taves, 1962), and that form the basis for expected behaviour within the profession. Role theory encompasses the idea of role conflict, which occurs when

incompatible expectations arise simultaneously for the behaviour of an individual, such as can happen in a rapidly changing environment (Kuokkanen, 1992; Toby, 1952).

For example, an individual in the role of medical doctor will enact behaviours that he or she believes are appropriate to a medical doctor, based on expectations of clinical freedom and autonomy, with the care of the patient being the central concern. The same individual in a medical management role must work within organizational expectations of exercising control over other doctors in the areas of expenditure, efficiency and quality. These roles may occur simultaneously and lead to stress or confusion as the individual attempts to determine the appropriate role for a clinician-manager (Lewis, 2012).

An individual experiences role discrepancy when there is a degree of incompatibility between his or her ideal role, which is the role that he or she expects to take in a particular situation, and the actual role in which he or she is actually engaged, or the specific tasks that are to be undertaken (Staudt, 1997; Takase, Maude & Manias, 2006). When individuals start a new job, they are generally looking forward to the opportunity to use their skills (Maslach et al., 2001), and to enact a role that is aligned with their expectations. Kahn (1990, 1992) found that when individuals are able to use their skills in a role that is congruent with their expectations, they tend to become more invested in the role, demonstrating a greater degree of effort and a higher level of job engagement. Evidence suggests, however, that when an individual performs work tasks that are not aligned with his/her role expectations there may be negative implications for

his/her level of job engagement. For example, it appears that work tasks that are misaligned with an individual's values or competencies are antithetical to job engagement (Leiter & Harvie, 1997; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Freney & Tiernan (2009), in their studies with nurses, demonstrated that paperwork and other administrative obligations reduce their level of workplace engagement, as a result of incompatibility with strong professional values that support spending time with patients.

Role discrepancy has been found to impact negatively on both individual and organizational outcomes. For instance, research has shown that consequences of role discrepancy include the decision to act in ways that are contrary to personal or professional values, the decision to leave the profession (Takase et al., 2006), a reduction in ethical behaviour (Yung, 1997), reduced career aspirations (Lee, Kwan & Walker, 2009), inefficiency (Wilcox & Smith, 1977), reduced job satisfaction (Staudt, 1997), and reduced perception of fit between the employee and the organization (Hussein & Manthorpe, 2008). Based on these outcomes, it seems reasonable to propose that role discrepancy may be associated with reduced levels of engagement, or the withdrawal of the effort and enthusiasm that characterizes engaged employees.

Role expectations may be conceptualized as part of the psychological contract (Bunderson, 2001). As such, role discrepancy may be conceived of as a form of psychological contract breach. Individuals expect that the employer will provide them with the opportunity to enact a particular role that typically includes the type of tasks and the input into decision making that they expect in a particular

job. If the individual perceives that the employer has not provided this opportunity, he or she may interpret it as a failure on the part of the employer to fulfill his/her obligations. Overall, both empirical and theoretical evidence suggests that role discrepancy may be an important predictor of reduced levels of employee engagement when interpreted as a form of psychological contract breach.

Being asked to undertake work that one did not expect to be doing may be interpreted as a form of psychological contract breach regardless of whether the additional work is perceived in a positive or negative way. The work may be welcomed by the employee if it is aligned with the employee's desires and interests, or unwelcome if it is perceived as simply the addition of a number of the same or similar tasks (Lawler, 1988). An increase in tasks without additional challenge or opportunities for development has been demonstrated to have a negative impact on perceptions of self-efficacy and the motivational potential of the job (Axtell & Parker, 2003; Parker, 1998). In addition, if new work requires skills that the individual does not have, or overloads him or her with too many tasks to perform effectively, the outcome is likely to be increased work stress (Campion, Mumford, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005) and decreased job satisfaction (White, 1990).

Not doing the work that one expected to do may create the perception that an individual's talents or skills are underutilized on the job, or that an individual is overqualified for the work that he or she is being expected to perform (Jones-Johnson & Johnson, 1992; Johnson, Morrow & Jones-Johnson, 2002). This

perception has been shown to have negative individual consequences, in particular, stress, depression, and frustration (Gardell, 1982; Jones-Johnson 1989).

With role discrepancy interpreted as a form of psychological contract breach,

H1: Role discrepancy will be negatively correlated with employee engagement

Professional Identity

Professional identity is included in this research as a potential moderator because it is a measure of how closely individuals identify with their profession, or their sense of “oneness” with their chosen profession (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2000). As such, it is proposed that it will affect the degree of emotional attachment that the individual feels to various workplace activities such as a work assignment aligned with professional skills and values. If an individual’s professional identity is strong, they will value the appropriate tasks of their chosen profession highly, and are therefore expected to feel a greater degree of negative reaction when not assigned these tasks, or assigned tasks that they perceive are not congruent with their profession. For this reason, professional identity is being explored as a moderator.

In order to consider the impact of professional identity, it is useful to have an understanding of what is meant by a profession. “Profession” is a socially constructed concept (McCulloch, Helsby & Knight, 2000) that is interpreted

differently in different settings and at different times. It may be considered as a form of work organization, a form of work orientation, or a process of group control (Clarke & Newman, 2000). It has been studied by sociologists, social psychologists, organizational behaviour and management specialists and philosophers over a number of decades, without any generally agreed upon conclusions or definitions. The perspectives range from the trait approach, which listed the attributes of professionals (Greenwood, 1957; Hall, 1968), through an interactionist approach (Becker, 1970), a functionalist approach (Reid, 1979), a normative approach (Swick, 2000), and a post-modern approach (Cochran, 2000).

A brief description of each follows: The trait approach identifies five attitudes of professionalism: use of the professional organization as a major referent, belief in public service, belief in self-regulation, a sense of calling to the field and a feeling of autonomy (Snizek, 1972). The interactionist approach argues that professionalism is constructed and reconstructed through the social relationship between the professional and the client (Chreim, Williams & Hinings, 2007). The functionalist approach focuses on the role and function of professionals in society. It argues that professions are granted some freedom from normal market forces in order to focus on the well-being of society (Reid, 1979). The normative approach states that professionalism is a function of behaving according to agreed-upon standards and norms (Swick, 2000). Postmodernists argue that there is a connection between power and knowledge, and the definition of professionalism focuses on the social control of knowledge (Frost, 2001).

For the purposes of this study, the normative approach (Swick, 2000) of profession will be used, defined as a group of people engaged in similar work, sharing attitudes, skills, behaviours, attributes and values (Swisher, Beckstead & Bebeau, 2004). These attitudes, skills, and values include a focus on intrinsic rewards involving the provision of service, a maintenance of expertise, a level of autonomy (Kerr, Von Glinow & Schrieschein, 1977), a level of responsibility and accountability, the commitment to ideals (Kole & De Ruyter, 2009), and identification with and commitment to one's occupation (Bartol, 1979).

Regardless of the definition of profession used, an individual with a strong professional identity will have adopted the attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs that are held by members of his/her particular profession (Adams, Hean, Sturgis & Clark, 2006; Loi, Ngo & Foley, 2004; Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006; Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz & Dahlgren, 2008).

Professional identity refers to the strength of an individual's attachment to the profession, and to the idealized professional role, which is the set of behaviours appropriate for members of that profession. Ashforth & Johnson (2001) and Ibarra (1999) both found that, although an individual's professional identity and their idealized professional role are not the same thing, they are inseparable and develop simultaneously. Lui, Ngo & Tsang (2003) and Reid et al. (2008) found that beliefs about appropriate roles, values, and activities result from socialization processes that arise during training for a specific profession and continue to develop over time as individuals gain further insight into professional practices through work (Adams et al., 2006). Chreim et al. (2007) found that an

individual's professional identity is supported by professional associations that provide ongoing professional development, focusing on professional skills and values and is further validated by interactions with other members of the professional group (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Professional identity alters individuals' interpretation of and response to tasks assigned to them by their employer (Boyt, Lusch & Naylor, 2001; Bunderson, 2001; Hekman, Steensma, Bigley & Hereford, 2009). When the work that individuals are asked to do coincides with their professional role, and they have identified positively with that role, the result is greater job satisfaction and commitment to the employing organization (Loi et al., 2004). Employees commonly experience a discrepancy, however, between their expectation of appropriate work as defined by their profession and the actual work, tasks and responsibilities involved in a job (Melia, 1984). The more strongly they identify themselves with their profession, the more strongly they will experience this discrepancy when it exists. This divergence has been linked to negative organizational outcomes such as resistance to change (Doolin, 2002).

These findings suggest that an individual's professional identity may affect the relationship between experiencing role discrepancy and feeling a reduced level of employee engagement. A higher level of job engagement should result from the potential to do work that is congruent with one's professional identity, which contributes to enjoyment at work and provides a sense that one's work has meaning (Wrzesniewski, Dutton & Debebe, 2003). Employees who feel that their work role aligns with their expectations and is consistent with their

personal values, interests and competencies have been found to be more fully engaged in their jobs (Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Bono & Judge, 2003; Kahn, 1990; 1992). It follows then, that work that does not align with expectations has the opposite effect, that is, to reduce the level of employee engagement.

It is anticipated that an individual lacking a strong professional identity will not have a strong attachment to his or her idealized professional behaviour, and is therefore not expected to experience as great a reaction to being asked to do work that is not aligned with the professional role, or not being able to do the work that aligned with this role. As such, it is expected that:

H2: Professional identity will moderate the relationship between role discrepancy and employee engagement such that a higher level of professional identity will increase the negative correlation between role discrepancy and employee engagement.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice refers to individuals' perceptions of fairness in an organizational setting (Greenberg, 1987; 1990). The degree to which organizational justice is perceived as present or absent in the workplace is completely subjective. When an individual perceives that he or she has been treated unfairly, the resulting negative reactions may result in a reduced level of task performance (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1987; Zapata-Phelan, Colquitt, Scott & Livingston, 2009) and reduced in-role behaviour (Kim & Mauborgne, 1996). When treated fairly, however, individuals

have demonstrated a variety of positive reactions, which have a beneficial impact on organizations, such as reduced turnover intentions and reduced aggression (Colquitt, Wesson, Porter, Conlon, & Yee Ng, 2001; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Nadiri & Tanova, 2010; Owens, 2006; St. Pierre & Holmes, 2010).

