Enlivening Thriving: Examining Thriving at Work and at Home, over Time and across Outcomes

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## Abstract 350 words maximum: (PLEASE TYPE)

This thesis examines a relatively new construct in organisational behaviour, thriving at work. Thriving is defined as a psychological state composed of the joint experience of learning and vitality, the dual nature of which emphasises sustainability in incorporating both physical and cognitive aspects. I present three linked empirical studies that examine thriving at work and at home, over time and across outcomes. First, based on interviews with employees, I inductively build theory regarding the existence of thriving, how the experience of thriving is used as a self-regulatory cue, how thriving across the work and home domains might be related, and describe individual outcomes of thriving. In the second study, I explore the use of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge by examining the conditions under which thriving at work is related to voluntary turnover. Analysing the data with multilevel regression, I find that thriving employees turn over (over a six-month period) unless there is a context which affords knowledge implementation opportunities. In the third study, a diary study across three days with lagged outcomes analysed with growth mixture modelling, I further examine thriving as a dynamic process that may determine self-regulatory outcomes. I find that individual levels of thriving vary within days and that increased thriving predicts improved individual outcomes at work and at home (work effort, burnout, and thriving at home). In summary, across the three studies, I find that thriving is associated with both positive and negative emotions, which suggests that there is an optimal level of thriving for an individual. I find evidence for the existence of thriving in the home domain, and that thriving at work predicts increased thriving at home. Finally, I find evidence supporting the relationship between thriving and improved individual and organisational outcomes (voluntary turnover, work effort, burnout, and thriving at home). These theoretical contributions are used to provide practical implications and outline possible future research directions.

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Abstract

This thesis examines a relatively new construct in organisational behaviour, thriving at work. Thriving is defined as a psychological state composed of the joint experience of learning and vitality, the dual nature of which emphasises sustainability in incorporating both physical and cognitive aspects. I present three linked empirical studies that examine thriving at work and at home, over time and across outcomes. First, based on interviews with employees, I inductively build theory regarding the existence of thriving, how the experience of thriving is used as a self-regulatory cue, how thriving across the work and home domains might be related, and describe individual outcomes of thriving. In the second study, I explore the use of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge by examining the conditions under which thriving at work is related to voluntary turnover. Analysing the data with multilevel regression, I find that thriving employees turn over (over a six-month period) unless there is a context which affords knowledge implementation opportunities. In the third study, a diary study across three days with lagged outcomes analysed with growth mixture modelling, I further examine thriving as a dynamic process that may determine self-regulatory outcomes. I find that individual levels of thriving vary within days and that increased thriving predicts improved individual outcomes at work and at home (work effort, burnout, and thriving at home). In summary, across the three studies, I find that thriving is associated with both positive and negative emotions, which suggests that there is an optimal level of thriving for an individual. I find evidence for the existence of thriving in the home domain, and that thriving at work predicts increased thriving at home. Finally, I find evidence supporting the relationship between thriving and improved individual and organisational outcomes (voluntary turnover, work effort, burnout, and thriving at home). These theoretical
contributions are used to provide practical implications and outline possible future research directions.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABIC</td>
<td>adjusted Bayesian information criterion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>Akaike’s information criterion</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGSM</td>
<td>Australian Graduate School of Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIC</td>
<td>Bayesian information criterion</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLRT</td>
<td>bootstrapped LRT</td>
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<td>BSC</td>
<td>Bearing Service Proprietary Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Consolidated Bearing Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>confirmatory factor analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMBA</td>
<td>Executive Master of Business Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESM</td>
<td>experience sampling methodology</td>
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<td>GMM</td>
<td>growth mixture modelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>human resource management</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCGA</td>
<td>latent growth class analysis</td>
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<td>LGM</td>
<td>latent growth modelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMR-LRT</td>
<td>Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test</td>
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<td>POS</td>
<td>positive organisational scholarship</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRMR</td>
<td>standardised root mean square residual</td>
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<td>WDQ</td>
<td>work design questionnaire</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background Literature

1.1 Background Literature Review

Work comprises a significant amount of people’s waking hours, shapes their identities (Dutton, Roberts & Bednar, 2010; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013) and is important for self-esteem (Winefield, Tiggemann & Winefield, 1992). Therefore, how organisations can provide opportunities for human development and fulfilment (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson & Garnett, 2012) is a subject of interest, especially in the context of increasing human sustainability at work (Pfeffer, 2010). Placing emphasis on personal and professional development opportunities, engagement and work–life balance is a characteristic that organisations use to promote themselves as employers of choice (Joo & Mclean, 2006). In doing so, organisations strive to be seen as ‘best employers’ to attract and retain talented individuals (Martin, Beaumont, Dolg & Pate, 2005). This encompasses benefits beyond work, such as opportunities at work that are likely to have effects upon individuals’ personal lives (Kelloway & Barling, 1991; Turner, Barling & Zacharatos, 2002) and macro effects on society, such as in relation to health (mortality and illness) and welfare (Pfeffer, 2010).

Over the last two decades, the positive psychology movement has sparked a renewed focus within the field of organisational behaviour on positive traits, states, behaviours and the ways that work can promote individual strengths, development and fulfilment (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Luthans, 2002). This approach has developed into a field of its own called positive organisational behaviour and, more broadly, positive organisational scholarship (POS), characterised by a focus on the application of scientific methods to positive phenomena in organisational contexts (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011). Positive scholarship has flourished, as indicated by the number of publications identified as belonging to the scholarship of positive organisational psychology, new journals such as the *Journal of*

However, the field has also come under criticism in regard to its ideology and empiricism (Fineman, 2006; McNulty & Fincham, 2012). Critiques on gaps in the field have highlighted a lack of conceptual clarity as to what constitutes the term ‘positive’ (Caza & Cameron, 2008; Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011), a failure to consider the context in which positive behaviours and outcomes occur (McNulty & Fincham, 2012) and little attention paid to potential (unintended) negative effects of seemingly positive behaviours. Researchers have argued that there is a need to demonstrate causal relationships between constructs that capture positive experiences and organisational outcomes such as profitability, productivity and turnover (Fineman, 2006). Finally, links between enhancing positive aspects of work and outcomes simultaneously in the domains of work and outside of work are seldom documented (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003). Progress has been made in these areas through increasingly empirical work (Donaldson & Ko, 2010); however, there is much to be done (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011). This thesis begins to address these gaps by building further understanding in these areas through consideration of one specific positive organisational construct—thriving at work. This construct was selected because it incorporates emphasis on human growth, development and wellbeing.

The concept of thriving has a long history, particularly in childhood development, describing the importance of growth and progress that is not simply mundane, but rather doing well or prospering in the process of developing (Ryan & Deci, 2001). For example, a plant may be growing, but that does not mean it is thriving. The seminal work used in this thesis is the conceptual developments provided by Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein and Grant (2005), which defined thriving as ‘the psychological state in which individuals
experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work’ (p. 538). Learning is about improving, acquiring and using skills to build capability and confidence, while vitality refers to a sense of energy and enthusiasm for work (Porath et al., 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2, scholars have argued that both these dimensions must be experienced for the individual to thrive—that is, thriving occurs through having both sufficient learning opportunities and energy.

Examining thriving at work provides an ideal opportunity to study a construct that promises to both increase individual fulfilment and improve organisational outcomes. While positive organisational scholars have argued that improving organisational outcomes is not a reason for studying positive phenomena, they acknowledge that it does appear to be beneficial to organisations (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011). This thesis contends that this in fact strengthens the argument for the importance of focusing on such phenomena. While the origin of a focus on positive phenomena may stem from a desire to understand and improve individual and societal wellbeing, demonstrating links to organisational outcomes further supports the case for studying these constructs and behaviours and making changes that are aimed at increasing such phenomena—especially considering the work context in which such phenomena are located.

One way thriving differs from other positive constructs is that its dual nature implies an inherent focus on human sustainability at work. The effects of management practices on human physical and psychological wellbeing have often been overlooked, with far greater emphasis placed on environmental or physical sustainability (Pfeffer, 2010). As individuals use resources to grow and develop, thriving also looks at how individuals produce resources (Spreitzer et al., 2012). One cannot study thriving without considering how the physical and cognitive coexist—thriving highlights the importance of ensuring that physical wellbeing (i.e., vitality) is not sacrificed in the name of gaining new skills and knowledge (i.e.,
learning). Additionally, researchers have suggested that a sense of thriving may serve as a source of internal feedback, helping people to assess themselves and whether what they are doing at work is sustainable (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Scholars have argued that thriving acts as a self-regulatory gauge that aids people in improving their short-term functioning and, in the long term, adapting themselves to the work environment (Spreitzer et al., 2005). It has been suggested that individuals self-regulate based on their level of thriving and that this helps them in their self-development (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Self-regulation has been approached from a largely cognitive perspective involving goal-directed activities – thriving combines both affective and cognitive aspects, with vitality and learning sub-dimensions respectively. Empirical evidence for this in the literature is limited and this idea is discussed throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapter 4 in which the original empirical evidence for this idea is reviewed.

Existing research has distinguished thriving at work from conceptually related constructs such as flourishing, subjective wellbeing and work engagement (Spreitzer et al., 2005; Spreitzer, Lam & Fritz, 2010). Links between thriving and important individual and organisational outcomes such as career initiative, performance, affective commitment and positive health and self-development have also been demonstrated (Paterson, Luthans & Jeung, 2014; Porath et al., 2012; Walumbwa, Muchiri, Misati, Wu & Meiliani, 2017). The research on this is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. However, despite such research, thriving is still a relatively nascent construct that would benefit from in-depth exploration.

It is important to treat thriving as distinct from related constructs explored in the existing literature and Chapter 2 of this thesis discusses the need to distinguish thriving in different domains. Current research on thriving focuses largely on the context of work and variables related to the work domain (e.g., Cullen, Gerbasi & Chrobot-Mason, 2018; Paterson et al., 2014; Prem, Ohly, Kubicek & Korunka, 2017; Ren, Yunlu, Shaffer & Fodchuk, 2015;
However, there is some evidence for thriving’s contribution to more general variables such as health and burnout (Porath et al., 2012), suggesting that thriving at work is likely to have broader influences on variables outside of the work context. There is also evidence that thriving at work is distinct from thriving outside of work (Porath et al., 2012). Drawing on this research and related literature on work and family interactions (e.g., Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinley, 2005; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), thriving in the work domain is likely to influence thriving and other variables in the home domain. It is assumed in this thesis that the work and home domains are separate and not overlapping, such that a distinction between variables that occur in the home domain versus those that occur in the work domain is meaningful (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Therefore, although these domains are likely to be separate, this thesis asserts that thriving in the work context is related to thriving in the home context and vice versa. Researchers have suggested that studies of thriving in different contexts is a worthwhile area for future research in a number of areas (e.g., whether thriving in one context enhances or detracts from thriving in another context, what the long-term effects of thriving on non-work outcomes might be, whether there are ways to combine thriving in different contexts and whether thriving changes over life contexts or varies by culture) (Porath et al., 2012). Chapter 4 measures thriving at work and at home and investigates the relationship between the two.

The overall purpose of this thesis is to explore in greater depth and detail the construct of thriving in two different domains, its effects on individual wellbeing and organisational outcomes, and its use as a self-regulatory gauge. This thesis investigates thriving and addresses the question of whether it is possible (and even essential) to experience both learning and vitality simultaneously, rather than trading one for the other. Further, coinciding with the tradition in POS, this thesis examines the contribution of positive constructs, such as
thriving, to personal benefits in both work and family domains alongside important business outcomes (Eby et al., 2005; Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Zedeck & Mosier, 1990). Finally, this thesis seeks to better explain the experience of thriving itself by addressing what thriving entails, how it unfolds and when it occurs. In particular, I investigate the purpose that thriving serves in the larger experience of work and how it may sustain work efforts over time. Three disparate empirical studies are presented, each focusing on different aspects of the thriving construct. Together, these studies move towards a better understanding of thriving, and add further momentum to the positive organisational agenda.

1.2 Motivation

Employing people is one of the biggest costs for organisations, but also one of the most promising sources of return on investment—that is, people are a source of competitive advantage (Bassi & McMurrer, 2007; Pfeffer, Hatano & Santalainen, 1995). Therefore, it is logical for businesses—in order to be more efficient—to pay more attention to people. Unfortunately, it seems that the mismanagement of people is a far more common scenario, for example, upper management failing to distinguish bad managers from good, or failing to recognise and reward good staff. Of course, people may be less inclined to talk about when they are treated well, but tales of mismanagement are not a new or unusual story. This mismanagement occurs in combination with organisations promoting themselves in terms of talent management and developing their people, which can sometimes sound like trying to do more with less. The concept of thriving suggests that while it is desirable for employees to learn and use their learning, attention also needs to be paid to their vitality and whether they are likely to stay and use their talents in the organisation or leave. However, I have observed in meetings with management the ‘soft’ side of the business, that is, people, being forgotten in the face of quantifiable or ‘hard’ organisational variables such as cash flow, assets and logistics. Therefore, there is a need to demonstrate that increased thriving is beneficial for
hard organisational outcomes, such as retention, to convince managers of the value of thriving.