The literature about organizational justice identifies at least three strongly related but distinct dimensions: procedural, distributive, and interactional justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). A further dimension - informational justice - has been identified by some writers (Colquitt et al., 2001). Organizational justice has been related to positive organizational outcomes such as rule compliance, recognition of authority, and task performance (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Devonish & Greenidge, 2010; Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009). This suggests that increased organizational justice may have a positive impact on an individual's fulfillment of his/her work roles (Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009).

Procedural justice is a type of fairness that is characterized by the perception that decision making is following specific rules. For example, decisions should be based on accurate information, be consistent both among individuals and at different times, be unbiased, represent the concerns of the people involved, offer some process for the correction of errors and reflect current ethical standards (Leventhal, 1976; Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009). Some writers have added further conditions such as the opportunity for the individuals involved in decisions to have input (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walker, Lind & Thibaut, 1979). A recent meta-analysis of organizational justice literature concluded that the procedural justice dimension shows the strongest relationship with work

performance and counterproductive work behaviour (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). These findings are similar to another meta-analysis of 183 justice studies, which found that procedural justice was correlated with performance (Colquitt et al., 2001). The reactions to a lack of procedural justice tend to be directed towards the organization, which is perceived to be the source of the problem, and have been shown to have a relationship with task performance (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1987) and in-role behaviour (Kim & Mauborgne, 1996). Two recent studies also suggested a significant positive relationship between procedural justice and work engagement (Inoue, Kawakami, Ishizaki, Shimazu, Tsuchiya, Tabata, Akiyama, Kitazume, & Kuroda, 2010; Moliner, Martinez-Tur, Ramos, Peiro & Cropanzano, 2008). Both procedural justice and interactional justice have been found to reduce the negative impact of psychological contract breach on employee behaviours (Kickul, Lester & Finkl, 2002).

Distributive justice occurs when employees perceive that rewards or other outcomes are distributed in a way that is consistent with implicit norms such as equity or equality (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, 2001) and has been shown to have emotional, cognitive and behavioural outcomes (Walster & Walster, 1975; Weiss, Suckow & Cropanzano, 1999). Reactions to a lack of distributive justice tend to be focused on particular tasks or the specific outcome under consideration (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Cropanzano & Folger, 1989) and the specific individual making the decision (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993).

Interactional justice describes the perceived fairness of the treatment that an individual receives during the enactment of procedures. It is linked to communication processes and expectations of respect and propriety (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009). Its impact on task performance is unclear; studies show conflicting results with some failing to show significant relationships (e.g. Colquitt & Jackson, 2006; Weaver & Conlon, 2003; Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009), and others showing a relationship (e.g. Cropanzano, Prehar & Chen, 2002). Because the source of interactional justice is perceived to be the supervisor, behavioural reactions to a perceived lack of interactional justice tend to be focused on the supervisor (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001) although two recent studies suggest a significant positive link between interactional justice and work engagement (Inoue et al., 2010; Moliner et al., 2008).

Informational justice is concerned with the quantity and quality of information and explanations that are provided to people (Colquitt et al., 2001). In particular, it focuses on information about why things have been done in a particular way, or why outcomes have been distributed in a particular fashion. Informational justice has been identified as a form of impression management, related to employees' perceptions (Jepson & Rodwell, 2009). Adequate and honest explanations provide employees with the information necessary to evaluate decisions and decision-making procedures, and to interpret outcomes (Ceylan & Sulu, 2011) and therefore are posited to be related to employees' reactions to work assignments. A higher level of information justice reduces uncertainty in the workplace, and is related to a reduction in employees' perceptions of

powerlessness and isolation (Ceylan & Sulu, 2011). Gupta & Kumar (2013), in a study of the performance appraisal process of 120 individuals employed by transnational corporations, found that “employees who perceive informational justice are more physically, cognitively and behaviorally engaged in their work.” (Gupta & Kumar, 2013, p.71). In a study of 103 MBA students at a Korean University, Son, Kim & Kim (2014) found a negative correlation with employee burnout, which suggests that it will have a positive effect on engagement. In a study of customer complaint handling, Ambrose, Hess & Ganesan (2007) found that perceptions of informational justice resulted in a positive organizational attitude. Their study suggests that informational justice may also alleviate lowered levels of distributive justice. While there is a smaller body of research examining this dimension of organizational justice, it consistently suggests that clear, sufficient and timely explanations add to a perception of organizational justice, and contribute to positive attitudes.

In the case of a breach of one’s psychological contract, such as being required to do work that is perceived as being inappropriate, organizational justice appears to buffer the negative impact by fulfilling at least part of the individual’s expectations regarding how they should be treated (Kickul et al., 2002; Restubog, Bordia & Bordia, 2009). Therefore, if the individual perceives that he or she has been treated fairly by the organization, a breach in psychological contract such as role discrepancy should be less likely to reduce engagement. As the literature is not clear about how the dimensions of organizational justice interact with the

other moderators in this study, all dimensions – distributive justice, interpersonal justice, procedural justice, and informational justice - are included.

Thus:

H3: Organizational justice will moderate the relationship between role discrepancy and employee engagement, such that the impact of role discrepancy is reduced when organizational justice is high.

Figure 1 demonstrates the proposed relationship among the variables, based on the literature. Role discrepancy, the incompatibility between an individual's ideal role and his/her actual role (Staudt, 1997; Takase, Maude & Manias, 2006) is shown as an independent variable, with an increased level of role discrepancy leading to a reduced level of employee engagement. This relationship is based on the work of Leiter & Harvie (1997) and Maslach & Leiter (2008), who explored the negative consequences of work assignments that were not aligned with an individual's perceptions.

As shown in Figure 1, this relationship is posited to be moderated by two variables: perceptions of professional identity and perception of organizational justice. Professional identity, the extent to which an individual identifies with and exhibits the characteristics common to a particular profession (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2000), is included as an indicator of the strength of the idealized role. Perceptions of organizational justice are included as beliefs about unfair treatment have been shown to have negative impacts on workplace experience and

behaviour (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1987; Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009).

This study helps to address the research gaps identified by several writers about the antecedents of employee engagement, in particular the impact of role discrepancy and the effect of professional identity and organizational justice on this relationship. It is intended to contribute both to increasing understanding of employee engagement in a theoretical sense, and suggesting management activities that will have a positive impact on employee engagement.

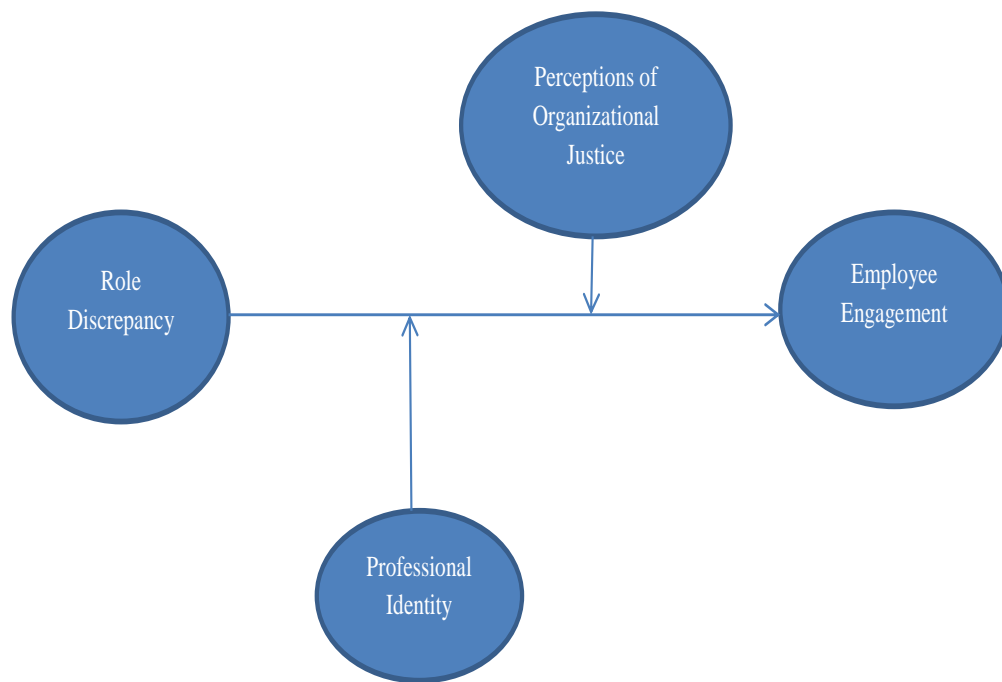


Figure 1: Proposed relationships among role discrepancy, organizational justice, professional identity and employee engagement.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The method chosen for this research was an online survey. A quantitative approach was selected because there is a lack of empirical data about the nature of the relationships among factors associated with employee engagement. This method allows for the study to investigate and map out the correlations among variables at a generalizable level, based on systematic and comparative measurement, which is hoped to provide a basis for further qualitative investigation at a later date (Lee, 1992). It provides a way of observing and describing self-perceptions that will lead to an understanding of the relationships among a limited number of variables across a large sample, focusing on the model of interaction, rather than on the individuals (Lee, 1992).

Sample

Librarians have been chosen as the sample population for this study as there are several reasons to believe that role discrepancy may occur at a high rate amongst librarians. First, changes in the kinds of work that librarians are expected to perform have been significant in recent years, largely due to changes in the technological environment (Barlow, 2008; Nussbaumer, 2008; Whitmell, 2006), and economic pressures, thus creating the opportunity for role discrepancy to occur (8Rs Research Team, 2005) (for a more detailed description of the work of librarians, see Appendix A). Furthermore, librarians exhibit a very low turnover rate (8Rs Research Team, 2005; Rathbun-Grubb, 2009), so that they are likely to stay with one employer long enough for their psychological contract to evolve.

Second, except in the province of Quebec, librarians are not licensed (<http://www.cbpc.qc.ca/corporation/corpo.html>), and therefore, there are no professionally imposed external controls on the work that an employer can ask them to do.