However, this thesis also aims to explore the question of whether there are beneficial personal outcomes from thriving, which—for the purposes of this research—necessitated identifying precisely what the thriving experience entails. This thesis also seeks to determine whether people actually change their behaviour based on their thriving levels and thus experience better outcomes; whether people really try to maintain a psychological state of wellbeing in the face of competing concerns (e.g., money); and whether there is any empirical evidence to suggest that maintaining people’s wellbeing is beneficial and useful for both organisations and for individuals’ home lives. This thesis thus examines the experience of thriving, how thriving at work and home may be related, how thriving varies over time and whether thriving predicts individual and organisational outcomes. These themes are depicted in Figure 1.1.

![Figure 1.1 Broad overview of the three research studies. Specific constructs in each study indicated (S1 = Study 1, S2 = Study 2 and S3 = Study 3).](image)

1.3 Overview and Contributions

The previous section presented a broad literature review to contextualise this thesis and its aims and general research questions. This section outlines the organisation of the thesis and provides an overview of each chapter and its contributions. This is followed by a section describing the rationale for the use of mixed methods and a section detailing the collaborating organisation. The remainder of this thesis is arranged as follows. The three research studies are presented in separate chapters (Chapters 2–4), each structured in the form of a management journal publication, including sections for the introduction and literature review, method, results and discussion.

Chapter 2 presents Study 1, which investigates thriving at work and at home (see Figure 1.1). Study 1 uses qualitative methods to explore the construct of thriving in more depth and contributes not only to the broader literature on thriving, but to the literature on POS and self-regulation by further developing the thriving concept. The study asks how individuals experience thriving at work, how thriving might function as a self-regulatory gauge and what the effects of the thriving experience might be, in particular from work to home and vice versa.

Study 2, presented in Chapter 3, follows up on the use of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge and, in line with demonstrating links between positive constructs and tangible organisational outcomes, investigates how thriving at work may influence voluntary turnover (as indicated in Figure 1.1), thus contributing to the theory of thriving and POS. Importantly, this study found that thriving only influenced voluntary turnover in the context of team knowledge implementation opportunities. When measuring actual turnover over a six-month period, it was observed that thriving employees who did not have sufficient knowledge implementation opportunities were more likely to leave the organisation. This suggests that simply increasing thriving at work may not be sufficient to influence retention; rather,
thriving needs to be increased in combination with contextual factors to allow thriving employees to use and maintain their thriving.

Collectively, Studies 1 and 2 present evidence that thriving might be dynamic over time and influences important individual and organisational outcomes. In Chapter 4, Study 3 follows up on these findings with a more complex research design that measures thriving twice a day for three days at the end of the work week, predicting self-regulatory outcomes for the following week (see Figure 1.1). Results showed two subgroups of individuals, classified as high and low thrivers, with the former having increased work effort, thriving at home and reduced burnout. Chapter 4 contributes to thriving, POS and self-regulation theory by investigating thriving as a dynamic process, exploring general versus daily thriving and distinguishing thriving from work engagement.

Each study chapter includes a review of the pertinent background literature in the context of formulating the aims and hypotheses of the relevant study and concludes with a discussion of the findings, their implications for theory and practice and avenues for future research. Chapter 5 summarises and integrates the results and contributions of each research study and discusses their implications. This chapter outlines the practical implications, strengths and limitations of this thesis as a whole and concludes with a discussion of potential future research directions.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Justification for the use of mixed-methods research.

This thesis presents three independent studies—one qualitative and two quantitative. Therefore, this thesis falls into the category of mixed-methods (but not mixed-models) research. The use of mixed methods was predominantly for the purpose of complementarity in the thesis, that is, to explore interconnected yet distinct aspects of thriving at work so as to expand the scope, meaningfulness and validity of the thriving construct by capitalising on
method strengths (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989). Researchers have developed a typology for discussing mixed-method research designs that represents designs along three dimensions: 1) level of mixing (partially mixed or fully mixed); 2) time orientation (concurrent or sequential); and 3) emphasis of approaches (equal or dominant status) (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). As such, this thesis would be classified as a partially mixed sequential dominant design. It is partially mixed because although the qualitative study and the quantitative studies were conducted as separate studies, the collected data was combined at the interpretation stage (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). It is sequential, because the studies were not conducted at the same time. Finally, the quantitative portion of this thesis is greater than the qualitative portion in assessing facets of thriving. These aspects of the design of this thesis were chosen to answer particular research questions and to add to the completeness of the understanding of thriving, rather than, for example, seeking to develop hypotheses. That is, in practice, Study 1—as a qualitative study—aims to provide a richer description of thriving than does the picture currently portrayed in the literature. Thus, while this description informs the understanding of thriving and contributes to some aspects of the quantitative studies, in particular Study 3, this contribution was not the main purpose of Study 1.

This thesis operates within the same paradigm and takes the same philosophical perspective, with strong tendencies towards positivism—that is, the belief that there is a fixed concrete world that is exterior to an observer (Chalmers, 2013). In this thesis, my ontological position is closer to an objectivist approach, but my epistemological position is relativist, taking account of the idiosyncratic development of meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1984). For example, I believe that a sample will to some extent provide insight that is representative of a phenomenon within the limitations of that sample. Thus, it is important not only to be systematic in relation to data collection and analysis, but to address the importance of my
own role in constructing meaning from the data. Therefore, it is possible to take a mixed-methods approach, using qualitative interview data to explore the construct of thriving without making a priori assumptions or theorising, yet seeking to test causal hypotheses using quantitative survey data. Using mixed methods in this thesis captures a broader range of evidence than using either method alone would. Further, there is a lack of qualitative studies on thriving. The qualitative study in this thesis captures more information about how individuals perceive and experience thriving than would be possible using a quantitative study. For example, Study 1 found that there were both positive and negative emotions that accompany the experience of thriving. This would not have been identified using a quantitative research method unless prior theorising had occurred—as has now been prompted by Study 1.

1.4.2 Justification for differing time periods of research designs.

The quantitative studies were conducted over differing time periods. This is noteworthy because thriving has previously been looked at over a variety of time periods, ranging from 24 hours to three years. Different time frames were critical to investigate the research questions of interest, for example, how thriving might be related to turnover and whether thriving functions as a short-term self-regulatory gauge.

More specifically, Study 2 uses a lagged design, using survey data to predict voluntary turnover occurring within a subsequent six-month period. This time period was selected because it provided sufficient time for feedback to be received and for individuals to act on this feedback. Study 3 uses a longitudinal design, measuring thriving twice a day for three days at the end of the work week, predicting outcomes that are measured in the following week. This time period was chosen due to Niessen, Sonnentag and Sach’s (2011) suggestion that thriving should be measured more often than once a day. Niessen et al. (2011) believed that relationships between thriving and other variables may not have been found due
to an excessive gap between measurements, arguing that the design of their study may not have been sensitive to more short-term associations. This thesis sought to understand how these short-term associations might influence individual outcomes. Therefore, the end of the week was chosen, as it was theorised that individuals might experience decreasing thriving over the work week. Using this timing allowed the study to test whether there was a general trend experienced in thriving that might predict outcomes in the following week.

1.5 Collaborating Organisation

This research was conducted at Inenco, a proprietary limited company, the holding company for a number of subsidiary companies in the mechanical engineering sales and solutions industry in Australia. The company sells parts such as ball bearings, O-rings and fasteners and their primary customers range from companies in the mining, fast-moving consumer goods, energy and transport industries to individuals fixing their own trailers and automobiles. Employees work in roles such as sales, support and technical solutions (e.g., investigating why a part keeps failing). The sales division is structured into retail branches. Stores are geographically spread throughout Australasia, with a typical branch consisting of a branch manager, second-in-charge, sales representative, and other internal branch staff such as drivers and warehouse stockers. There is also a network of sales representatives and management that overlaps the retail branches. The organisation employs approximately 1,300 individuals throughout Australasia and generates annual revenues of approximately $325 million (USD).

Inenco is a third-generation family-run company, which began with the owner selling parts from his car boot. Recruitment is based on a model whereby individuals can enter ‘at the ground floor’ with minimal education and skills, and then work their way up to top management levels. Some of the current top managers have indeed taken this route. Thus, the business has quite a family-oriented, developmental perspective. Management seek to
provide ways for individuals to develop their skills, offering opportunities to progress through training programs and move to other parts of the business to maintain interest and momentum. The family representative on the Board of Directors—Mitchel Martin-Weber—is the grandson of the original business owner. He is interested in employee wellbeing, especially spillover from learning opportunities at work into employees’ home lives. Mitchel Martin-Weber was excited by the idea that work could be a way for people to improve their lives more generally, and thus funded the scholarship for this PhD on thriving.

As previously mentioned, Inenco holds a number of subsidiary companies, the main two being Consolidated Bearing Company (CBC) and Bearing Service Proprietary Limited (BSC), which both have branches located across Australia. These companies have the largest number of employees, thus the dissertation focused on these two subsidiaries over a period of approximately four years. Each research chapter (Chapters 2–4) provides an explanation of the specific subsample.

1.6 Conclusion

This thesis examines in more detail the experience of thriving, how thriving at work and at home may be connected, how thriving varies over time, and the relationship of thriving to individual and organisational outcomes. The following chapters detail the empirical studies in this thesis before concluding with a discussion chapter.
Chapter 2: The Domain-Specific, Unusual and Complex Emotional Nature of Thriving: Towards a More Nuanced Understanding of Psychological Experiences at Work and at Home

A growing body of research indicates that thriving, defined as the joint experience of learning and vitality, has far-reaching implications for organisations. Through an inductive study of how individuals experience learning and vitality at work and at home, as illustrated by the shaded boxes in Figure 2.1, this chapter extends the theoretical understanding of thriving. In particular, the results suggest key points of departure from the extant literature, including the need for a domain-specific understanding, the fact that thriving is experienced primarily in the unusual rather than the everyday, and the duality of positive and negative emotions accompanying thriving. In highlighting these features, this study develops a more nuanced understanding of the role thriving plays as a self-regulatory gauge.

![Figure 2.1 Overview of Study 1 variables](image-url)
2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Thriving as wellbeing.

Wellbeing is a ‘complex construct concerning optimal experience and functioning’ (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 141). Ryan and Deci (2001) identify two distinct but related philosophies underpinning wellbeing—hedonism and eudaimonism. Hedonism refers to the view that wellbeing is about happiness and pleasure, while eudaimonism sees wellbeing as concerning the fulfilment of potential. Research on wellbeing has thus tended to fall into two groups, depending on which philosophy of wellbeing has been applied (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Broadly speaking, a hedonistic perspective of wellbeing typically focuses on subjective wellbeing, happiness, and life satisfaction, while a eudaimonistic perspective focuses on psychological wellbeing, self-actualisation, and meaningfulness.

Thriving has the capacity to fulfil both the eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of wellbeing, with learning satisfying an eudaimonic function and vitality being hedonic in nature (Spreitzer et al., 2005). The learning component of thriving refers to the sense of acquiring and applying knowledge and skills, or growing and developing at work (Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Spreitzer et al., 2005). Individuals feel that they are continuously improving at what they do and building capability, confidence and effectiveness (Porath et al., 2012).

The vitality component of thriving refers to the sense of having energy available to the self (Spreitzer et al., 2005) and is similar to Nix, Ryan, Manly and Deci’s (1999) understanding of subjective vitality, defined as a conscious positive feeling of aliveness and vitality, which may be dependent on physical and psychological factors (Ryan & Frederick, 1997), and which has also been described as a calm energy, or relaxed possession of liveliness and vigour (Thayer, 1996; Nix et al., 1999). Vitality, then, may be considered a positive feeling characterised by high activation in comparison with feelings that may be considered equally pleasant, but less energetic (Nix et al., 1999).
To reemphasise, prior work on thriving has argued that it captures the combined experiences of learning and vitality (Spreitzer et al., 2012). For example, in order to thrive, it is not sufficient to acquire new skills without also experiencing vitality. If an individual feels a sense of learning but not vitality, this is likely to lead to feelings of burnout (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Conversely, if an individual is experiencing vitality but not learning, this may lead to feelings of stagnation (Porath et al., 2012). In sum, thriving is conceptualised as a positive, energising state focused on ‘a sense of progress or forward movement in one’s self-development’ (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 538).