Finally, although a Master's degree in Library and Information Science (LIS) tends to be the same regardless of the type of library where an individual is employed or the type of work he or she is doing, the large number of library associations provides variability in the socialization of librarians. There are 73 Canadian librarian associations listed by Library and Archives Canada (http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/lac-bac/cdn_libraries-ef/www.lac-bac.gc.ca/6/7/s7-2000-e.html) and many librarians also belong to American or international associations. This study will survey English-speaking librarians from across Canada, employed in a variety of settings, and at different stages in their careers, to investigate the relationships among professional identity, role discrepancy, organizational justice and employee engagement. It was decided to limit this survey to English-speaking librarians due to the different working conditions in the Province of Quebec, where the majority of French-speaking librarians are employed. The decision to limit the survey to Canada was based on the need to limit variance that may be caused by employment standards and economic situations in different countries.

The population sampled for this study is made up of English-speaking librarians currently employed in Canadian libraries or LIS settings. Individuals were asked to self-identify as “librarians” to reduce sampling problems that could result from different job titles, such as Library Manager or Information Specialist. Participants were asked to indicate the level and type of education they completed, so that responses that were part of the analysis could be limited to those with a Master’s degree in Library Science (MLS), or Information Science, or its equivalent. This restriction reflects that, in Canada, an MLS or its equivalent is the terminal professional degree for librarians. By limiting the population to this group it was possible to adapt the measure of role discrepancy to the tasks most often assigned to librarians. Finally, an online survey is appropriate for librarians in that they have an adequate reading level to interpret and respond to a survey, and they have both computer literacy and access to computers.

In the late fall of 2012, respondents were recruited through the email distribution lists of the Canadian Library Association, the provincial library associations, such as the Library Association of Alberta, and some specialist library associations such as the Canadian Association of Law Libraries. The complete text of the letter sent to the library associations is included in the ethics documents in Appendix B. A total of 27 library associations were initially contacted representing different segments of the population, such as regional associations, or those representing librarians in different types of libraries such as law libraries or medical libraries. Thirteen agreed to distribute the survey to their

members. Individuals who received the invitation through association mailing lists were also requested to forward the survey to colleagues who may not have been on distribution lists, to increase the penetration of the survey and to increase the potential to include respondents who are not library association members.

The size of the total population is not known, however one source estimated that there were approximately 11,405 librarians in Canada (OCLC, 2004). A second source, Statistics Canada, estimated there were approximately 10,000 librarians in Canada in the 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2006). As this study was restricted to English-speaking librarians, this figure can be reduced by approximately 10% to account for the French-speaking population. The figure can further be reduced to reflect the number of librarians working in non-library settings. This figure has been estimated to be as high as 10 percent (Weech and Konieczny, 2007). These reductions to account for language and choice of employment would reduce the total population for this study to approximately 8000 to 9000, depending on which estimate of the total population is used.

An on-line survey was administered, conducted using FluidSurveys (<http://fluidsurveys.com/>) a commercial online survey package (see Appendix D). This method was chosen in order to reach a wide range of librarians at different levels of responsibility, from different types of libraries, and to include respondents from different sized communities across the country. The questions were designed to assess employees' perceived levels of role discrepancy, the strength of their professional identity, their perceptions of organizational justice, and their level of employee engagement. Participation in the survey was

voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed. Participants were also able to withdraw voluntarily at any point in the study. The associations were asked to send reminder messages two weeks after the initial invitation.

Measures

The questionnaire used for this study consisted of three sections. The first section included a scale used to measure the outcome or dependent variable, employee engagement. The second section included scales to address the predictor variables: professional identity, role discrepancy and perceptions of organizational justice. A measure of psychological contract breach was also included to test the assumption that role discrepancy is perceived as a psychological contract breach. All of the statements in these sections were positively worded, eliminating the need for reverse scoring. The third section required respondents to provide demographic information, including the type of library that they are employed in, and their years of service with their current employer.

Dependent Variable

The measure developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2002) was used to measure employee engagement, the dependent variable of the study. It was selected because it has been widely used in a number of studies, and therefore provides opportunities for comparison of results. It includes 17 questions that are answered with a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item from this scale is

“At my job I feel strong and vigorous.” Previous studies using this measure with various populations have shown a Cronbach’s alpha between .76 and .91 (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). An analysis of this test showed factorial validity across ten countries, including Canada (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006).

Independent and Moderator Variables

Role discrepancy. The main independent variable for this study, as indicated in Figure 1, is role discrepancy. Hartseil’s (1987) measure of role discrepancy was adapted for this study because it measured discrepancy through attention to specific workplace tasks. In this measure, respondents are presented with a list of job-related activities and asked to indicate the amount of time in an average week that they actually spend on each of them. They are then asked to indicate the amount of time that they think they should be spending on each activity. The original measure was designed to measure role discrepancy among school psychologists, so in order to adapt the measure for librarians, two changes were made. First, the items were changed to reflect the in-role behaviour of librarians, that is, the roles that librarians might expect to undertake in a professional position, based on a national study of Canadian librarians (8Rs Research Team, 2005). This study asked for the frequency that each task was performed, and was meant to include all facets of a librarian’s job. Sample items include “Creation and maintenance of bibliographic records” and “Reference, information service and research support”. The test was scored by calculating a difference score between the actual role enacted, and the idealized role. For the purposes of this research, the revised measure, containing 37 items, was tested

with a pilot group of six librarians employed in two different libraries, and changes in wording were made in response to their comments. The revised measure was re-tested with six different librarians, employed in two different libraries. No more wording changes were needed.

Second, the survey was changed so that respondents were asked for percentages of their time rather than number of hours; each column should equal 100. This revision allows for comparability among individuals' varying work schedules. The scores on this measure could vary between 0 and 200, with 0 indicating a complete alignment between the actual and idealized role, and 200 indicating a complete disconnect between the tasks that the individual was engaged in and what they believed they should be engaged in. The highest possible score, 200, would occur when the variance between what an individual expected to be doing was equal to 100 (i.e. they were not doing any of the work that they expected to be doing), and the variance between what they were doing and what they expected to be doing was also 100 (i.e. none of the work that they were actually doing corresponded with what they expected), resulting in a total variance of 200.

Psychological contract breach. A global measure of psychological contract breach was used to test the assumption that role discrepancy is perceived as a psychological contract breach. This measure assesses employees' perceptions of how well their psychological contracts have been fulfilled by their organization. The nine question measure devised by Robinson and Morrison (2000) was used, answered with a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1

(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item from this scale is “My employer has broken many of its promises to me even though I’ve upheld my side of the deal.” Previous studies have shown a Cronbach’s alpha reliability measure of .92 (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). This particular measure provides a global measure of organizational contract violation according to a review of various measures conducted by Freese and Schalk (2008). Higher scores indicate a higher level of psychological contract breach.

Professional identity. The first proposed moderator variable is professional identity. The scale developed by Adams et al. (2006) was used as it has been used in a number of other studies, thus providing opportunities for comparing results. This scale consists of nine statements rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). This measure contains items such as “I have strong ties with members of this profession”. In a previous study (Adams et al., 2006), the test was shown to have an internal consistency reliability of 0.79. The scale had been validated for the Adams et al. (2006) study through a panel of judges. Given that this scale was originally constructed for administration to a sample of law students, two items were changed slightly. “I am often ashamed to admit that *I am studying for* this profession” was changed to “I am often ashamed to admit that *I work in* this profession.” “I try to hide that *I am studying to be* part of this profession” was changed to “I try to hide that *I work as* part of this profession.” These changes were tested for clarity on the pilot group described previously, and no further

changes were made. A higher score indicates a higher degree of professional identity.

Organizational justice. The second proposed moderator variable is organizational justice. The scale developed by Colquitt (2001) was used as it is the most commonly accepted and used scale. This scale consists of twenty questions on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= to a small extent; 5 =to a large extent), and asks respondents questions regarding the procedures used to arrive at the assignment of their current responsibilities. A sample item from this part of the measure is “Have those procedures been based on accurate information?” When answering the distributive justice questions, individuals were directed to focus on the assignment of current tasks. A sample item from this part of the measure is “Is your assignment of current tasks justified, given your performance?” This is based on the assumption that assignment of current tasks is seen as a form of recognition. For the interpersonal justice questions, respondents were directed to consider the individual who is responsible for assigning their current responsibilities. A sample item from the interpersonal justice scale is “Has he/she treated you with respect?” When answering the informational justice questions, respondents were directed to again consider the individual who is responsible for assigning their current responsibilities. A sample item from this part of the measure is “Has he/she communicated details in a timely manner?” Respondents’ scores on each scale indicated the extent to which they perceived each type of organizational justice in their workplace. Colquitt’s (2001) analysis of this measure indicated that a confirmatory factor analysis showed that the

overall measure demonstrated both content and predictive validity. The reliability for each section of the test varies; a Cronbach's alpha reliability measure ranges from .70 to .93 (Colquitt, 2001). Higher scores on each scale indicated a higher perceived level of organizational justice.

Demographic Variables

Participants were asked several demographic questions, including: collective agreement in place, age, years of service with current employer, type of library, size of library (measured as number of employees), level of current position, gender, education, and number of current library association memberships. These demographic variables have been suggested by various studies in the areas of role discrepancy, psychological contract breach, organizational justice, professional identity and engagement because of their potential to inflate or suppress relationships among other variables (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). Additionally, each of these demographic variables was included in the previous study, "The future of human resources in Canadian libraries" (8Rs Research Team, 2005), which informed the design of this study.

The presence of a collective agreement, including faculty agreements, has been a subject of concern in the library literature for many years, particularly as it is related to identity and status. It has engendered a great deal of opinion (Axford, 1977), but no conclusive empirical data have been reported, so it is therefore included because of its proposed relationship with professional identity.

Age has been shown to have a correlation with role conflict such that middle-aged employees exhibit a higher level of role conflict (Schreurs, Van den Broeck, Notelaers, van der Heijden, & De Witte, 2012). It may also affect employee engagement such that it moderated levels of engagement for older employees (Avery, McKay & Wilson, 2007). Finally, it has shown to be positively correlated with burnout in librarians, which is negatively related to employee engagement (Attafar, Asl & Shahin, 2011).