Empirically, thriving at work has been differentiated from associated positive constructs such as learning and performance goal orientations, positive and negative affect, proactive personality, core self-evaluations, flow, flourishing, subjective wellbeing, and work engagement (Spreitzer, Lam & Fritz, 2010; Niessen et al., 2011; Porath et al., 2012). Thriving has demonstrated relationships with several individual and organisational outcomes of interest (Porath et al., 2012; Ren et al., 2015; Spreitzer et al., 2012). For example, in a study of blue-collar workers, professionals, university staff and not-for-profit managers across six organisations, increased thriving was found to predict job performance (Spreitzer et al., 2012). Investigations of expatriate adjustment (Ren et al., 2015) found that thriving was positively related to retention, while thriving has been associated with self-development (Paterson et al., 2014). Other studies have found that a more family supportive work environment improves employee levels of thriving (Russo, Buonocore, Carmeli & Guo, 2015), and that experiencing positive meaning at the beginning of the day enhances thriving at the end of the work day (Niessen et al., 2011).

2.1.2 Thriving as self-regulatory gauge.

Scholars have argued that thriving achieves these beneficial individual and organisational outcomes because it serves as a component of self-regulation (Spreitzer &
Porath, 2013). Self-regulation broadly refers to unconscious and conscious human regulatory processes and typically concerns acts of volition and behaviour guided by goals (Baumeister, 2002). Thriving, as a self-regulatory experience, is likely to form part of a feedback model whereby individuals self-monitor their cognitive and affective experiences, receive information that there is a discrepancy between their goals and the current state of affairs, and seek to remedy this discrepancy through their behaviour (Carver & Scheier, 1981). For example, when thriving, an individual senses that they are progressing as desired. This reinforces current behavioural choices, and the individual may then ‘stay the course’ and continue to engage in patterns, routines or tasks that have resulted in the experience of thriving. When not thriving, an individual is likely to have the sense of suboptimal functioning, that something is missing from or not right about their current course of action. Lack of forward movement in skill and knowledge development combined with low physical energy suggests that the current behavioural path is not ideal. Sensing this, the individual is likely to self-regulate, that is, use this as a signal to monitor the situation more closely and adjust their behaviour and efforts accordingly to increase the experience of thriving (Porath & Spreitzer, 2013).

While thriving has been conceptualised as a self-regulatory gauge, little empirical work has been published in this area to date. There are also a number of unresolved issues in the self-regulation literature. For example, much of the research in this domain has occurred within an experimental setting, and it is unclear what mechanisms may serve more broadly as signals that change may need to occur. There is a need to understand how thriving may function as a self-regulatory mechanism in a real-world setting, encompassing additional factors and strategies to improve functioning.

It is likely that in order for thriving to be sustained and beneficial, adequate resources are required. For example, researchers have found that when teachers are emotionally
exhausted, transformational leadership actually decreases individual levels of thriving (Niessen, Mader, Stride, & Jimmieson, 2017). Resources could be external or internal to the individual, such as time, energy, financial assistance or supportive leadership – valuable in themselves or because they are conducive to other resources of value (Hobfoll, 2001). Yet, organisations may fail to recognise that a lack of resources, including personal resources, may impede thriving; alternatively, they may recognise this but fail to address it. This study seeks evidence of how the presence or absence of resources influences people’s thriving. Organisations that invest resources to support thriving would naturally like to know what their return is on this investment, and whether employee thriving provides benefits that are aligned to organisational goals and outcomes.

Another open question in the literature pertains to individuals’ perception, awareness and understanding of thriving. We know little about exactly how thriving may be used as a self-regulatory gauge. Do individuals recognise combined experiences of learning and vitality as being more beneficial or desirable than learning experiences that are tiring and draining? Do they seek out such opportunities? And when they experience thriving, does this indeed result in continuing to engage in the same behaviours in the future to purposefully maintain that sense of thriving?

2.1.3 Thriving across domains.

A final issue in relation to the theoretical refinement of thriving pertains to where thriving occurs. Prior research on thriving has focused on a single work context (i.e., an employee’s current place of work), and there is little empirical research examining whether there may be spillover from thriving in one context to another context, such as from work to home. One study did find relationships between thriving in one context and another, although the magnitude of the correlations was small (Porath et al., 2012). Specifically, the relationship between thriving at work during an Executive Master of Business Administration
(EMBA) program and post-EMBA was significant ($R^2 = .37, p < .001$) even though the majority of participants reported having moved to a new organisational context post-EMBA. That is, if thriving were wholly context dependent, one would not expect to find any significant correlation. Further, thriving outside of work was positively related to thriving at work during the same time period ($R^2 = .28, p < .001$), although the shared variance of thriving at work and at home does suggest that individuals can be thriving at a different level in one aspect of life (e.g., work) than in another aspect (e.g., non-work). That is, they are related but not necessarily equivalent. Interestingly, post-hoc analyses indicated that among the 17 individuals who were one standard deviation above the mean on thriving at work, only four (less than 25%) were also one standard deviation above the mean on thriving outside of work. Similarly, among the 14 individuals who were one standard deviation above the mean on thriving outside of work, only five were also one standard deviation above the mean on thriving at work (Porath et al., 2012).

Yet, there is strong evidence that spillover can occur between domains. It has been shown that various work constructs may influence family constructs and vice versa, including affect (Williams & Alliger, 1994), time (Shockley & Allen, 2007) and energy (Marks, 1977), affecting important outcomes such as physical and psychological health, and wellbeing (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). That is, negative affect was found to spill over from work to family and vice versa (Williams & Alliger, 1994). Meanwhile, the degree of work interference with family was shown to be dependent upon flexible work arrangements, in particular, flexibility in regard to time (Shockley & Allen, 2007). The results of these studies suggest a few different avenues for how thriving may operate—for instance, is thriving at work a state that spills over into thriving in the home domain, or is there a more general construct that influences both the work and home domains? Thus, it is apparent that our
understanding of what thriving might mean to an individual within different contexts is unclear.

2.1.4 Research aims and questions.

Thus, this study has three aims. The first aim is to investigate whether individuals consciously recognise the experience of thriving, and what that experience contains. While it has been suggested that an awareness of thriving does not necessarily have to be overtly conscious or rationally managed in order for it to serve a self-regulatory function (Spreitzer et al., 2005), this thesis argues that it is of interest and importance whether individuals are able to, when prompted, describe the degree to which they are aware they are thriving and whether they consciously self-regulate on this basis.

The second aim is to understand how a sense of thriving is used in self-regulation. For thriving to function in the manner predicted by prior conceptual models, individuals must recognise that their experiences of learning and vitality are connected, use their current levels of both as a signal or cue, and then initiate ways to either maintain current behaviour or to change behaviour in order to balance learning and vitality if the two components are not equally optimal. For example, as an individual feeling low on learning but high on vitality becomes mindful of this, do they then take action to address antecedents of the learning deficit while simply maintaining the vitality?

The third aim is to understand in greater depth how thriving in different domains is related. If thriving is a self-adaptive gauge that steers individuals’ actions in regard to their own development, it is important to understand whether individuals perceive this thriving to be a function purely of the work setting (e.g., I am thriving at work) versus a more holistic experience (e.g., I am thriving in general) or two parallel yet potentially interrelated experiences (e.g., I am thriving at work and at home. My thriving at work enables greater thriving at home.) Further, this research will enable a greater understanding of how different
contexts may enable individuals’ experience of thriving by exploring how individuals describe their thriving at home in contrast to their thriving at work.

The three research questions are: 1) How do individuals experience thriving as a self-regulatory gauge at work and at home? 2) How do individuals consciously use strategies to balance their learning and vitality at work and outside of work? 3) Do individuals perceive learning and vitality to be related across work and outside of work, or, if they differ, what conceptual implications do the differences imply?

2.2 Method

Given the emerging phase of theory pertaining to thriving, a qualitative approach best suits the research purpose (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Further, given my objective of better understanding individuals’ experiences as a self-regulatory process, delving deeper into the human experience through conversational flow was critical. Therefore, an exploratory and inductive approach was warranted. Specifically, the research involved a series of comprehensive, semi-structured interviews. This technique was chosen because it allows for open-minded exploration of the phenomenon of thriving (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Straus & Corbin, 1998).

2.2.1 Research site and sample.

Employees from two subsidiary companies of Inenco were interviewed, as described in Section 1.5. Since the data collection, these companies have been merged due to their similarity.

Differing job levels may influence individual thriving, for example, through responsibilities, autonomy and available learning opportunities. Thus, two different levels relating to technical expertise required for the role were selected for variance. These were technical sales engineers (TSEs) and sales representatives. TSEs have in-depth, detailed knowledge of specific products and work on particular projects, while also serving as subject-
matter experts internally and externally to the organisation. Sales representatives are required to have broad knowledge across a range of products, and provide support to specific sales branches in their geographic area, while also targeting customers within that area. Twelve TSEs and 10 sales representatives were invited to participate in the interviews. All employees who were invited participated in the interviews. The average age of the employees was 46 years (ranging from 31 to 65 years), the average highest education level was high school (10 out of 22 participants) or a trade/TAFE qualification (nine participants), and the average time spent with the organisation was 11.5 years (ranging from eight months to 36 years). The majority of the interviewees were male (91%, or 20 out of 22) due to the primarily male workforce in this industry.

2.2.2 Data collection and data analysis.

Consistent with inductive theory-building, data collection and data analysis were treated as interrelated processes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), such that data analysis informed the data-collection process. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews held in office buildings at branch locations. The time allotted for each interview was a maximum of one hour. These interviews were audio-recorded. Informed consent was sought both for the interview and for recording.

In order to examine the research questions while also allowing open, unprompted responses, interviewees were first asked to describe a time when they had been learning and felt energised by that learning while at work. They were also asked about support during their experiences, and any outcomes that had resulted from their learning at work and at home. Time permitting, respondents were then asked the same questions but with regard to learning and energising experiences at home. The full interview protocol is presented in Appendix A. I also provided preliminary feedback on this study in a presentation to upper management in the parent organisation, Inenco. The presentation slides are included in Appendix B.
The interviews were transcribed, and in addition to the recording of the interview, notes were made after the interview. These notes, the interview transcripts and narratives composed by the researcher regarding the analysis and collection process were entered into a database, as recommended by Yin (1994). This resulted in 191 pages of text data.

Atlas.ti software was used for analysis of the data. In Phase 1, two types of coding were used: open coding and a priori coding. Open coding is ‘the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). In contrast, a priori coding involves the use of codes that have been constructed from existing theoretical perspectives rather than empirical observations (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This process resulted in a total of 31 first-order codes. I also refined the code usage as it emerged, discussing any discrepancies in code definitions to ensure a consistent understanding of when to apply a code. Table 1 shows the codes and a sample excerpt for each of them.

For example, respondents often talked about how other people were a source of knowledge, and this was coded as ‘Learning from others—customers, manufacturers, suppliers, work colleagues, partners, friends, children’ first-order code. As one respondent, Employee A, said, ‘I’m nosy, I have to know why, so that you know, I pick [his] brain, I pick the machinist’s brain downstairs, [name]’. As a second example, several respondents mentioned that they were always learning at work, and this was coded as ‘Individual seeks out role, company and/or industry that requires constant learning’ first-order code. Employee N said:

I’m forever learning at work. Each day is a learning day for me because engineering’s a pretty broad subject. Anything that spins and rotates is what I’m learning every day … anything that involves movement … I’ve got training [from three sources] and I’m sure there’s plenty more to come.
As a final example, respondents discussed consciously balancing work and home situations, and this was coded as ‘Important to maintain a balance between work and home’ first-order code. Employee G mentioned, ‘there’s a pretty good balance. That’s just self-discipline, that’s all, on what you can and can’t do. If you can’t fix something, no point trying to stress yourself to death over it.’
Table 2.1