There is very little empirical research comparing employee perceptions of working conditions or employment issues in different types of libraries. There is, however, a body of writing that explores this idea, so the type of library is included in this study to provide some empirical investigation. Work environments in academic and public libraries have been compared (Martinez, 1999; Edwards, 2002), as have the environments in special and academic libraries (LeBeau, 2008).

The size of the library has shown to be related to individuals' decisions about association membership (McCracken, 1999). Since association membership is included as one of the factors associated with the development of a stronger professional identity, the size of library was included as a factor.

Dekker, Barling & Kelloway, (1996) and Talacchi, (1960) demonstrated that the size of an organization is negatively correlated with employee satisfaction; although this is not the same as employee engagement, it suggested a need for further investigation as both are measures of employees' reactions to their work.

Management positions have been shown to have job requirements that may conflict with the professional beliefs of managers. Briggs (2007), in a study of middle managers in colleges, including librarians, showed that this conflict can affect the individual's perception of his or her own professional identity. Therefore, the level of the current position of the respondent was included as a variable.

Healey and Hays (2012) showed in a study of counselling psychologists that males exhibited a stronger correlation with both professional identity and employee engagement. Lewis (2004) in a similar study of social workers, found that gender influenced career opportunities and the development of professional identities in social workers (Lewis, 2004). Therefore, gender was included as a variable.

Level of education was included for two reasons. The first is that the study is limited to librarians with a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies and this variable is therefore used to screen respondents. The second is that education is believed to be a major contributor to formation of the professional identity (Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz & Dahlgren, 2008), and has been positively correlated with employee engagement (Crush, 2008), so this study examines whether education beyond the MLIS degree has any further impact on reported engagement.

Research Ethics Considerations

Given that this research involves the use of human subjects for the survey, care was taken to support an ethically sound research project. As anticipated, this study fell into the category of minimal risk as the possible harms appear to be similar to those encountered in everyday life. In order to ensure that any potential risk was minimized, the following steps were included in the study:

1. All of the information required in Section 1.0 of the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Procedures was provided to potential respondents at the beginning of the survey.
2. Each participant was required to give free and informed consent prior to his/her participation in the study, and was informed of his/her right to withdraw from the study at any point (Appendix E).
3. As the researcher is well-known in the Library and Information Science community, particular care was taken to identify this study as part of the researcher's independent doctoral study and in no way related to her employment position in order to alleviate any perceived conflict of interest.
4. The researcher used a survey tool that stores data in Canada in order to avoid any concerns about the storage of data in the United States, and thus subject to the Patriot Act.
5. Assurances of privacy and confidentiality were offered. Only the primary researcher saw the original responses.
6. No names of individuals or identifying personal characteristics were asked for in the study.

7. Research ethics approval was obtained from both Athabasca University and the University of Alberta (Appendices B and C).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Response Rate

A complete data set was obtained after data cleaning, resulting in 300 usable responses. During data cleaning, incomplete responses were reviewed but no systematic bias was observed; the majority of the incomplete responses were never started, which may reflect an anomaly in the survey mechanism. Data analysis was restricted to respondents who had completed the survey, although it included some respondents who neglected to supply complete demographic data. The survey was designed so that respondents had to complete a question (except for demographic questions) before progressing. Incomplete responses were therefore not included in the analysis.

Because the definitive size of the population, as well as the number of individuals who actually received an invitation to participate is unknown, the response rate is indeterminate. However, if as explained earlier, there are 8000 potential librarian respondents in Canada, the response rate would be 3.75%.

As shown in Table 1, the demographic results indicate that more older librarians than younger responded, although without an accurate demographic breakdown of the community, it is not possible to establish whether this is representative of the entire community. The higher proportion of respondents who had been librarians for less than 5 years (25.5%) than of librarians under 34 (20.2%) may be a result of the tendency for individuals to join this profession as a

second career choice. There were more female than male participants as expected from a traditionally female dominated profession. The very high proportion of respondents who have been in their current position for less than six years (80.3%) seems very high, and may reflect a type of respondent bias that requires further study.

The distribution among types of library suffers from insufficient comparators to establish whether this is a good representation of the community. It does, however, establish that there was an opportunity for participation from many different parts of the Canadian library community, and therefore provides some insight into the differing work environments that occur. This is similar to the distribution within the size of library variable; it provides a broad perspective representing different parts of the community.

The current position of respondents provides face validity for the sample. It is expected that there are fewer individuals as you ascend any organizational hierarchy, and this is reflected in the sample.

For a more detailed description of the demographic characteristics, see Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 300).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 300)

Characteristic	N (%)
Age	293*
Under 34	61 (20.2%)
35-44	70 (23.2%)
45-54	79 (26.2%)
55 and older	83 (27.5%)
Gender	293*
Female	242 (79.6%)
Male	50 (16.4)
Other or prefer not to say	1 (.3%)
Years since receiving MLIS	275*
Less than 5	77 (25.5%)
6-15	86 (28.5%)
16-25	57 (18.9%)
26 or more	55 (18.2%)
Years in current position	299*
Less than 6	182 (80.3%)
6-15	81 (26.8%)
More than 15	36 (11.6%)
Type of library	300
Public, regional or county	84 (27.8%)
College, technical institute, university	115 (38.3%)
Organizations, governments, K-12 schools	101 (33.4%)
Collective agreement	300
Yes	180 (59.6%)
No	117 (38.7%)
Not sure	3 (1%)
Size of library/number of employees	298*
Less than 25	125 (41.4%)
26-50	42 (13.9%)
51-100	27 (8.9%)
Over 100	100 (33.1%)
Current position description	296*
Direct service	166 (54.8%)
Middle management	85 (28.1%)
Senior administrator	45 (14.9%)
Unknown	7 (2.3%)

* Variables that do not total 300 reflect questions that were left unanswered by respondents.

Demographic variables

Initially, all demographic variables were analyzed for correlation with the dependent variable, employee engagement, to ensure that none of them was a primary antecedent for the dependent variable. The results follow.

The seventeen questions that comprised the test for employee engagement were cumulated to result in one score for each individual. This score was then used for the following tests. A number of the variables were not significantly related to employee engagement when examined with an ANOVA test with a Bonferroni post hoc test, as follows:

Variable	f=	p=
Years of service	f=1.75	p=.16
Type of Library	f=2.46	p=.09
Size of Library	f=.67	p=.61
Years of service as a librarian	f=1.031	p=.380

An ANOVA test determined that the following variables were not significant when compared with employee engagement:

Variable	f=	p=
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A collective agreement	f=5.30	p=.59
Gender	f=.53	p=.47

An ANOVA test with a Bonferroni post hoc test determined that the variation among the type of job when correlated with employee engagement was significant. Respondents who reported that they were in senior administrator positions were more engaged than those who reported that they were in direct service positions ($f=5.52$; $p<.001$).

An ANOVA test with a Bonferroni post hoc test determined that two categories of respondents to the question of year of graduation with an MLS or equivalent were significant. Respondents who graduated between 1980 and 1989 were more highly correlated with employee engagement than those who graduated between 2000 and 2009 ($f=3.58$; $p<.01$). There was no significant difference among the other respondents.

The two demographic variables that showed a correlation with employee engagement were the type of job (senior administration vs. direct service provision) and the years since the respondent graduated with his or her professional degree (MLS or equivalent). This study does not investigate the reasons for this correlation, which provides an opportunity for further investigation. It might be useful however, to posit an explanation for these correlations. Individuals in senior management positions generally have more control over the types of work that they do, and therefore might be in a position to

do more of the work that is important to them, and delegate work that is less important. The higher level of engagement shown by those who graduated with a professional degree between 1980 and 1989, relative to those who graduated before 2009, might reflect a tendency for individuals who are not engaged in their work to leave the profession during their early employment, resulting in a situation where the people who choose to stay are those who are more engaged. While it was beyond the scope of this study to examine this, it might provide an area for further investigation. Since senior managers also tend to be people who have been in the profession longer, the relationship between these two variables deserves further investigation. In order to pursue their significance in the final result, both of these variables were included in later correlations.

Independent Variables

Next, all of the independent variables were individually correlated with employee engagement. This was to eliminate any which showed no correlation and to establish whether any one of them was entirely responsible for the variation in the dependent variable. Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients for the variables included in this analysis. The significance level is indicated at the bottom of the table.

Table 2: *Correlations with employee engagement*

		Emp Eng	DisJ	ProcJ	IntJ	InfoJ	TotJ	Prof ID	PCB	CE_Grandtotal	age	Years_work
EmpEng	Pearson Correlation	1	.491**	.451**	.331**	.377**	.483**	.430**	-.434**	-.278**	.163**	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.006	.225
	N	291	291	280	291	287	276	288	290	291	285	268
DisJ	Pearson Correlation		1	.673**	.527**	.575**	.780**	.237**	-.579**	-.431**	.034	.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.563	.968
	N		300	289	300	296	285	296	299	300	293	275
ProcJ	Pearson Correlation			1	.651**	.755**	.920**	.241**	-.645**	-.327**	-.061	-.111
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.308	.071
	N			289	289	285	285	285	288	289	282	265
IntJ	Pearson Correlation				1	.739**	.826**	.094	-.582**	-.255**	-.078	-.122*
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000	.000	.106	.000	.000	.183	.043
	N				300	296	285	296	299	300	293	275
InfoJ	Pearson Correlation					1	.900**	.173**	-.588**	-.302**	-.078	-.104
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.000	.003	.000	.000	.187	.088
	N					296	285	292	295	296	289	272
TotJ	Pearson Correlation						1	.217**	-.694**	-.384**	-.056	-.115

	Sig. (2-tailed)							.000	.000	.000	.350	.064
	N						285	281	284	285	278	262
ProfID	Pearson Correlation							1	-.120*	-.163**	.093	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)								.039	.005	.115	.167
	N						296	295	296	296	289	272
PCB	Pearson Correlation								1	.384**	.147*	.177**
	Sig. (2-tailed)									.000	.012	.003
	N								299	299	292	274
CE_Grandtotal	Pearson Correlation									1	-.058	-.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)										.326	.740
	N									300	293	275
age	Pearson Correlation										1	.789**
	Sig. (2-tailed)											.000
	N										293	270

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Key to table: Correlations with Employee Engagement

EmpEng	Employee engagement
DisJ	Distributive justice
ProcJ	Procedural justice
IntJ	Interpersonal justice
InfoJ	Informational justice
TotJ	Total justice
ProfID	Professional identity
PCB	Psychological contract breach
CE Grandtotal	Role discrepancy
Age	Age
Years_work	Years at current position

Distributive justice showed a significant positive correlation with employee engagement ($r = .50, p < .001$); as did procedural justice ($r = .451, p < .001$). Informational justice showed a weaker positive correlation with employee engagement ($r = .377, p < .001$), while interpersonal justice showed the weakest positive correlation with employee engagement of all of the justice measures ($r = .331, p < .001$). The total justice score showed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .483, p < .001$).

A potential concern is the high level of correlation, or multi-collinearity among some of the justice measures, including distributive and procedural justice (.673), interactional and informational justice (.739), and informational and procedural justice (.755). Prior research, however, has indicated that these scales

predict different dependent measures, and it has been confirmed that they are independent constructs (Colquitt et al., 2001). In addition, although they are independent when used in research, in practice there is often a correlation between them (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992).

Professional identity scores ranged between 17 and 42 with a mean of 29 and a standard deviation of 3.37. It showed a significant positive correlation with employee engagement ($r=.43$, $p < .001$) demonstrating that those respondents who are more invested in their identity as a librarian are also more engaged in their in-role tasks.

Psychological contract breach showed a negative correlation with employee engagement ($r=.434$, $p < .001$). This indicates that as individuals experience a higher level of perceived gap between what they understood their employer to have promised and what they are receiving, their level of employee engagement decreases.

Role discrepancy measures the gap between the respondent's current job and his or her idealized job. Possible scores for role discrepancy range between 0 (complete alignment) and 200 (complete discrepancy). This score represents the difference between what an individual is doing and what they expected to be doing, ranging from 0-100, plus the difference between what they expected to be doing and what they are actually doing, ranging from 0-100, with a possible total score of 200. The actual range was from 0 to 196. The mean was 44.5 (SD = 33.7).

The individual scores for employee engagement are calculated by cumulating the scores from the seventeen questions on the test. While possible scores for employee engagement could range from 5 (very disengaged) to 85 (highly engaged), the actual range was from 18 to 85, with a mean of 61.0 (SD = 11.2). Figure 2 shows the distribution of employee engagement; the normal distribution suggests that there was an appropriate range of responses to the question of current levels of engagement, providing some face validity to the use of the test with this community. There is a moderate negative correlation between role discrepancy and employee engagement indicating that as role discrepancy increases, engagement decreases.

The correlation between the perceived gap between an employee's actual work and their idealized work is negatively correlated with employee engagement ($r = -.278, p < .001$). This indicates that as the gap increases, engagement decreases.

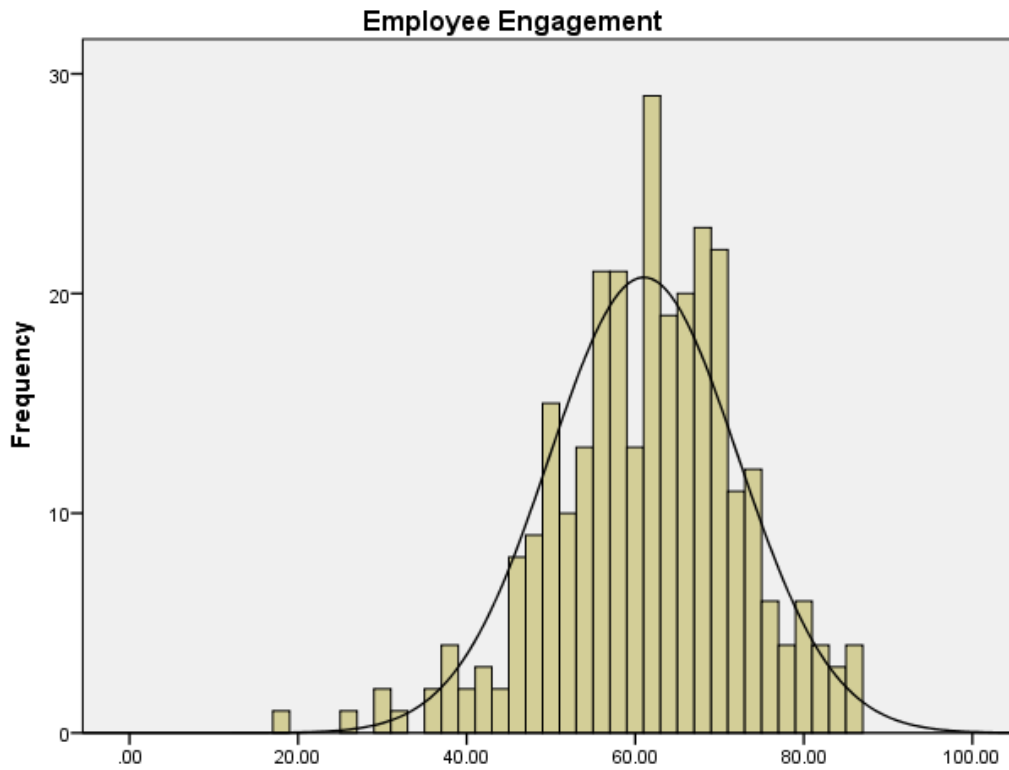


Figure 2: Distribution of Employee Engagement

To test the research hypotheses, an analysis was conducted to calculate the odds of having the dependent variable of high engagement associated with all the independent and moderator variables. For a summary see Table 3:

Table 3: Odds ratios for Independent and Moderator Variables, plus 2

demographic variables, associated with an increase in employee engagement

When associated with an increase in employee engagement		Sig.	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval for Exp (B)	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Intercept	.000			
	Role discrepancy	.529	1.003	.993	1.014
	Distributive Justice	.024	1.136	1.017	1.270
	Procedural Justice	.417	1.029	.960	1.104
	Interpersonal Justice	.108	1.098	.980	1.230
	Informational Justice	.986	1.001	.908	1.103
	ProfID	.000	1.234	1.108	1.375
	Age = <34	.005	.140	.035	.560
	Age = 35-44	.066	.334	.104	1.073
	Age = 45-54	.412	.659	.244	1.783
	Age = 55+
	Years of service = <6	.096	3.209	.813	12.675
	Years of service = 6-15	.712	.804	.252	2.562
	Years of service = 16-25	.915	.943	.321	2.766
	Years of service = 26+

Note that only two demographic variables are included here – the rest are categorical variables and therefore not suitable for this test. When unadjusted variables were tested for odds ratios, the following results were found:

For each one point increase in role discrepancy, there is a 2% decrease in the likelihood of a high level of employee engagement. For a one point increase in professional identity, there is a 14% increase in the likelihood of a high level of employee engagement.

For each one point increase in distributive justice, there is a 24% increase in the likelihood of a high level of employee engagement. The other justice factors showed a lower impact: procedural justice was associated with a 12% increase in the likelihood of high engagement, interactional justice was associated with an 18% increase and informational justice was associated with a 13% increase.

When the variables that showed a correlation with employee engagement were combined in an adjusted model, with no interactions, the following results were found: distributive justice, professional identity, and age accounted for 37% of the variance in employee engagement. The individual variables accounted for the following levels of variance: distributive justice 13.6%, professional identity 23%, and age 86%. The other variables were no longer significant in the adjusted model: role discrepancy, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, informational justice, and years of service.

A revised model, based on these data, is presented in Figure 3: Antecedents of Employee Engagement. The three variables interact with each other to have a significant positive association with a high level of employee engagement.

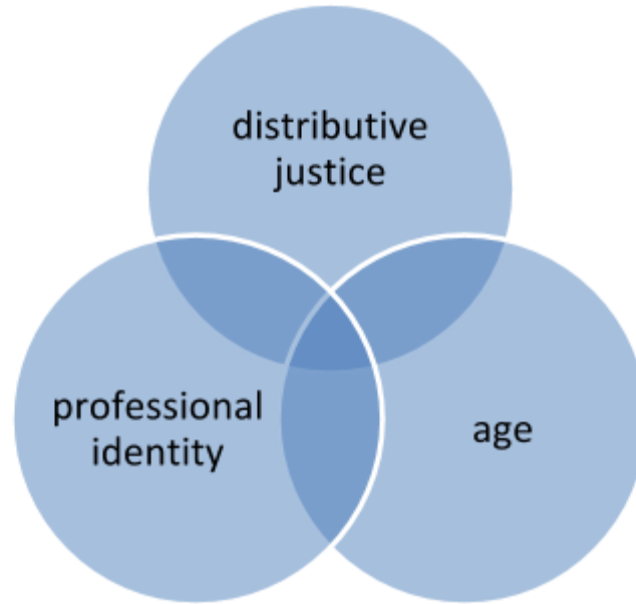


Figure 3: Revised model of Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

H1: Role discrepancy will be negatively correlated with employee engagement

H1 was partially supported. In other words, when role discrepancy is considered as an unadjusted variable, it has a slight negative association with employee engagement.

H2: Professional identity will moderate the relationship between role discrepancy and employee engagement such that a higher level of professional identity will increase the correlation between role discrepancy and reduced levels of employee engagement.

H2 was also partially supported. Professional identity is seen to have a moderate negative correlation with employee engagement. When the adjusted variables are combined however, professional identity combined with distributive justice and age over-rode the correlation between role discrepancy and employee engagement.

H3: Organizational justice will moderate the relationship between role discrepancy and employee engagement, such that the impact of role discrepancy is reduced when organizational justice is high.

Finally, H3 was also partially supported. All forms of organizational justice showed a positive correlation with employee engagement. When the adjusted variables are combined, however, only distributive justice has a positive correlation with employee engagement.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Employee engagement has become a current area of interest in the practitioner and research literature (Higgins, 2008), and a quick internet search finds in excess of 48 million hits. From this it can be inferred that managers would like to be responsible for a highly engaged workforce. Organizations are offered and have adopted many strategies for increasing engagement, and many consultants are happy to offer their services to measure and improve the level of employee engagement in organizations. It is not, however, a clearly understood or consistently interpreted construct, which may result in interventions to improve engagement that are neither practical nor useful. The entire field of engagement is open for considerably more research attention from both researchers and practitioners.