*First-order codes with illustrative quotations*

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<th>First-order Codes</th>
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<td>Thriving occurs while undertaking tertiary study</td>
<td>‘So in those instances where I was doing the AGSM [Australian Graduate School of Management, MBA] … I was really happy and once you get in the groove of studying again, for that couple of years it went relatively quickly and it was a positive experience for me and I did learn a lot which I use.’ ‘I’ve been at university for [many] years, I would say I always try to feel positive, I guess energised is a nice word, but I’d rather use the word positive. You have to be alert, no use trying to learn something if you’re tired … I try to formulate a positive question to ask or an informative question.’</td>
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<td>Thriving occurs while undertaking training courses at work</td>
<td>‘But you try and I still like to learn on these things. I was at a training session learning how to fit a bearing, which I’d never done, which was great.’ ‘The training [course], it’s just learning how other people understand things, how other people’s minds work and how you’ve got to work together with them. So that’s probably helped a lot more, it’s good.’</td>
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<td>Thriving occurs with parenting children</td>
<td>‘Really learning … I have a seven-year-old son and it is fascinating … I think that makes me learn consistently … it’s definitely energising.’ ‘Really learning outside of work … I have a seven-year-old son and it is fascinating watching the joy that’</td>
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<td>First-order Codes</td>
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<td>he gets out of mundane things and I think that makes me learn consistently. And it’s funny because he is so much like me but also it’s kind of a bit confronting at times looking in a mirror because I can see the mistakes he’s going to make before he makes them and you have to let him do it because if he doesn’t he won’t learn. But on the flipside of that I sit there and think, “Am I really like that? I really should try and work on that a little bit.” So yeah, he makes me learn every day.’</td>
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<td>‘For something you do outside of work … it’s not a chore. Yeah, we’re learning songs, but it’s fun, and learning isn’t work if it’s fun.’</td>
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<td>‘On motor vehicles, if there’s something to be repaired, try and repair it. I love learning, seeing how things tick, how it works, what goes into it, what it’s made up of and all that sort of thing. You can lose yourself in the moment, it’s about being passionate about it, enjoying it and whatever it is that you’re doing making sure you take something positive out of it.’</td>
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<td>‘I’m learning all the time, you’re always learning. In this company and in this industry, you’re forever learning … there’s something new all the time. Somebody always bringing something out new for you to look at … it’s good because you’re always on the ball … you never get bored.’</td>
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<td>‘The reason I love this job so much is I can’t master it, whereas working with other companies in the past</td>
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<td>with a lot of roles that I did it’s so repetitive and</td>
<td>You need to constantly be learning, you do need that because otherwise you get bored. I need something more exciting and challenging and that’s why I love this job so much.’</td>
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<td>after a while you know all your legislation, your</td>
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<td>policies, your procedures back to front and you get</td>
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<td>bored with it. You need to constantly be learning,</td>
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<td>you do need that because otherwise you get bored.</td>
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<td>I need something more exciting and challenging and that’s why I love this job so much.’</td>
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<td>Thriving occurs with community activities e.g., sports</td>
<td>‘Learning skills there and learning sport … people driving you to do something because being a team sport.’</td>
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<td>and community organisations</td>
<td>‘The people around me helped me learn. Being part of a club, a committee, there was certain tasks that I hadn’t done before … that was energising and good to be a part of.’</td>
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<td>Interpersonal interactions stimulate thriving</td>
<td>‘It just gave you more scope to learn, to absorb, put into practice. Great teamwork ethics, really good disciplines as far as working with a larger group of people in different parts of Australia. That was just a very, very positive time and a very good uplift … You learn off them, you listen, you worked on certain projects or, you know, tasks, I guess more as a collective group. There seemed to be a lot more input and there was just positive input; that was the part I liked about it the most.’</td>
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<td>You learn from everyone around you, or a good person</td>
<td>‘You learn from everyone around you, or a good person learns from everyone around you. I had the benefit of a guy who is extremely good at his job and extremely good at managing people as well. I consider</td>
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<td>learns from everyone around you. I had the benefit of</td>
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<td>myself as always learning and imparting that knowledge to the new engineer that we’ve employed recently.’</td>
<td>‘The people around me helped me learn. Yeah, being part of a club, a committee, there was certain tasks that I hadn’t done before within a club so to learn from other members within the club and that, that was energising and just good to be a part of to be able to help build the club and keep the club successful.’ ‘If you’re not learning and energised, you’re not paying attention, and I think that’s a tragedy … having those interpersonal relationships energises you, I think, naturally. Like it’s people that tend to be less energised are the ones that don’t have sort of a strong social bond around them.’</td>
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<td>Interaction with others supports thriving</td>
<td>‘Well, I suppose the people around me were a major leaning post for me. I was able to sort of draw knowledge from those around me—not everybody, obviously, but, yeah, a number of people around me were quite useful resources, for want of a better phrase, I suppose.’ ‘Like I’ve learnt stuff off my children, learn stuff off my wife all the time, you know, what she’s been doing in her working day … there’s stuff that the kids, especially the 14 year olds, learning at high school these days that we never learned at his age, you know, and he’ll tell you about it, you know, you’re learning off him.’</td>
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<td>Thriving produces good tired feelings</td>
<td>‘I generally find if you cross the t’s and dot the i’s and you do it in a reasonable amount of time, you’re not up to two o’clock in the morning every day, tiring is a good feeling, not a bad feeling.’</td>
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<td>Thriving produces good tired feelings</td>
<td>‘I think any time you can have a positive learning experience, although you’re tired, either physically or mentally tired, I think you go home with a sense of satisfaction and achievement.’</td>
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<td>Thriving enables rest</td>
<td>‘I was quite excited about coming to work kind of thing because every day was a different thing, it was something new every day.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving enables rest</td>
<td>‘I’m always busy all day, every day … so basically you’re developing these endorphins that make you want to carry on and do more. Energy creates energy.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving is a sense of achievement</td>
<td>‘Yeah, I was tired, but it wasn’t draining, it was actually enjoyable to do.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving is a sense of achievement</td>
<td>‘The worst thing is half learning and not fully comprehending. That plays on you. If you learn to the point of making sure you get the signal right, means more time from the other person. But if you learn to the point of fatigue, but come out with the right understanding, well that’s still satisfying. You’ll be fatigued and satisfied at the same time.’</td>
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<td>Thriving is a sense of achievement</td>
<td>‘It was the same with uni. Generally sleep comes from knowing that everything you’re doing is on track.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving is a sense of achievement</td>
<td>‘It was good coming to work, it put an enjoyment factor back into it. You didn’t mind staying back if there</td>
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<tr>
<th>First-order Codes</th>
<th>Quotations</th>
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</table>
| Presence or absence of work resources influences learning experiences | ‘Having the resources available within [the company] to deal with what I wanted to attack personally was a great help. I can honestly tell you that managers here were more than forgiving on a few times.’

‘From a management perspective, there was never an issue in if I have to go up to my manager and say, “I need a day. I’m behind … I need some time” and they’d always say “No problems. Take a couple of days.” So work was really good. I was fortunate … both from the work perspective and from the university perspective, my environment and allowing me the assistance I needed at the time I needed it was always provided without “Oh, you have to make it up” or “That’s no good. You’re falling behind here.” I never had that, so that’s really good.’ |
<p>| Self-development applies across                       | ‘I think every time you get more assured with yourself in what you can do through fault-finding and fault________________________________________________________________________________________ |</p>
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<th>First-order Codes</th>
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<td>work and home domains</td>
<td>rectification, I think that’s just a good thing in general. I think that influences your life everywhere. The more you practice that skill and the more you get pushed into those sorts of situations certainly the better off you are in life.’</td>
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<td>‘It was something I found myself and sort of took on board. I did a self-analysis which is something you do in managing change and I self-analysed myself and I looked at it and I spoke to my wife about it and she said, “You’ve actually done a pretty good job”. And I set myself a goal to change particular parts of my personality.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulating tasks based on energy</td>
<td>‘I guess they’re all factors that come into a learning experience, hence I try to always do my learning early in the morning, first thing. I don’t have to worry about 15 other problems before I go home. That’s why I always hold learning stuff usually by nine am, kick off. That’s for my own better feeling I guess. Yeah you’re usually energised earlier in the morning.’</td>
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<td>levels</td>
<td>‘I want to be present. So if I’m tired, I might tend to say, “Can we do this next week?” Then you’ll have 100% of my focus. If I’m not going to be good for the task, I will postpone. It affects what you learn greatly if you’re not focused. If you’re not focused you’re going to be reading that again or be asking questions that have already been answered.’</td>
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| Individual seeks out role, company and/or industry that requires constant learning | ‘Realistically speaking, if you don’t learn something during the course, maybe not of every day but of every other day, then you’re not really working, especially in what I do, which is manufacturing design and problem solving and troubleshooting.’  
‘Even today, you’re learning things every day; if you’re not coming to work and learning something, you may as well not come to work.’ |
| A sense of interest accompanies thriving | ‘I mean, it’s something that interests me, like movement or why things work, so it engages me because it’s what I’m interested in. It’s just one of those things: if you’re interested in something then you allocate time for it or you concentrate on it if it does interest your mind and you sort of stick to it.’  
‘OK so I’ve also experienced the other learning—well, the not-learning experience because you tend to glaze over and [think] “I’ve really got no interest in this”. If it’s not relevant it’s not a learning experience. So the other type of learning that I’m talking about is I actually go and seek it out, so it’s always a good experience.’ |
<p>| Self-development (via thriving) is important | ‘I mean, I guess what I’m saying is that you want to be able to learn something every day. I mean, the human mentality is that you want to be able to fill your brain with knowledge and you don’t stop doing that until you unfortunately die.’ |</p>
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<th>First-order Codes</th>
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| First-order Codes                       | ‘So if you’re enthusiastic about your job and you’re enthusiastic in your life, you’ve got to be more receptive to learning, more receptive to self-improvement, even if it is in a limited framework that’s presented to you. It doesn’t mean that the storeman can’t be as enthusiastic as I am or the Managing Director.’  
 ‘You have to keep yourself constantly stimulated in some sort of way because otherwise what are you going to do? You’ve got to still go to work, you’ve got to have something to wake up for every day and something to strive for and something to grow to and step towards and you’ve got to have the good with the bad.’ |
| What happens at work doesn’t affect home and vice versa | ‘I don’t specifically go out of my way to involve both parties or involve work with home or vice versa.’  
 ‘No, not a great deal. Not too much transfers from home to work, not really.’ |
| Separation of work and home             | ‘So you separate the pair of them; work’s work, home life’s home life.’  
 ‘So I’ve always done that I suppose, I’ve always kept them separate. I think it might have happened through time. I’ve always thought work and home are very important, but I don’t want to mix work with home and vice versa.’ |
<p>| Important to maintain a balance         | ‘So it’s like you’ve got a happy life and a happy wife, I think that’s half the battle, one sort of helps the |</p>
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| between work and home             | other, but you need that work balance, of work and home balance. If you haven’t got that, you know, it doesn’t matter what pay you’re on, it’s irrelevant and obviously the more you get the more pressures you get but you’ve got more, I suppose, money to spend so it makes life a bit easier but, no, it’s a bit of a balance, I think, is what you need; everyone needs a balance in their life, I think.’  
‘Very much so if that work–life balance is there, one shouldn’t overcome the other. I mean I’m working sometimes long days and then I’m working at home talking to Germany, that sort of thing, if you need to. Luckily enough I can compartmentalise things quite well you know. Sometimes if I’ve had a bad day at work I might yell at the kid or something like that. Then you realise that you shouldn’t and you don’t, you stop. However the balance you strike flows with each other. You don’t finish work and forget about it.’ |
| Thinking about work while at home | ‘Yeah, I was dreaming about it that night and hoping and praying that it was going to turn up Friday morning from Melbourne and I just kept ringing the supplier, like Nord, and going “Okay, are you sure? Has it been done yet, have you fixed it, is it ready to go? Is it packed, is it on the courier?” you know, and then making sure it got to us and then obviously the delivery and so, yeah, thinking about it at night, going, “Please, please, and please make sure that I’ve identified it correctly” because there’s nothing worse than they get that and turn around and it doesn’t fit. So, yeah, it did play on my mind for those two nights and I
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<td>did think about it quite a few times and just said a few prayers.’</td>
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<td>‘Oh, sometimes you do, if you can’t come up with the answer you do think about work. If you weren’t interested, if you didn’t care, you wouldn’t be thinking about it. It’s part of who you are I think rather than what the job is.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work takes up time at home</td>
<td>‘So it certainly adds extra hours by doing that. Most of it is good. Sometimes, you know, things crop up which you have to action which you wouldn’t want to do normally but certainly you’re thinking about work a lot more. Yeah, so it’s not really an 8.00 till 5.00 anymore. You sort of get home, have a break and whatever, then all of a sudden eight or nine, all the factories are operational overseas [and] I need to send a few emails. So it does encroach into your personal time.’</td>
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<td>‘I still do work at home. I’ve got a computer at home so I get home—I sometimes might take the wife to work early so I could be on it at 6 o’clock and I could be on it late at night … it’s usually reports and things because sometimes if you’re out there and you’re flat-out you don’t get a chance to complete those and you know, it’s part of your KPI [Key Performance Indicator], you’ve got to complete it. Not every night, but some nights if I’ve got to catch up.’</td>
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| Chooses to look at work content while at home            | ‘I sort of tend to have information in front of me and I sort of look at it and study at home when I get the chance when I’ve got spare time. So whenever I’m by the television I sort of just have a bit of a read and try to inform myself with the products that we do sell. So yeah, I mean it doesn't really affect me, it’s just that I take up my own time in looking at it whenever I can.’  
‘Well, everything’s there for me at home, you know what I mean, I’ve got me laptop there, I’ve got everything there. So I work by myself. I do all me own training, everything. So you look at that side of it, I do a lot of doing stuff on the computers, I do a lot of quotes after hours and that sort of stuff.’ |
| Spillover of moods, attitudes, or emotions between work and home | ‘If you have a good day, if you have a good learning day and call it good outcome day. Let’s face it, if you learn something that you believe is value, that’s a good day. You’ll go home on a pretty good high. Conversely, if you have an awful day, irrespective of learning, you might go home on a bit of downer.’  
‘And then like all jobs sometimes, yeah, you’ve had a bad day and you go home and you’re tired of it all but certainly over my career I’ve been very energised at work and home, yeah.’ |
<p>| Feelings of energy are related across work and home       | ‘No, I think they do. I think that comes back to enjoying what you do. If you don’t enjoy what you’re doing then you have to drag your butt out of bed thinking “I don’t want to go to work” and everything’s going to be relating to that. So if you’re energised and you enjoy what you do and by and large as much as |</p>
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<td>work can be enjoyable then, yeah, I think that just means when you get home you don’t feel like you’re flogged and you’re happy and you’re not sort of coming home, throwing things and stuff. So, no, I think they’re definitely intertwined.’</td>
<td>‘I think there’s always an interaction between work and home. I’ve always enjoyed my work and so I think if you enjoy your role, your job, and everything that, well, you’re going to be energised and happy at home.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recovery from work occurring at home</td>
<td>‘Let me say that all the things I do outside of work are what probably take the stress out of me enough to come back to work, you know what I mean.’ ‘So sometimes it’s good every day just to get out, to separate yourself from the building, talk with a few mates, have a few laughs and give each other a bit of grief.’ ‘By the time you’ve done [work] for eight, nine hours, sometimes longer, you’re pretty drained and sometimes you just want to go home and just have a shower, whatever, have your tea and lose yourself in the TV or read a book or something.’</td>
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<td>Work resource (mentor) helped with home issues</td>
<td>‘If you are lucky enough to have someone that you can talk to about it … I could use him if I had problems outside of work or something like that and draw on his abilities and that helped me, very much so.’</td>
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<td>First-order Codes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using networks developed outside work at work</td>
<td>‘It does help, actually, to make some decisions. And even those contacts, I’m using in the field, I can see a few people from our community too, so it helps, actually, to develop the business out of them.’</td>
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<td>‘It might be the case of you’ve got a particular problem at work and you might think, “Oh I can run that past my mate who works over there” and he can give you some feedback and you can bring the information in from outside. That’s just basically networking and knowing who you can talk to on certain subjects and that can happen within your colleagues or contractors or your social set.’</td>
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| Use of skills and/or learning between work and home     | ‘There was a [work] course we did a few years back I was part of. It was [about] asking questions the right way but it was following a process. So you’re going through and identifying the problem, investigation of the situation without actually getting into the [details], getting the person’s thoughts and feelings on the subject and then coming up with not a resolution but an action plan and then coming up with some sort of criteria … and really, you could apply that to parenting, you know, that’s what you do. Little Johnny comes up to you and is crying. “Okay, what happened?”’, ask questions, investigate and come up with an action plan so that you solve it for next time. That came out of a course that we did at work … it was how to deal with staff. And you can have a discussion with your mate at the pub and although you don’t want to look like you’re putting him under the third degree you can sort of use some of those skills in a social
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<th>First-order Codes</th>
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<td></td>
<td>environment and you feel like you’re using them.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘It’s different—one’s a social setting, social scene, and one’s a professional scene. But what you’re learning running a team in a sporting environment is really no different to running a team in a work environment. You’re still coaching staff … you go through different stages, coaching, learning, delegating, whatever. So it’s really applying the same sort of thing, it’s really no different.’</td>
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In Phase 2 of the analysis, the first-order codes were combined into second-order codes. This included relating concepts to each other and coding across concepts to identify themes for the relationships between variables. Comparisons and contrasts were also made across respondents, which Miles et al. (2014) identified as a helpful tactic for conclusion drawing and the verification of aggregate themes. Using these codes aided the exploration of additional potential influential behaviours that were not initially recognised. As shown in Table 2, I arrived at a set of six second-order codes: 1) thriving occurs across a variety of work and home experiences; 2) thriving occurs through interpersonal interactions; 3) thriving simultaneously produces and uses resources; 4) thriving has a role in self-regulation; 5) individuals have different strategies and preferences around work–home linkages; and 6) resources used in one domain/taken from another.
### Table 2.2

**First- and second-order codes and themes**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-order Codes</th>
<th>Second-order Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thriving occurs while undertaking tertiary study</td>
<td>Thriving occurs across a variety of work and home experiences</td>
<td>Thriving as occurring in the unusual and interpersonal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving occurs while undertaking training courses at work</td>
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<td>Thriving occurs with parenting children</td>
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<td>Thriving occurs with hobbies</td>
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<td>Thriving occurs with on-the-job learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving occurs with community activities e.g., sports and community organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal interactions stimulate thriving</td>
<td>Thriving occurs through interpersonal interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction with others supports thriving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning from others—customers, manufacturers, suppliers, work colleagues, partners, friends, children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving produces good tired feelings rather than bad tired feelings</td>
<td>Thriving simultaneously produces and uses resources</td>
<td>Thriving as both pleasant and unpleasant</td>
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<td>First-order Codes</td>
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<td>Themes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive sentiment around thriving</td>
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<td>Thriving enables rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving is a sense of achievement</td>
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<td>Presence or absence of work resources influences learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-development applies across work and home domains</td>
<td>Thriving has a role in self-regulation</td>
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<td>Regulating tasks based on energy levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual seeks out role, company, and/or industry that requires constant learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>A sense of interest accompanies thriving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-development (via thriving) is important</td>
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<td>What happens at work doesn’t affect home and vice versa</td>
<td>Individuals have different strategies and preferences around work–home linkages</td>
<td>Thriving as compartmentalisation</td>
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<td>Separation of work and home</td>
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<td>Important to maintain a balance between work and home</td>
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<td>Thinking about work while at home</td>
<td>Resources used in one domain/taken</td>
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<tr>
<td>First-order Codes</td>
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<td>Work takes up time at home</td>
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<td>Choosing to look at work content while at home</td>
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<td>Spillover of moods, attitudes or emotions between work and home</td>
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<td>Feelings of energy are related across work and home</td>
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<td>Use of skills and/or learning between work and home</td>
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The second-order code ‘thriving occurs across a variety of work and home experiences’ captures the diversity of the thriving experiences that were recounted. I was surprised by the nature and uniqueness of the experiences the interviewees told me about. This set of codes included mentions of thriving occurring while enrolled in tertiary classes, undertaking training courses at work, parenting children, and engaging in hobbies such as fishing, working on cars, and playing the piano. Likewise, respondents mentioned thriving occurring during on-the-job learning, and through community activities such as sport or community organisations. For example, one respondent shared that:

There’s satisfaction, satisfaction about learning. I really like this song so I’m going to learn to play it … I feel good about playing the song, this is a song I love to do … I can play classical guitar as well, which is a lot more intricate and complex … I love rock music and I play it all the time, but when I play a finger-plucked guitar rather than [an electric guitar], there’s a lot more technique involved in the learning process and so when you accomplish that and you play it mistake-free … practising something, it’s not a chore … it’s fun and learning. (Employee F)

I was also interested to learn that thriving occurs through others, and the second-order code ‘thriving occurs through interpersonal interactions’ captures the number of respondents who highlighted how social interactions increased their learning and vitality. This set of codes revealed that interactions stimulate and support thriving and that learning occurs through a variety of different interaction partners, including customers, manufacturers, suppliers, work colleagues, partners, friends and children. For example, one respondent described an experience as follows:

That’s what you ultimately do and you want to be able to feed off other people and learn off other people. It still comes down to you might have discussions outside in a social setting, a group of friends, you might be in the same industry, not directly in the
same industry, like you don’t come across them but they work in the same sort of industry—where you can apply that to your daily routine or daily interaction. You know, you want to be able to learn off people. (Employee Q)

The second-order code ‘thriving simultaneously produces and uses resources’ captures how individuals’ described thriving experiences to be tiring, but in a productive way. It is comprised of the first-order codes ‘thriving produces good tired feelings rather than bad tired feelings’, ‘positive sentiment around thriving’, ‘thriving enables rest’, ‘thriving is a sense of achievement’, and ‘presence or absence of work resources influences learning experiences’. Exemplifying this set of codes, one employee said:

When I say ‘draining’, just the physical aspect, like the hard work aspect of it. Doing it, I actually enjoy doing it, getting involved with the tradesmen, with the design, because I was involved with the design work with the architect so that part of it is rewarding. (Employee L)

The second-order code ‘thriving has a role in self-regulation’ signifies that individuals described instances of consciously altering their behaviour in response to thriving. This set of codes highlighted that self-development applies across work and home domains, that task regulation occurs based on energy levels, and that individuals seek out a role, company, and industry that require constant learning. It also included codes that captured the fact that a sense of personal interest accompanies thriving, and that self-development that occurs through thriving is important to individuals. For example, one interviewee said:

I’m busy. So my days at work are busy, I’m fortunate that I have a lot of flexibility within all the roles that I’ve had within the organisation. So I’ve always been able to get involved with areas of the business that I have more interest in. I have never felt drained from work, as if to say, you know, I want to get home or levels where I need to rest. This job doesn’t have that aspect to it that I feel that I’m spent and I need to
have time off from work or I need a break. I don’t get that feeling at all. I feel that it’s in control and out of control in that nicely balanced level where I can handle it. And there are times when it’s out of control and there are times where it’s very much in control. It kind of floats in between there. And then when it’s a little bit in control, that’s probably where I choose to put myself in an out-of-control state of mind and that’s where I get my enjoyment. But it’s not like I live in that out-of-control state of mind or out-of-control area all the time. (Employee C)

Still another set of codes highlights that ‘individuals have different strategies and preferences around work–home linkages’. These excerpts demonstrated the variety of ways in which interviewees perceived work and home domains to be related, and included codes indicating that what happens at work doesn’t affect home and vice versa, that work and home are separate, and that it is important to maintain a balance between work and home. For example, one respondent said:

I think that there is always an interaction between work and home. That’s clear, it’s not like I don’t bring them together or there aren’t any cross overs, but I don’t specifically go out of my way to involve both parties or involve work with home or vice versa. I see them as two different parts of my life. (Employee C)

Another respondent said:

If you have a good day, if you have a good learning day and call it good outcome day. You’ll go home on a pretty good high. Conversely, if you have an awful day, you might go home on a bit of a downer. (Employee D)

Finally, I assigned the second-order code ‘resources used in one domain/taken from another’, which indicated the ways in which there were spillover effects from work to home and vice versa. Some respondents reported thinking about work while at home or that work took up time at home, and that they chose to work at home. Others indicated spillover of
moods, attitudes, or emotions between work at home, and that energy is related across the domains. Finally, interviewees mentioned recovering from work while at home, that mentors at work sometimes helped at home, and that networks at home helped at work, and there was a transfer of skills between home and work. An example of this is illustrated in the following statement:

But if it’s a rewarding learning experience, when you go home and you’ve got something out of it you can sort of sleep a bit easier, put your head on the pillow and go out like a light. As long as you can see a benefit from it, there’s got to be some sort of achievement of benefit out of positive learning. (Employee G)

Another person commented:

It’s helped me relate to my kids more, absolutely, specifically a course on managing people, it was amazing how you don’t look at them as kids anymore, you look at them as little people. You know, you don’t look at them as subordinates. They have a personality and they have an opinion and I think it makes you sort of sit back and listen to what they have to say as opposed to [telling them what to do]. So I suppose if anything I’d say it was a positive to my family. I was always quite a volatile sort of personality and I think doing this helped me sort of distinguish, stand back, and analyse a situation before sort of going off my head at it. There are times I’ll still flare up, but nowhere near what I was. (Employee J)

In Phase 3 of the analysis, the second-order codes were synthesised into three major themes, thriving as occurring in the unusual and interpersonal, thriving as both pleasant and unpleasant, and thriving as compartmentalisation, which helps to provide answers to the initial research questions and in so doing to extend the theory. These themes represent the major findings of the research, and are detailed below, followed by a discussion of the theoretical developments and implications for future research.
2.3 Findings

Overall, these findings reveal several important insights that differ from existing conceptualisations of thriving in the literature. Described below are the three major themes that emerged from the analysis, which I use to extend the conceptual development of thriving, creating a more nuanced understanding of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge.