This study was designed to examine engagement within a particular work environment, librarianship. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among role discrepancy (the gap between one's idealized job role and one's actual job role), organizational justice, professional identity (the strength of one's identification with a specified professional role), various demographic factors, and employee engagement (the contribution of passion and energy in the fulfillment of one's work role). Two personal factors, professional identity and age, and one situational factor, distributive justice, interacted to correlate with employee engagement in a statistically meaningful way. A key

contribution of this research is its focus on a particular independent variable, role discrepancy, and one of its potential outcomes, reduced levels of employee engagement.

This interaction suggests that individuals who have a strong sense of their identification as a professional, a librarian in this case, and who experience a high level of distributive justice are more engaged in their work, and this engagement increases as they get older. While the independent variable, role discrepancy, did show a slight positive correlation with employee engagement, as predicted, this association was entirely overtaken by professional identity, age and distributive justice, when all variables were tested in a full model. This implies that some of the strategies for increasing employee engagement that are recommended in the practitioner literature, such as developing realistic job expectations (Markos & Sridevi, 2010), may not be as effective as proposed.

An important contribution of this study is the finding that a particular personal factor, professional identity, and a demographic factor, age, are strongly positively associated with employee engagement. This finding is an important contribution because it suggests that there are more personal characteristics at work in the understanding of engagement than might be suggested by the practitioner and consultant literature. The evaluation of professional identity and its association with employee engagement provides insights into why some management decisions regarding work allocation, which are made for many practical reasons, can have varying implications for different employees. For example, those decisions that increase or align with a librarian's sense of

professional identity are more likely to increase engagement in the work itself. Alternatively, decisions regarding work allocation that are not aligned with a librarian's sense of professional identity are likely to result in lower levels of employee engagement in work.

The positive association of several of the other variables suggests that there is a great deal more research needed before a comprehensive predictor model of employee engagement is created. High levels of role discrepancy, for example, while predicted to be a major association with employee engagement, only showed a slight positive correlation when analyzed as an independent variable. This could reflect some lack of clarity in the measure of role discrepancy, or some perception on the part of respondents that while they may not be doing what they expected to be doing, this discrepancy it is not necessarily negative. Further study that attempts to either separate two distinct forms of role discrepancy: doing work that one did not expect to be doing, versus not doing work that one expected to be doing, might add some clarity to this. Additionally, further investigation into whether role discrepancy is necessarily seen as negative might explain why role discrepancy doesn't associate strongly with employee engagement.

There was a somewhat weak correlation between psychological contract breach and role discrepancy ($r=.38$, $p<.001$), although a high correlation was assumed prior to the study. This suggests that role discrepancy is not typically interpreted as a breach of the psychological contract. Further research is needed to understand why it is not understood to be a breach, and what librarians

understand to be the obligation of the employer regarding the assignment of work. Psychological contract breach, included as a possible theoretical explanation for different levels of employee engagement, showed a moderate negative correlation with employee engagement ($r = -.43$, $p < .001$). As psychological contract breach increases, employee engagement decreases, suggesting that this might partially explain why some employees are more engaged than others. Further research into defining what librarians believe is a breach of their psychological contract would add depth to the definition of the antecedents of employee engagement.

The strong association of distributive justice with employee engagement suggests that of the different types of organizational justice, distributive justice matters most. In other words, the sense of equity in rewards is more likely to affect an employee's engagement levels than procedural, interactional or informational justice. If a practical application is made of the findings of this study, managers could be able to make changes which have more effect than simply improving the overall justice climate of the organization. The findings about the relationship between distributive justice and employee engagement suggest some opportunities for management to mitigate the negative effects of requiring employees to do work that is not supported by their professional identity. For example, managers could ensure that less desirable tasks are distributed evenly among employees, or that employees have input into how the tasks are distributed. Managers could also ensure that recognition is directly related to the work that is being done. Taken as a whole, this study suggests an

explanation for why some individuals react differently in the workplace to the assignment of tasks.

A number of the variables that are somewhat positively associated with employee engagement may suggest a different interpretation of the data. For example, those with senior positions, who had been librarians for a decade or more, and in their current positions for several years, as well as being older, are all more likely to show a higher level of engagement. Rather than suggesting a causative relationship, this may simply reflect that individuals with a lower level of engagement left the profession previously...in other words the more engaged librarians are in their work, the more likely they are to stay for a longer period of time, and seek promotion. This definitely suggests an area for future investigation.

While the empirical evidence reviewed clearly links employee engagement to a number of organizational outcomes, none was found that was carried out in a not-for-profit environment. This study provides a starting place for research in that area by studying librarians who are typically employed in government, academic or other not-for-profit organizations. This creates an opportunity for comparison of conditions contributing to employee engagement in for-profit and not-for-profit settings.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations, several of which pertain to the sample and the method used for collecting data. It was restricted to one profession, librarianship, and in order to be generalizable, would benefit from re-testing with a similar but different group such as social workers or occupational therapists. The use of one professional group allowed for study of respondents who had experienced similar socialization. A study of a different group would highlight differences that occur as a result of self-selection into a particular profession. The lack of professional licensing in librarianship means that there is no comprehensive list of librarians, or breakdown of their places of employment or types of work. It is therefore difficult to be assured that this was a representative sample.

The sampling procedure may have introduced a sampling bias. The choice of library associations as the vehicle for distribution of the survey resulted in a probable unevenness of distribution, potentially leading to the exclusion of librarians who do not belong to library associations, or do not read their email from associations in a timely fashion. This latter problem was suggested by approximately sixteen potential respondents who contacted the researcher after the survey was closed, indicating that they had not read the invitation in time to participate. Additionally, the survey strategy only captured perceptions at a particular point in time; the nature of the research design prevented making inferences about changes over time. Further research is thus required to clarify ongoing relationships, particularly among professional identity, distributive justice and employee engagement.

A more subtle sampling bias is introduced by limiting the study to currently employed respondents. It is possible that the decision to remain employed as a librarian may reflect a higher level of engagement or professional identity than a broader pool of respondents that included librarians who had chosen to work in other fields.

The comparison with the 8R's sample (8Rs Research Team, 2005) indicated that this sample was significantly different from the sample for that study, for example, the average age was much younger and with a lower percentage of managers, which limited the opportunity for meaningful comparison with the 8Rs study. It is not possible, however, to determine whether the makeup of the Canadian library community has changed in the eight years between the studies, or whether this represents a sampling anomaly. Further investigation of this community would add clarity in this area.

The use of a national online survey had the advantage of providing a broad sample and an introduction to possible relationships among the variables, but the addition of focused, qualitative studies to investigate the relationships more deeply would extend this work. It is possible that the choice of an online survey created a respondent bias towards individuals who are most comfortable in a digital environment. The choice of methodology also creates another limitation: as all responses are self-reported, there is likely a level of bias introduced as people tend to report in a way that they perceive as being positive. A different research method or different tests could be used to address this limitation.

Any study of perceptions has inherent limitations, as there is no way of objectively verifying them. The tests used, however, except for the test of role discrepancy, had been used and validated several times. A different research method, however, might be used for comparison to try to develop a better understanding of perceptions.

The measure used for role discrepancy has not been tested a significant number of times, and it may not have captured the nuances of this construct. Specifically, it does not discriminate between being asked to do work that one does not expect to do, and not being able to do work that one expects to do. It also does not discriminate between discrepancies that may elicit a positive response and those which elicit a negative response. In addition, the test is quite long and complex, which may have created respondent fatigue. Further refinement of this measure might provide results that were more useful to practitioners.

The imprecision of many management theories has been shown to produce different levels of analysis and “different value assessments” (Miller & Tsang, 2010), which may be reflected in this study, and in particular in the use of the measure of role discrepancy. It is possible that the distinction between different categories on the test created difficulty for respondents, or that the need to assess percentages of time spent was frustrating. Further refinement and simplification of the measure are needed in order to make it easier to use and to reveal more precise results. Although changes were made to the test in response to the

participants in the pilot phase, comments from respondents indicate that it was still difficult to use.

A more general limitation to this study is the lack of consistency in the literature about the definition of employee engagement and how it differs from other attributes such as commitment, alignment and satisfaction (for example, see Cohen & Higgins, 2007; Fernandez, 2007). There is general agreement that engagement is a beneficial thing for an organization in that it contributes to both personal and organizational outcomes. It is appealing to managers, and is an area that they wish to improve; judging by the number of consultants offering services in this area, organizations are willing to spend money for this purpose. An internet search for “employee engagement consultants” shows over 63,000 hits for Canada. This is regardless of the fact that there is no general agreement about what employee engagement is, and how to further it. More debate in both the research literature and the practitioner literature is needed to develop a consistent definition that is subject to a consistent form of measurement. This is likely to occur as this research field evolves, and in particular, as engagement is understood to be distinct from other well-researched and documented constructs (Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi & Nimon, 2013).

Two conflicting definitions for example, from two different sources, will lead to different outcomes. One definition, for example, from the practitioner literature states that “Employee engagement is an outcome-based concept. It is the term which is used to describe the degree to which employees can be committed to their organization such that they are at their most productive.”

(Cohen & Higgins, 2007). This is quite a different approach from a commonly used definition in the research literature, which describes engagement as the extent to which an employee is physically, cognitively and emotionally involved in the performance of his or her job, and demonstrates this involvement through energy, dedication and absorption in the job (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Kahn, 1990). Until there is some common definition of the construct, the research and its application to practice will continue to exhibit a high level of confusion.

As with any organizational research, there is a limitation that occurs because of the diverse and changing nature of the social phenomena with multiple and contingent processes occurring. It is not possible to identify and measure all of the variables that may affect the outcome; therefore there is always a possibility that an unexamined variable is confounding the relationships. In addition, a survey such as used in this study only captures respondents' perceptions at one particular time and proposes correlational relationships; a longitudinal study would provide a much clearer understanding of how perceptions of engagement change over time. It would be particularly useful if engagement could be tested before and after a major organizational change such as a restructuring,

Practical Implications

One of the practical implications of this study is that managers should pay a great deal of attention to distributive justice if they want to promote a workplace

that encourages employee engagement. In order to do this, it is necessary to develop a better understanding of how individuals believe that rewards should be distributed. Distributive justice is often evaluated against implicit norms such as equity or equality (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, 2001), which requires a clear understanding on the part of the leader as to what these norms are in a particular workplace. A recent book on employee engagement (Macey, Schneider, Barbera & Young, 2009), suggests that “fairness” is part of an “engagement culture”, which would be supported by this study, but the book does not elaborate on fairness as it is discussed in the justice literature, nor does it use measures of organizational justice to support this suggestion.