2.3.1 Thriving as occurring in the unusual and interpersonal.

The first theme pertains to when and in what ways individuals experience thriving, and provides insight into the first research question: How do individuals experience thriving as a self-regulatory gauge, at work and at home? Specifically, although the majority of the sample found it easy to describe thriving experiences, the literature more generally infers that thriving will occur in individuals’ everyday lives where there are conditions such as a supportive work context, where individuals engage in certain types of behaviours, and where individuals have access to or generate resources in doing work (Niessen et al., 2011; Spreitzer et al., 2005). In contrast, respondents in this study tended not to report thriving occurring within routine activities, but rather described unusual experiences, and in particular, points of inspiration outside of the norm. That is, the experiences that were recounted were typically outside of the normal day-to-day activities of people’s lives. For example, one individual described his time taking classes for a law degree in a different country, and thus a different time zone, while continuing to work full time, an experience that was extremely fatiguing, and yet one that he also described as energising and challenging. This was a unique and special opportunity to thrive that would not have occurred in his regular routine.

Although many of the experiences were out of the ordinary for the interviewees, something they had in common was that they occurred within interpersonal situations—people rarely described any thriving experience that did not involve others, and many singled out how social interactions enhanced or generated their thriving experiences. Although
Spreitzer et al. (2005) suggested that other people could be antecedents for vitality and learning (i.e., antecedents to thriving), they did not elaborate on how thriving might actually occur through the interactions with those individuals. The findings indicate that the interactions themselves are what constitute thriving. For example, one individual described having an informal mentor at work as being a long-term source of support, knowledge and vitality, a relationship that spanned the work and home contexts and continued once the mentor had retired. Another person described how being brought together by the organisation to work with other staff that they would not normally work with was energising.

2.3.2 Thriving as both pleasant and unpleasant.

The second theme captures the second-order codes ‘thriving simultaneously produces and uses resources’ and ‘thriving has a role in self-regulation’, and speaks to the research question: How do individuals consciously use strategies to balance their learning and vitality in order to self-regulate? The findings in this regard were both surprising and perhaps even counterintuitive. There is both an explicit statement and an implicit assumption in the literature that thriving is a positive experience, for example, ‘thriving is a desirable subjective experience’ (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 537). As far as I am aware, there has not been much consideration of the potential ‘dark side’ of the thriving experience.

In contrast, the findings suggest that while thriving is typically considered a rewarding experience associated with feelings of satisfaction and achievement, which is consistent with descriptions of thriving in the literature to date, this does not capture a complete understanding of someone who is thriving. While a sense of thriving frequently accompanies or even produces resources such as positive emotions and knowledge, the interviewees indicated that it also entails the use of resources, which can contribute to negative feelings such as fatigue and stress, and lead to periods of self-doubt and reflection.
More specifically, thriving functioned for the interviewees as an indicator of self-development, and this development necessitated change. Whether or not the outcome of a change is positive or negative, the change itself required effort. This expenditure of effort was associated with not only positive feelings, but also negative feelings. The findings indicated that thriving thus operates within a cycle of emotions, whereby individuals check in with both their positive and negative feedback, where negative feedback is not simply a lack of thriving, but a question of whether thriving is being put to good use, or stemming from optimal inputs. This suggests that if thriving can be an unpleasant as well as a pleasant experience, there may indeed be times when, after a period of high thriving, individuals may need to draw back and actually experience less thriving.

Further, individuals described using thriving to direct their behaviour, for example, consciously arranging schedules at work to create times during which thriving was more likely to occur or be most useful, such as scheduling learning experiences for times when energy was highest during the day. One individual described how he gauges whether his vitality levels are sufficient for tasks requiring learning, and if they are not, plans these tasks for a time at which he can anticipate having sufficient vitality to perform them. By extension, this may increase levels of thriving by maximising the opportunity for the two dimensions to co-occur during the day. Thus, it is clear that individuals use strategies to balance their energy and learning.

However, it has not yet been established that this occurs in the long run. For instance, some of the interviewees might begin to question whether this thriving was productive to their overall career goals or self-development, something that individuals also revealed to be of importance to them. That is, interviewees stated how important self-development was, both at work and at home (e.g., ‘life is about learning’), and described how their role in the company or industry required constant learning. That is, individuals not only recounted
thrive in their work. These experiences were described as thriving, but directly and indirectly described how they pursued environments where they would have more opportunities to experience thriving. These might be within the same role and organisation, or across other roles, organisations and industries.

2.3.3 Thriving as compartmentalisation.

A third theme arose after aggregating the codes that occurred in the second-order codes ‘individuals have different strategies and preferences around work–home linkages’ and ‘resources used in one domain/taken from another’. The findings associated with this theme help to answer the third research question, namely: Do individuals perceive learning and vitality to be related across work and outside of work, or, if they differ, what conceptual implications do the differences imply?

Half of the sample described thriving at work having an influence at home. Fewer individuals mentioned thriving at home having an influence at work. There were clear individual differences in how people described their vitality levels across work and home, and in the degree to which they perceived or allowed these two domains to be connected. For example, some individuals stated that they preferred work and home to be completely separate areas of life, while others perceived work and home experiences to be interrelated.

Further, the findings suggest an individual difference characteristic that is likely associated with how thriving is experienced—separation of work and home domains, sometimes referred to as segmentation or compartmentalisation. Individuals who have this tendency consciously and actively maintain a boundary between work and home (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). However, not all individuals are characterised by segmentation. While Spreitzer et al. (2005) acknowledged the likelihood that certain individual differences may contribute to different levels of thriving, their focus is on understanding the contexts that can promote thriving, rather than on these individual differences.
However, the interviews revealed that individuals differ in terms of the degree to which they perceive and compartmentalise their thriving into different contexts or see thriving as being a common experience underpinning their entire lives. This individual preference affected the degree to which work–home spillover in thriving was experienced. Hence, I cannot unilaterally claim that there will be spillover, but rather that the degree of spillover will vary across individuals.

This is important, as it suggests that what may increase thriving at work may or may not be influenced by individuals’ thriving at home. For example, someone who keeps their home life and work separate may feel little benefit in terms of thriving at work even if they are thriving at home. A different employee, who perceives their thriving to be inextricably linked between work and home, may find their thriving at work influenced by spillover from the home domain. This has important implications for how strategies for enhancing thriving are implemented. This will be discussed further below.

2.4 Discussion

These findings suggest the need to reconsider theoretical aspects of thriving, and to incorporate a more complete understanding of thriving into future studies. In this section, I begin by examining what was consistent in existing research, key points of difference, and their implications for conceptualisation and modelling the role of thriving. I then discuss the limitations of the study and make suggestions for future research.

2.4.1 Implications of thriving as an unusual interpersonal experience.

Prior literature has suggested that thriving is socially embedded, contextually bound, and a desirable, positive experience used in self-regulation (Spreitzer et al., 2005). The findings extend these ideas, in that thriving is not just embedded in a social context, but rather actually occurs through interactions with others, and that it is supported when resources are present in the work or home context. As one participant explained, ‘the people around me
were a major leaning post for me. I was able to sort of draw knowledge from those around me … a number of people around me were quite useful resources.’ It may be that there are different ways in which thriving is generated through social interactions. Two possible ways are through high quality connections (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011) and relational energy (Owens, Baker, Sumpter, & Cameron, 2016), both of which specify the importance of interactions with co-workers as producing feelings of vitality, positive energy, and enhancing cognitive functioning. Thriving is also often concurrent with feelings of achievement and satisfaction, and thus described as a pleasurable experience.

In addition, the finding that thriving is recounted more frequently in relation to events outside of people’s routine activities is an important extension of prior research. Porath et al. (2012) indicated that they expected changes in thriving to reflect situational change in individuals’ work environments. These findings add greater depth to this statement. Perhaps one way in which people think about their thriving is not necessarily on a day-to-day basis, but rather in a collective, more general sense that encompasses what they have done over the past months, or even years, for example, to determine whether they are satisfied with their thriving experiences or progress within the organisation. Thriving does seem to be contextually bound, that is, people described events related specifically to their work in their current organisation.

2.4.2 Implications of thriving as also unpleasant.

These findings support the theory that thriving is used in self-regulation, with individuals describing the use of structures to enhance their experience of thriving, particularly while at work, such as scheduling or deferring learning activities to specific times when they know they will be able to be more attentive and energised. However, a more nuanced interpretation is required to fully understand the role that thriving plays in self-regulation, as the findings showed that thriving may also be considered an unpleasant
experience. That is, thriving was associated with challenge, which was associated with hard work and growth. Growth implies change, which is often considered a difficult and, in the moment, potentially unenjoyable experience. Thus, thriving may perhaps be functional, but not necessarily comfortable, and it is possible that each individual may reach a natural level beyond which they do not feel the need to increase their thriving. It may be impossible (and undesirable) for individuals to be very high in thriving across all domains all the time. Further, over the longer term, when thriving remains very high, it may cease to reinforce behaviour and no longer have a motivational effect.

Indeed, there may be an optimal/functional level of thriving for each individual, and a level greater or lesser than that is what is significant for each individual. Theoretically, the implication here is that, contrary to what is suggested by Spreitzer et al. (2012) endlessly increasing thriving for each individual is unlikely to occur in practice. Certainly, if individuals find themselves lower than they would prefer in their level of thriving, increasing this will lead to greater feelings of satisfaction and progress. However, unconditionally promoting thriving risks falling into the theoretical criticism of positive psychology, which is that no construct is absolutely positive all the time in every context. More is not always better.

Alternatively, it may be that those activities need to be assessed in terms of losses and gains to establish whether it is worth expending so much effort. That is, it seems likely that additional information is required besides thriving in order to explicate the feedback cycle, information such as context, individual attributes, or growth need states. These may all moderate the thriving–behaviour relationship. This unaccounted for information may explain why higher correlations were not found between thriving measured over time and in different contexts as in Porath et al. (2012), as there may have been important variances that were not accounted for. Carmeli and Russo (2016) suggest that work and home relationships which
have high levels of positive regard enrich both work and home and thus help individuals to thrive. Future research could incorporate measurements of the degree of positive regard experienced in individuals’ work and home relationships to test these propositions.

2.4.3 Implications of thriving as compartmentalised.

Finally, thriving appears to be influenced by individuals’ perceptions of how their home and work lives are intertwined. This suggests that it cannot be assumed that workplace contextual changes will improve every individual’s level of thriving at work. For instance, it could be that a manager has done everything possible to enhance the work context, which may increase thriving in some employees, but there is still likely to be a subset of employees who, because of their home situation, are simply unable to thrive at work at that time. It may be that these are the employees who experience more spillover generally. In this instance, managerial interventions may only influence those employees who compartmentalise, or who are already at an optimal level of thriving at home and at work. Managers may need to consider employees’ home lives and simply be supportive, understand that certain interventions are more appropriate for certain types of employees, or account for employee preferences. An employee who does not compartmentalise and is experiencing a lot of home to work spillover may need the opportunity to, for example, bring their children in to the workplace. Alternatively, an employee who compartmentalises to a high level may resent a manager seemingly encroaching upon their home life and may only be interested in what will improve their work context. There are also likely to be cultural aspects at play here—consider a culture in which the metaphor of a family or village at work is expected, for example, in the Philippines or Puerto Rico, versus a culture such as France, where employees do not expect to have to socialise with other work colleagues in general, and find the idea of treating those at work like family to be strange. Differences in cultures are likely to influence the experience of thriving.
Interestingly, people were less able to describe thriving experiences outside of work. Given that thriving is theorised as being contextually enabled, this poses the question of what it is about an organisational setting that might lend itself to creating individual experiences of thriving versus external settings that perhaps are less structured insofar as the experience of thriving is concerned. The findings provide two potential answers. One is that people were more easily able to answer questions about workplace aspects that encouraged thriving (versus home aspects), such as interaction with co-workers and management, and training courses. Within the thriving literature, there has been a strong suggestion that social interaction and resources may be key enablers of thriving at work (Spreitzer et al., 2005; Niessen et al., 2011). It may be that for individuals who have less structured social activities outside of work, this reduces potential thriving, as there are fewer enablers. Secondly, there may also be specific features of the organisational context that particularly encourage thriving at work in this sample. That is, individuals spontaneously mentioned a theme of constant learning as being a feature of the organisational culture. Further research is required to draw firm conclusions.

2.4.4 Limitations and future research.

A limitation of this study is that the interviews were drawn from a single industry and only two job roles. The interviewees also tended to be more mature in terms of their age and career development stage. However, this context could also be considered a strength, as it highlights that thriving is of importance to employees who work in a more concrete, practical world of, almost literally, ‘nuts and bolts’. Future research could study younger workers and/or different industries to investigate whether thriving varies across these different contexts.

It is also acknowledged that the interview questions asked people to recall a time when they were thriving, and thus the findings may have been influenced by the episodic
nature of people’s memories when asked to recount experiences. That is, when people are asked to consciously recall their thriving, they tend to recall specific instances that stand out from the normal processes of everyday life. Based on these discoveries, it may also be of interest to investigate more closely the influence that individual perceptions may have on people’s experiences of thriving to better understand how this influences thriving at work. I encourage future research on whether there is an optimal level of thriving, that is, a key unanswered question in the literature is whether thriving should be conceptualised as something that people are continually experiencing and whether it is changes in the level of thriving that are noticed, or whether people are in general not necessarily thriving, and therefore notice occasions that generate thriving. In addition, future research could explore whether the learning aspect of thriving is a neutral, positive, or negative experience. While thriving has been conceptualised as a positive experience, it is possible that either I did not capture the construct appropriately (as individuals reported unpleasant as well as pleasant feelings) or it may be that thriving should be better conceptualised as incorporating challenge or resilience.