The scores for role discrepancy, while showing a normal distribution, were actually quite low, (mean 44.5), suggesting that this is not an area of great concern for the study respondents. Therefore, an employer who wishes to improve conditions in a library work setting might choose to invest in areas other than improved understanding of professional work roles for either students or potential employees. To reduce this score further however, communication with schools of Library and Information Science, focusing on new and changing roles for librarians, could continue in order to ensure that training and socialization are aligned with actual workplace practices.

The weak correlation between informational justice and employee engagement suggests that even if employees ask for more information, providing it will not necessarily result in an increase in employee engagement. Further investigation might uncover the reasons for ongoing requests for more

information, and pursue whether there are other desirable personal or organizational outcomes that arise from providing more information.

Investigation of a different work group would also reveal whether the desire for more information is related to librarians' professional role, which is highly involved with information.

Professional identity is not an area typically explicitly investigated in a recruitment process. An employer who wishes to increase the level of engagement in an organization, however, might include some discussion of professional identity with potential candidates. Interview questions regarding pride in being a librarian, association with the characteristics of librarians, or activities that reflect a sense of strong identification, for example through association activities, might indicate a stronger professional identity.

The lower level of engagement correlated with recent graduates from Library and Information Science programs suggests that greater attention needs to be paid to these employees. Exploring further with them how their perceptions of a workplace affect their level of employee engagement would provide options for management to intervene. It may also require some consideration of whether the expectations of younger employees are different from those of older employees, and some comparison with research into the needs of different generations in the workplace might add value here. This may be a particular opportunity for an employer when there is a major change in the demographics of a workplace, for example, after a voluntary retirement program that reduces the average age of the workforce.

Future Directions

The findings of this study open interesting avenues for further research. First of all, a simpler method for testing role discrepancy in the workplace might lead to more useful results. For instance, further investigation about employee reactions to role discrepancy and its outcomes may lead to an understanding of the impact of reassigning employees to new tasks rather than hiring new employees. Also, a clearer understanding of how role discrepancy is understood, and whether in some cases the opportunity to do unexpected work is perceived as being positive, would provide some useful guidance for managers when they are assigning work.

Factors which showed a positive and significant correlation with employee engagement when examined separately, but not when included in the integrated model could also be examined further. For example, a 1% increase in interactional justice was correlated with an 18% increase in interactional justice. Further study with different respondent groups would demonstrate whether or not this is replicated with other groups.

While the presence or absence of a collective agreement did not correlate with employee engagement, there is an opportunity for further study in understanding how a collective agreement impacts the factors that are related to engagement.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Employee engagement continues to be an area of interest, in the research literature, the practitioner literature, and, based on the number of consultants available to help organizations modify their level of employee engagement, in the business environment. As a construct, however, employee engagement continues to suffer from a lack of clear definition, a confusion of measures, and a dearth of empirical investigation. This study contributes to a greater understanding of employee engagement, limited to one professional group, and adds to the number of areas that need further analysis.

Although this study proposed a number of workplace experiences and individual differences, based on the literature, which could moderate this phenomenon, the findings support the lack of clarity around employee engagement. The majority of the proposed moderators showed no significant correlation with employee engagement, and, in fact, the findings of this study indicate that only two of the proposed individual differences (professional identity and age) and one workplace experience (distributive justice) showed a significant association with employee engagement.

While there are an increasing number of articles in the practitioner and popular literature that outline the advantages to employers of highly engaged employees, including a higher level of innovation (Gallup, 2006), and increased

employee wellbeing (Gallup, 2013), many of them confuse engagement with other constructs such as satisfaction (Bart, 2011), motivation (Kelleher, 2011), organizational culture (Swindall, 2010) and mental health (Phillips, 2003). Until there is a more consistent definition and measurement, it will be difficult to verify the examples provided of the damage caused to organizations by “disengagement”. Resulting programs and interventions that are offered to increase engagement, therefore, exist in an environment of “buyer beware”. Employee engagement is an area that will benefit by further study and definition.

This study found that there were three distinct relationships that must be considered when evaluating employee engagement. One of them – age - is not in the control of the employer, but may be kept in mind when undertaking activities to change levels of employee engagement. The second, professional identity, may be affected by decisions made by the employer. In particular, employers who place a high value on participation in professional organizations and support it by providing incentives or financial support may also benefit from a higher level of employee engagement. Incentives may be built into the evaluation and reward system, or may include concrete support such as time off for holding association office or financial support for attending association meetings. Organizations may also consider the use of association activity as a recruitment strategy in an effort to hire individuals with strong professional identities and concomitant higher levels of engagement. This, however, requires further investigation, to ensure that the proposed relationship between activity involving professional associations and professional identity is valid, and that it results in the desired outcomes.

Organizational justice, however, can be influenced by the employer, and paying particular attention to perceptions of distributive justice can produce positive benefits to the organization at very little cost. Areas such as management training, good procedures and documentation, reward systems and communication strategies should be linked to higher levels of employee engagement. This requires a sustained commitment on the part of the employer regarding training and expectations of managers in this area, and recognition that changing perceptions takes some time.

Employee engagement has positive benefits for both individuals and the organizations that employ them. This study contributes to both the research literature and practitioner knowledge by investigating factors that are related to employee engagement, and suggesting ways in which these factors can influence workplace and personal outcomes.

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APPENDIX A –LIBRARIANS

Service Canada’s Job Futures and occupational codes, identifies 26 specializations within libraries (www.emploiavenir.ca/noc/titles/5111.shtml) and describes “what they do” as a series of tasks including development of library collections, organization of library collections, and delivery of an array of information services. A more broad reaching description of librarians’ professional responsibilities comes from the mission of the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia: “professionals to exercise leadership in planning, implementing and promoting the preservation, organization and effective use of society’s recorded information and ideas” (www.slais.ubc.ca).

Most traditional librarian positions incorporate three aspects of library work: user services, bibliographic services, and administrative services. User services, such as reference and instruction involve working directly with users to help them find and evaluate the information that they need. This involves analyzing user needs to determine what is needed, and then searching for, acquiring, and providing the information or developing tools and systems to support user self-service. Bibliographic services are concerned with the acquisition, organization and preservation of information resources in all formats. It includes cataloguing and indexing, as well as the development and implementation of extensive computer interface and data systems as an increasing

amount of information becomes available electronically. Administrative services oversee the planning and management of libraries including negotiating contracts for services, materials, and equipment; personnel management; public-relations, advocacy and fundraising; financial management; and maintaining relationships with funding bodies and parent institutions.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/print/ocos068.htm>), librarians now combine duties traditionally linked to print resources with tasks reflecting changing technology although their fundamental role has not changed: to assist people in finding information and using it effectively for personal and professional purposes. This requires knowledge of a wide variety of scholarly and public information sources and expertise in trends related to publishing, computers, and the media in order to select and organize information resources. Librarians frequently manage staff and resources to develop and implement programs for users to assist them in finding and using the information that they need.

As suggested in the previous paragraph, the traditional view as libraries as collections of print material has been significantly challenged by the development of new formats for information including audio and video, as well as data files and other electronic resources. For some librarians, physical existence is not a necessary feature of a library with the exception of the provision of space for study. For other librarians, the large historical collection of paper-based information sources, and the continuing high volume of publishing in print means

that the physical space is still a fundamental feature of libraries. This change has also resulted in different job titles for librarians, including information professional.

In Canada, the Master's degree is the terminal professional degree for librarians. This program is offered at six universities in English (University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, University of Toronto, University of Western Ontario, McGill University and Dalhousie University), one university in French (Universite' de Montreal), and one bilingual university (University of Ottawa). There are also online options for completing this degree, such as the University of San Jose. Depending on the university, the degree may be known by different names referring to librarianship or information science. Graduate education for prospective librarians is somewhat generic as many students have not chosen a specialization when they begin their studies, and a significant portion of graduates do not end up employed in the type of library that they anticipated.

Librarians are not regulated as a profession in any province in Canada except Quebec. In the rest of Canada, the typical requirement for employment is a Master's degree or its equivalent, from an ALA (American Library Association) accredited program. This distinguishes librarians from other library employees including library technicians with a two-year diploma, library clerks, technical employees such as computer programmers and other professionals such as accountants. This distinction is generally not well understood by library users, who frequently refer to any employee found in a library as a "librarian". A study of faculty perceptions of library staff at Albion College confirmed that faculty had

great difficulty in making distinctions between support staff and librarians, and that librarians were perceived primarily as keepers of books (Oberg, 1989). This confusion is supported by the fact that library users often perceive librarians undertaking what appears to be clerical work, and therefore conclude that all librarian work is clerical. Nitecki's (1993) review of letters and opinions demonstrated that faculty took a "myopic view of the library as a location, a storehouse collecting and preserving information". Librarians, however, "were really not visible".

Librarians are generally identified by the type of library in which they are employed, e.g., academic librarians employed in universities, public librarians employed in public libraries, school librarians in schools or special librarians employed in corporate or government libraries. Within each setting, they are generally further divided by specialization, for example an Engineering Librarian in a university, or a Children's Librarian within a public library.

**APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL ATHABASCA
UNIVERSITY**

MEMORANDUM



DATE: February 25, 2012

TO: Ms. Margaret Law

COPY: Dr. Kay Devine (Applied Project Supervisor)

Ms. Janice Green, Secretary, Athabasca University Research Ethics Board

Dr. Simon Nuttgens, Chair, Athabasca University Research Ethics Board

Dr. Teresa Rose, CIM Applied Project Coordinator

FROM: Dr. Mihail Cocosila, Faculty of Business Research Ethics Review Committee

SUBJECT: Ethics Proposal # FB-12-04L: *Employee disengagement: The impact of role discrepancy, professional identity, and organizational justice*

I am pleased to advise that the above-noted project has been awarded **APPROVAL** on ethical grounds. This approval of your application will be reported to the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (REB) at their next monthly meeting. There are,

however, several minor revisions requested to this application prior to filing and reporting to the Athabasca University REB.