Finally, the results highlight that positive interaction with others is indeed a reliable way to enhance thriving. The specific question of how the interaction with others generates thriving is a key question of interest in the literature. Researchers have suggested that it is through support functions (Feeney & Collins, 2015), positive regard (Carmeli & Russo, 2016), high quality connections (Stephens, Heaphy & Dutton, 2011), or relational energy (Owens et al., 2016). In addition, thriving been has suggested to function as a buffer that mitigates the detrimental effects of de-energising relationships upon performance (Gerbasi, Porath, Parker, Spreitzer, & Cross, 2015). These are all likely to be fruitful avenues of future research.
2.5 Conclusion

This study extends the theoretical understanding of thriving, demonstrating both important points of reinforcement of and differentiation from the existing literature. It may be that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to increasing thriving, and that a more nuanced approach is required to explore avenues that may enhance positive experiences at work. Further, we should question the assumption that more is always better. Part of the thriving self-regulatory experience may be balancing thriving itself.
Chapter 3: Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Team Context Moderates Turnover among Thriving Employees

As illustrated in Figure 3.1 (specific variables are shaded), this study draws upon a social cognitive approach to self-regulation to argue that the relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover depends on whether the team context provides employees with knowledge implementation opportunities.¹ A longitudinal research design over six months with 125 participants nested in 35 teams and incorporating archival turnover data demonstrated that thriving employees were more likely to leave when team knowledge implementation opportunities were low, and less likely to leave when team knowledge implementation opportunities were high. Importantly, these findings hold when controlling for job attitudes, thus advancing theory on the role of team context in understanding turnover, as well as how thriving serves as a self-regulatory gauge in a real-world setting over an extended period. Practical implications for the design of work so as to retain employees are also discussed.

¹ Two prior versions of this study were submitted as conference papers. These are presented in Appendix C.
Figure 3.1 Overview of Study 2 variables

Controls
- Age
- Job satisfaction
- Continuance commitment
- Team size

The thriving construct
- General thriving
- Thriving at work
  - Daily thriving at work

Work context
- Knowledge implementation opportunities

Outcomes
- Organisational outcomes
  - Voluntary turnover
  - Work effort
- Personal outcomes
  - Burnout
  - Thriving at home
3.1 Introduction

In times of economic prosperity, recovery, and even downturn, organisations struggle with employee retention. Understanding the reasons for voluntary turnover—when employees choose to leave a job—is a global problem. Average yearly turnover rates in Australia tend to hover between 11% and 16%, and in some industries, such as hospitality, are as high as 65% (ABS, 2013). In the US, voluntary turnover ranges from 16% to 22%, and in hospitality can be as high as 49% (US Department of Labor, 2014). This voluntary turnover is extremely expensive for organisations, with some estimates placing the cost as high as 150% of an employee’s annual compensation figure, albeit higher for managerial and sales positions (Bliss, 2013). When it is high performers who leave, voluntary turnover is also likely to be detrimental to organisational performance (Nyberg, 2010; Shaw, 2011).

Organisational scholars have long examined the causes and consequences of turnover, with the topic being addressed in more than 1,500 published articles as of 2007 (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee & Eberly, 2008) and more since then (e.g., Hom, Lee, Shaw & Hausknecht, 2017; Hom, Mitchell, Lee & Griffeth, 2012). Although there is no single cohesive perspective on the turnover process, Holtom et al.’s (2008) review indicated that the past decade has seen an expansion of theoretical approaches in turnover research, with promising avenues including new individual attribute predictors, increased focus on context variables, and modelling of turnover over extended periods. These research avenues are combined in this study by investigating how context—specifically, whether teams provide knowledge implementation opportunities—may affect how an individual-level attribute (thriving) influences turnover over time.

Indeed, many models of turnover begin with the proposition that individual attributes initiate the turnover process (Holtom et al., 2008). In particular, employee job satisfaction and commitment have long been considered critical in understanding turnover, with the
rationale that employees who are disgruntled with their job or organisation will consider opportunities to work elsewhere (Holton et al., 2008). However, this may only be part of the picture; what about turnover among those employees who are experiencing positive states at work? Research within the domain of POS focuses on such positive experiences among individuals, groups, organisations and societies (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003), and has recently brought attention to the concept of thriving—defined as a psychological state of combined learning and vitality, embedded in the context of work (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein & Grant, 2005). Thriving is about improving, acquiring, and using skills to build capability and confidence while maintaining a sense of energy and enthusiasm for work (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson & Garnett, 2012).

The relationship between thriving and retention is not necessarily straightforward. At least one study has demonstrated evidence that thriving has a positive relationship with retention (Ren et al., 2015). However, in that study, teachers had volunteered for an expatriate job assignment and made a verbal commitment to stay for three years. Retention was defined as any teacher staying for longer than three years, and ‘quitting’ signified the end of the teaching experience after less than three years. Thriving was positively related to retention, but this population is somewhat unique, and the voluntary nature of the assignment likely contributed to retention. In situations in which there are more job and career opportunities available, and in which leaving the job is not equivalent to leaving the country, it is expected that the effect of thriving on retention will be more complex.

That this may be the case is suggested by research showing that thriving at work has been associated with improved job performance, self-development and career initiative (Paterson et al., 2014; Porath et al., 2012). In addition, career adaptability has been shown to have a positive relationship with turnover intentions (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Thus, it is conceivable that thriving employees are high performing, possess greater career initiative,
and may thus also be better able to obtain another job elsewhere. Importantly, whether they stay or go may depend on context. Previous research has indicated that contextual variables influence whether individuals with higher employability and ease of movement seek different jobs or remain with their current organisation (Benson, Finegold & Mohrman, 2004; Trevor, 2001). This study extends this research by examining the effects of thriving and its interaction with team context in determining the outcome of the stay-or-go decision.

Thriving as an explanatory mechanism for turnover departs from the traditional focus on job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and commitment). Job attitudes tend to capture symptoms of whether the job situation is acceptable, and thus job attitudes are associated with employees staying in their jobs. In contrast, scholars have contended that thriving is often used by employees as a self-regulatory gauge (Spreitzer et al., 2005). That is, experiencing a sense of thriving encourages one to do ‘more of the same’, whereas a lack of thriving signals a need for change. Specifically, when an employee begins to sense that he or she is no longer learning, and is at the same time drained and lacking energy at work, then this is likely to prompt the employee to consider alternative scenarios to address this absence of thriving, including a change in job content (e.g., moving to a different project), role (e.g., moving to a different part of the organisation), or perhaps in the extreme, moving to a different organisation altogether. In addition, an employee’s turnover is not just a function of the thriving self-regulatory process, but is also determined by specific features of the employee’s work environment. This fits with the recent thriving research, which seeks to understand the role of context (Porath et al., 2012). Hence, this study contributes to the turnover literature by adding a self-regulatory perspective in examining why employees leave and what organisations can do about it.

In the next section I investigate these relationships using a rigorous longitudinal research design utilising objective turnover data from human resource records collected over
a six-month period. The design is strengthened by controlling for job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction and organisational commitment) that prior research has demonstrated are important antecedents to turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Holtom et al., 2008).

3.1.1 Theory and Hypotheses.

As previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, thriving at work has been differentiated from associated constructs such as flow, flourishing, resilience and subjective wellbeing (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Empirically, thriving has also been distinguished from job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction and commitment), as well as theoretically related constructs such as learning, performance goal orientation, core self-evaluations, positive and negative affect and proactive personality (Porath et al., 2012). Thriving at work has also been positively linked to a variety of beneficial individual and organisational outcomes such as job performance, organisational citizenship behaviours, leadership effectiveness, innovative work behaviours, career development initiative, self-development, health and decreased burnout and job strain (Niessen et al., 2011; Paterson et al., 2014; Porath et al., 2012; Spreitzer & Porath, 2013; Spreitzer, Porath & Gibson, 2012).

Besides these associations, it is argued that thriving functions as a subjective, internal indicator that individuals use to recognise whether they are ‘on or off track in their own development at work’ rather than waiting for external, lagged feedback from others (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 545). This occurs during the process of self-regulation, defined as conscious human processes that typically concern acts of volition, self-adjustment and behaviour guided by goals (Carver & Scheier, 2011; Karoly, 1993). Specifically, thriving may be broadly conceptualised as part of a feedback model whereby individuals monitor their cognitive and affective experiences, use the outcomes of this self-assessment as an indicator of whether there is a discrepancy between their goals and the current state of affairs, and seek to remedy this discrepancy through their behaviour (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Spreitzer & Porath, 2013).
For example, when individuals are thriving at work, they feel a sense of cognitive growth and physical energy. This may serve as an internal cue that they are progressing as desired, prompting them to continue in their current job or role and, over the longer term, remain with the same organisation.

When not thriving, there is an absence of learning and vitality; individuals may feel bored, unstimulated and drained. In other words, they are likely to sense that they are not functioning optimally. This is a signal to adjust their behaviour and efforts accordingly (Spreitzer & Porath, 2013), and may prompt a modification of tasks or roles, or, when sustained over a long period, might ultimately lead to the decision to leave. From a theoretical perspective, if thriving is negatively associated with voluntary turnover, this is preliminary evidence that individuals use thriving as a self-regulatory gauge, and that internal feedback cues prompt behavioural change.

However, the relationship between thriving and turnover may not be as straightforward as one might think. As previously mentioned, there is some evidence supporting a positive relationship between thriving and turnover (Ren et al., 2015). However, it may also be the case that a thriving employee engages in career development, gains new skills and then perceives ease of movement to pursue alternative career pathways in other organisations. This is especially likely to occur if thriving employees do not sense opportunities to apply their new skills in their current organisation. For example, Benson et al. (2004) found that when individuals gained advanced education degrees but were not subsequently promoted at work, they were more likely to leave the organisation.

Organisational context frequently accounts for such opposing relationships (Johns, 2006). For example, group efficacy is typically positively related to group performance; however, there is some evidence that in highly individualistic contexts, the relationship is negative (Gibson, 1999). Similarly, there is conflicting evidence about how mood influences
creativity, with research demonstrating that this may be due to whether or not there is a supportive workplace environment (George & Zhou, 2007). This study finds that when individuals work in a context that provides opportunities for thriving, they are more likely to stay, but when the work context does not provide signals that thriving opportunities will occur, individuals are more likely to leave.

Most prior research on self-regulation has focused on the direct relationship with behaviour, with less attention paid to the role of context (Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt & Hall, 2010). This is despite the recognition of triadic reciprocal causality in determining human behaviour in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), which specifies that explaining any one instance of behaviour (e.g., a change in level of effort on a task) requires an understanding of elements of the person, as well as elements of the context, which interact to result in behaviour, and that behaviour in turn affects both the person and the environment. Empirically, this has been supported in many domains, including relationships among self-efficacy, context and task performance in predicting newcomer adjustment to organisations (Saks, 1995), managerial performance (Wood, Bandura & Bailey, 1990), and coping with career-related events (Stumpf, Brief & Hartman, 1987).

When applied to thriving, a social cognitive approach to self-regulation suggests that when individuals experience a lack of thriving (i.e., a personal component), their subsequent reactions and choice to leave (i.e., the behavioural component) will be determined in part by the context in which this experience is occurring (i.e., the environmental component). Context facilitates or constrains certain reactions and choices (Johns, 2006). Here, the focus is on knowledge implementation opportunities, which concern the extent to which employees have the opportunity to process and act on information, experiment with new behaviours to solve problems, and thereby implement and extend their knowledge. Prior research indicates
that when individuals engage in certain behaviours, this increases thriving, and that experience of thriving reinforces the continued engagement in these behaviours.

Here I focus on team context as an enabler or barrier to this relationship, concentrating in particular on knowledge implementation opportunities as a contextual factor that is especially important both to the specific organisational context and to broad organisational contexts where workers require both cognitive growth and energising social opportunities to succeed. In this particular context, the organisation sells specialised products requiring individuals to have detailed knowledge and understanding of such products. As they implement this knowledge with customers, it provides for energising and reinforcing social interactions. Hence, because knowledge implementation opportunities provide leverage for both the learning and vitality facets of thriving, they are a potentially powerful point of leverage (or constraint) for thriving. Given that thriving is an experience of personal cognitive growth (Spreitzer et al., 2005), organisational contexts that provide knowledge implementation opportunities will be critical for self-regulation (Bandura, 1997). If employees do not have knowledge implementation opportunities in their immediate environment (e.g., the team in which they work), their thriving remains idle, unable to be translated into positive outcomes, and thus voluntary turnover is more likely as employees will look for another team context in which they can utilise their talents. However, when thriving employees are given opportunities to implement knowledge in their team, they experience the sense of mastery that results in motivation to stay with the organisation.