The approval for the study “as presented” is valid for a period of one year from the date of this memo. If required, an extension must be sought in writing prior to the expiry of the existing approval. **A Final Report is to be submitted when the research project is completed.** The reporting form can be found online at <http://www.athabascau.ca/research/ethics/>.

As implementation of the proposal progresses, if you need to make any significant changes or modifications, please forward this information immediately to the CIM Research Ethics Review Committee via mihailc@athabascau.ca for further review. We wish you all the best with your research. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes for your timely completion of this very interesting research project.

Best regards,

Mihail Cocosila, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Business
Athabasca University
E-mail: mihailc@athabascau.ca

Revisions required for final approval

B1-2 Some references are expected since it is about existing literature.

C1-1 Exact sample size calculations are not necessary.

C1-2 Should provide more details - e.g., what MLS or Information settings are.

Appendices 5 and 6 should indicate how to contact AU's REB, if necessary (e.g., e-mail address).

APPENDIX C: ETHICS APPROVAL UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**Notification of Approval**

Date: September 6, 2012

Study ID: Pro00033368

Principal Investigator: [Margaret Law](#)

Study Title: Employee disengagement: The impact of role discrepancy, professional identity, and organizational justice

Approval Expiry Date: September 5, 2013

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 2 . Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stanley Varnhagen
Chair, Research
Ethics Board 2

*Note: This
correspondence
includes an electronic
signature (validation
and approval via an
online system).*

APPENDIX D – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Note that the style and font are set up as it was distributed.

Employment perceptions

A survey to explore how librarians feel about their current employment.

Welcome

This survey explores how librarians feel about the responsibilities that make up their current employment and about the way in which those responsibilities were assigned. It is intended to provide a framework that will be useful to supervisors and employers when assigning work and when changing work responsibilities. Your participation in this survey will help to provide a broad picture of employment within a wide variety of settings in the LIS field across Canada.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. Your answers are both anonymous and confidential. You may exit the survey at any time by closing your browser. There is no penalty for not participating in the survey, or not completing it. To continue with the survey, choose "yes" below.

- Yes
- No

INTRODUCTION

This survey asks questions about your perceptions of your current employment situation. There are no right or wrong answers. In situations where there is not an option that exactly reflects your perceptions, please select the one that is closest to how you feel. The survey is intended to capture your first response to the question.

Organizational Justice

The following items refer to the work that is currently assigned to you. To what extent do you feel that:

	Not at all	A little	Moderatel y	Quite a bit	To a very large extent
Your current work assignment reflects the effort that you have put into your work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your current work assignment is appropriate for the work you have completed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your current work assignment reflects what you have contributed to the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your current work assignment is justified given your performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Organizational justice

Jobs are complex and involve tasks that are not necessarily clearly part of the job. The following items refer to your current responsibilities and the process used to arrive at their assignment to you. This process may not be clear to you, however, to what extent do you feel that:

	Not at all	A little	Moderatel y	Quite a bit	To a very large extent
You have been able to express your views and feelings during that process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You have had influence over the decision arrived at through that process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That process has been applied consistently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That process has been free of bias	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That process has been based on accurate information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You have been able to appeal the decision arrived at through that	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

process

That process upheld ethical and moral standards

Organizational Justice

The following items refer to the individual who was responsible for assigning your current work responsibilities. To what extent do you feel that:

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	To a very large extent
He/she has treated you in a polite manner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
He/she has treated you with dignity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
He/she has treated you with respect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
He/she has refrained from improper remarks or comments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Organizational Justice

The following items refer to the individual who is responsible for assigning your current work responsibilities. To what extent do you feel that:

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	To a very large extent
He/she has been candid in communications with you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
He/she thoroughly explained how the assignment of your current responsibilities was made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
His/her explanations were reasonable regarding how the decision was made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
He/she communicated the details in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

a timely manner

He/she seemed to tailor
communication to individuals'
specific needs



Professional Identity

The following statements are about your current profession. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree	Disagre e	Neither agree nor disagree	Agre e	Strongly agree
----------------------	--------------	----------------------------------	-----------	-------------------

I feel like I am a member
of this profession

I feel like I have strong ties
with members of this
profession

I am often ashamed to
admit that I work in this
profession

I find myself making
excuses for belonging to
this profession

I try to hide that I work as
part of this profession

I am pleased to belong to
this profession

I can identify positively
with members of this
profession

Being a member of this
profession is important to
me

I feel I share characteristics
with members of this
profession

Employee Engagement

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work					
At my work, I feel bursting with energy					
At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well					
I can continue working for very long periods of time					
At my job, I am very resilient, mentally					
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous					
To me, my job is challenging					
My job inspires me					
I am enthusiastic about my job					
I am proud of the work that I do					
I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose					
When I am working, I forget everything else around me					
Time flies when I am working					
I get carried away when I					

am working

It is difficult to detach
myself from my job

I am immersed in my work

I feel happy when I am
working intently

Perception of employment

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the organization that is your current employer?

Strongly disagree	Disagre e	Neither agree nor disagree	Agre e	Strongly agree
----------------------	--------------	----------------------------------	-----------	-------------------

I feel that my organization has
not come through in fulfilling
the promises made to me
when I was hired

I have not received everything
promised to me in exchange
for my contributions

My organization has broken
many of its promises to me
even though I've upheld my
side of the deal

I feel a great deal of anger
toward my organization

I feel betrayed by my
organization

I feel my organization has
violated the contract between
us

I feel extremely frustrated by
how I have been treated by
my organization

Current employment

This measure compares the amount of time that you spend on particular activities at work, with the amount of time that you think a person in your position should be spending on these activities. In the "actual" column, estimate the percentage of time that you spend on average; in the "ideal" column, estimate the percentage of time that you think you should be spending. Both columns should add up to 100%

	Actual	Ideal
Collection development, evaluation or management		
Electronic licensing		
Digitization of collections		
Reference, information service or research support		
Programming or library instruction		
Liaison with faculty, special populations (e.g. people with disabilities) or community groups		
Cataloguing, database management and organization of information resources, including metadata		
Repair or conservation of library or archival material		
Creation or maintenance of bibliographic records		
Processing interlibrary loan requests - borrowing or lending		
Acquisition, receipt or payment for library materials		
Circulation or discharge of library material		
Sorting, shelving or filing of library material		
Bindery or material processing		

Library systems, hardware or software support; Network management or technical support

Web development or applications

Database creation or maintenance (including OPAC)

Participation in professional associations

Attendance at conferences or workshops

Research or publishing in the field of librarianship

Training and development of library staff

Managing library units or activities, including supervision

Organizational planning and decision-making; Policy development

Human resource planning or management

Budgeting or financial management

Managing space, facilities or building operations

Marketing or public relations; Fund raising or donor support

Other job functions that are not specified above

TOTALS

Respondent information

Is your current employment covered by a collective agreement?

Yes

No

Not
sure

In what year were you born?

1991

1990

1989

1988

1987

1986

1985

1984

1983

1982

... 31 additional choices hidden

...

1949

1948

1947

1946

1945

1944

1943

1942

1941

1940

How long have you been in your current position?

Less than one year

1-3 years

4-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

More than 15
years

Which of the following best describes the type of organization where you are currently employed?

University

College, Technical Institute, University College

Municipal Public Library

Regional or County Library System

Government: Federal, Provincial, Regional or Municipal

Non-profit Organization (e.g. hospital, religious institution, charity organization)

For-profit Organization (e.g. business, law firm, bank, crown corporation)

School: K-12

Other Employer (e.g. consulting firm, vendor, research project)

Number of employees in your library or information organization

Less than 5

6-10

11-25

26-50

51-100

More than 100

Don't know

Not employed in a
library

What best describes your current position?

Person who offers direct service to library users, or customers; or provides bibliographic or technical services.

Middle management (e.g. supervisor, branch head, department head)

Senior administrator (e.g. Head or Chief Librarian, Deputy or Assistant Head, CEO)

Gender

Male

Female

Other

Prefer not to
answer

In what year did you receive your Master's degree in Library and Information Studies, or its equivalent.

2012

2011

2010

2009

2008

2007

2006

2005

2004

2003

... 38 additional choices hidden

...

1963

1962

1961

1960

1959

1958

1957

1956

1955 or earlier

Thank You

Your participation in this survey will help to develop a broad and comprehensive picture of how librarians feel about their current responsibilities.

APPENDIX E – CONSENT FORM

Dear Librarian or Information Specialist,

This is your invitation to participate in an online survey on librarian and information specialists' perceptions of their current work environment and their relationship to it. The survey is directed to Canadian librarians working in library or LIS settings. The data is being collected for a study carried out in fulfillment of requirements for the Doctorate of Business Administration program at Athabasca University. The project is entitled Employee disengagement: The impact of role discrepancy, professional identity, and organizational justice.

Participation is voluntary, and you can terminate the survey at any time by closing your browser. You may also choose to not answer all of the questions. Incomplete responses will be deleted prior to the final data analysis. There will be no penalty or consequences for not completing the survey. The survey should take less than 20 minutes to complete. No identifying information will be collected; responses will be anonymous and will be reported without any identifying characteristics.

The survey has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards at Athabasca University and the University of Alberta. Although I am professionally affiliated with the University of Alberta, this survey has no relationship to my work with the University of Alberta Libraries.

If you have questions about this study, please contact:

Margaret Law
DBA candidate
Athabasca University
mzelmanlaw@gmail.com

Kay Devine
Program Director, DBA Program
Athabasca University
kayd@athabascau.ca

The existence and results of the research findings will be listed in an abstract posted online at Athabasca University's Digital Thesis and Project Room, and the final research paper will be publicly available.

through Dissertations and Theses Databases.

By continuing with this survey, you are indicating that you have read and understood the information contained in this email, and agree to participate in the study, on the understanding that you may refuse to answer certain questions, and that you may withdraw at any time during the survey by closing your browser.

To access the survey, please go to:

<http://app.fluidsurveys.com/surveys/librarian/dba/>