Consider the following potential scenarios. An employee at Genenco attends a series of training and development courses offered by the organisation, and through simulations and practice in her team, experiences a great sense of cognitive growth, as well as feeling energised and excited about applying new knowledge. She is thriving, and begins to search for opportunities to master and implement the new expertise and channel her energy into
productive outcomes. Her team manager responds by assigning her to a new project that involves establishing an innovative marketing protocol. Through internal feedback mechanisms, the employee gauges her level of thriving, agrees to the assignment, immerses herself in the new project, and remains productively employed in the organisation, which has succeeded in putting both her cognitive growth and vitality to good use.

In a contrasting scenario, an employee at Revertco attends a series of training and development courses, experiences an equal sense of cognitive development and increased energy, and is also excited about applying his newly acquired expertise. However, Revertco fails to provide any new opportunities for the employee to master and implement that expertise in his team, and he continues to engage in the same tasks he was performing prior to the training. Through internal feedback mechanisms, this employee senses a disconnect: after the training, he was thriving, but had no way to channel that growth and energy to master and implement his newly acquired skills through new opportunities. Compared with the scenario that occurred at Genenco, it is much more likely that this employee will leave his organisation. Stated another way, through the self-regulatory process, the interaction between the personal characteristic of thriving and a limiting team context that is lacking in opportunities for knowledge implementation gives rise to the behavioural choice to leave and find a new context that provides such opportunities. Importantly, these scenarios illustrate that even thriving employees may leave if they are not provided with opportunities to implement knowledge in their team such that they may make use of their cognitive growth and vitality.

This study further expects that thriving will predict turnover beyond the effects of job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The influence of job satisfaction (the extent to which the employee is satisfied and happy with the job) (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) and continuance commitment (the costs perceived by the individual of leaving the organisation)
The study also controlled for team size and age, as these have also been shown to predict turnover (Holtom et al., 2008). It is predicted that:

\textit{Hypothesis 1:} Knowledge implementation opportunities will moderate the relationship between thriving at work and voluntary turnover, such that: 1a) in team contexts with a high level of knowledge implementation opportunities, there will be a negative relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover; and 1b) in team contexts with a low level of knowledge implementation opportunities, there will be a positive relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover.

\section{Method}

\subsection{Participants.}

Participants were from a subsidiary company of Inenco, as explained in Section 1.5. Employees work in small retail branches that are distributed across the country. A branch is a store where customers come to buy products and services, and typically consists of three employees. A branch fits the definition of a team because it is comprised of a small number of highly interdependent employees, with shared goals (e.g., performance and sales targets), and employees need to work together to achieve these goals. Shared goals and working interdependently are critical defining features of teams (Hackman, 1987).

Data for testing the hypotheses included a confidential online survey and turnover data from human resource records. Employees completed the survey individually during work hours, and the response rate was 86%. Of the employees selected to complete the survey, 10% were on holiday or sick leave, and thus only 4% declined to participate in the survey. Two participants who were classed as leaving for non-voluntary reasons (e.g., being
dismissed) were also removed from the sample. In addition, multilevel outliers were identified using the top-down process advocated by Aguinis, Gottfredson and Joo (2013). This led to the deletion of two team-level outliers and one individual-level outlier. Thus, the final sample included 125 participants, nested in 35 teams, of which 22 participants left the organisation in the six months after they had completed the survey.

3.2.2 Measures.

3.2.2.1 Thriving at work (alpha = 0.92).

Thriving was measured using the validated and established eight-item scale from Porath et al. (2012). Items were ‘I feel alive’, ‘I have energy’, ‘I look forward to each new day’, ‘I feel alert and awake’, ‘I find myself learning often’, ‘I continue to learn more as time goes by’, ‘I am developing a lot as a person’, and ‘I see myself as continually improving’ (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statements (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

3.2.2.2 Knowledge implementation opportunities (alpha = 0.79).

Participants were asked to rate how frequently they perceived an opportunity to engage in implementing new knowledge within their team (1 = very infrequently; 5 = very frequently) (Items were: How frequently does your team: ‘Implement new products and services easily?’, ‘Have a common understanding of your products and services?’; and ‘Constantly consider how to better use knowledge?’), using items adapted from Jansen, Van Den Bosch and Volberda (2005). Given that this is a team-level construct, it was necessary to justify aggregating knowledge implementation to create a team-level construct. The intraclass correlation coefficient of 0.06 indicated that a substantive amount of variation in knowledge implementation was due to the groups (Bliese, 2002). To identify interrater agreement within the groups, I computed the rwg(J) (James, 1982). The average rwg(J) for knowledge implementation was .68, which is acceptable (James, 1982). These statistics provide evidence
that knowledge implementation is a context construct appropriately investigated at the team level.

3.2.2.3 Turnover.

Turnover data were obtained from human resource records, operationalised as a binary variable (0 = stayed; 1 = left), for the six months after the survey was completed. A six-month timeframe was chosen because this covers two financial quarters, during which time employees receive both monthly and quarterly feedback, suggesting ample opportunity for employees to implement behaviours (e.g., leave or remain with the organisation).

Given the dependent variable of turnover, it is important to understand the industry and organisational context. Indicators suggest a stable macro-level environment in which employees did not have an overriding reason to leave. Average turnover for large organisations in Australian industry (16%, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012) is reflected in the organisational sample, which had turnover of 16.6% in the year in which the data were collected. The organisation has many attractive features to retain its workforce. Within the year in which the data for this study were collected, the business was growing; there had been a 60% increase in sales and gross profit for the organisation over the previous five years, achieved through both the existing business (via expanded product offerings and geographic coverage, and the provision of higher-value services) and acquisitions. Given this success, the company had reinvested in its human resources, providing a wide range of training and development programs from intensive face-to-face coaching to online training.

3.2.2.4 Controls.

Job satisfaction (alpha = 0.90) was measured with three items adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1975) (Items were: ‘Overall, I am satisfied with the kind of work I do’, ‘Overall, I am satisfied with working at [my organisation]’, and ‘Overall, I am satisfied with my job’). Continuance commitment (alpha = 0.65) was measured with three items adapted
from Allen and Meyer’s (1990) measure (Items were: ‘It would be very hard for me to leave right now even if I wanted to’, ‘I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving’ and ‘One of the major reasons I continue to work for [my organisation] is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice – another company may be too demanding or may not match the overall benefits I have here’). Both satisfaction and continuance commitment were measured on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Employees’ ages were obtained from human resource records.

3.2.3 Discriminant validity.

The discriminant validity of the multi-item scales (thriving, knowledge implementation opportunities, continuance commitment and satisfaction) was demonstrated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). A four-factor solution (thriving at work, knowledge implementation opportunities, job satisfaction and continuance commitment) fit the data ($\chi^2 [98] = 212.75, p < .01, \text{CFI} = 0.90$, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.09). The four-factor model had better fit than any alternative model, including a three-factor model with thriving and job satisfaction combined, a three-factor model with job satisfaction and continuance commitment variables combined, a two-factor model with job satisfaction and commitment variables combined, and then knowledge implementation opportunities and thriving combined, and a one-factor model. Compared with the best-fitting alternative three-factor model (the model with job satisfaction and continuance commitment variables combined), the four-factor model demonstrated a significantly better fit to the data, $\Delta \chi^2 (3) = 41.61, p < 0.05$. Therefore, the four-factor model was retained for the analyses.

3.2.4 Analysis.

Since I had cross-level predictions, hypotheses were tested using multilevel regression analyses in Mplus (version 7.2). This enabled testing of how the individual relationship between thriving and turnover was moderated by the team context of knowledge
implementation opportunities. At the individual level, I controlled for age, job satisfaction, and continuance commitment, and at the team level, I controlled for size. As recommended for testing moderation, the predictors were standardised prior to analysis (Aiken & West, 1991). More specifically, following best practice for multilevel regression, for the fixed-effects model, the individual-level predictor thriving was grand mean-centred, whereas for the cross-level interaction, the individual-level variable thriving was group mean-centred and the team-level variable knowledge implementation opportunities was grand mean-centred (Enders & Tofghi, 2007).

3.3 Results

Correlation coefficients, means and standard deviations for the variables at the individual level are presented in Table 3.1. Multilevel regression results are presented in Table 3.2.

To test cross-level interactions, a comparison between a fixed-effects model without the interaction (Model 1) and the cross-level model that includes the interaction (Model 2) is needed to determine whether the added complexity of the cross-level interaction is a better representation of the data (Aguinis, Gottfredson & Culpepper, 2013; LaHuis & Ferguson, 2009). As recommended by Aguinis, Gottfredson and Culpepper (2013), the fit of the fixed-effects model and that of the cross-level interaction model were compared using ∆ log-likelihood (MLR). This indicated that the cross-level interaction model was a significantly better fit to the data than the fixed-effects model (Δ χ² (3) = 13.42, p < .01).

Thus, Model 2 was used to test the hypothesis that the level-1 relationship between thriving and turnover varies as a function of the level-2 team context of knowledge implementation. As predicted, the results support the hypothesis that knowledge implementation opportunities within the team moderate the individual thriving–turnover relationship. As shown in Table 3.2, after entering the controls (age, job satisfaction,
continuance commitment at the individual level, and team size at the team level) and main effects (thriving at the individual level and knowledge implementation opportunities at the team level), the interaction of individual thriving and team-level knowledge implementation opportunities demonstrated a significant effect on turnover ($b = -1.81, p < .05$).

To interpret the interaction, I plotted the simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderating variable (Dawson, 2014), team-level knowledge implementation opportunities. Following best-practice recommendations (Aguinis, Gottfredson & Culpepper, 2013; Matthieu, Aguinis, Culpepper & Chen, 2012) and common practice (e.g., Bliese & Britt, 2001; Tucker, Sinclair & Thomas, 2005) to deal with the reduced likelihood of detecting cross-level interactions, a significance level of $p < 0.10$ was used to detect whether the simple slopes of the interaction were significant. As shown in Figure 3.2, the form of the interaction effect was as hypothesised. For teams with abundant knowledge implementation opportunities, the relationship between individual thriving and turnover is negative ($\beta = -2.07, t = -2.01, p < 0.05$), such that as thriving increases, the probability of turnover decreases. For teams with a low level of knowledge implementation opportunities, the relationship between thriving and turnover is positive ($\beta = 1.67, t = 1.71, p < 0.10$) such that as thriving increases, there is an increased probability of turnover.

**Post-hoc analyses**

There was a high correlation (0.62) between thriving at work and job satisfaction. Therefore additional analyses were run to investigate whether this correlation might be adversely influencing the model results. When job satisfaction was removed from the model, the interaction between thriving at work and knowledge implementation opportunities was still statistically significant ($p < .01$). When replacing thriving at work with job satisfaction in the model, the interaction between job satisfaction and knowledge implementation opportunities was not statistically significant. Therefore, it is unlikely that job satisfaction
caused the model results and job satisfaction is not interchangeable with thriving even though they are highly correlated.

It is also possible that there was another factor besides knowledge implementation opportunities that was causing turnover rates to differ between the teams. To investigate this, I conducted a chi-square test of independence (as is appropriate with two categorical variables: team and turnover). As there were cell counts with $n < 5$, I report the Fisher’s Exact Test statistic, which is not statistically significant (33.70, ns). This suggests that there is no relationship between turnover rates and the teams.
### Table 3.1

*Means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients for all study variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>36.81</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance commitment</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.62**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge implementation</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>−0.19*</td>
<td>−0.32**</td>
<td>−0.14</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
<td>−0.21*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a p < .05, ** p < .01
Table 3.2  

*Results of multilevel regression analysis predicting voluntary turnover*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level and variables</th>
<th>Model 1: Fixed effects</th>
<th>Model 2: Cross-level interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1: Employee</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.068 (0.34)**</td>
<td>3.25 (0.88)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−0.64 (0.27)*</td>
<td>−1.18 (0.35)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>−1.17 (0.42)**</td>
<td>−1.56 (0.74)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance commitment</td>
<td>−0.08 (0.32)</td>
<td>−0.45 (0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work</td>
<td>0.53 (0.47)</td>
<td>−0.00 (0.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2: Team</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge implementation</td>
<td>−0.41 (0.21)</td>
<td>−0.96 (0.44)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team size</td>
<td>−0.57 (0.28)*</td>
<td>−1.24 (0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-level interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work × Knowledge implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td>−1.81 (0.46)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood (MLR)</td>
<td>−46.053</td>
<td>−42.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction factor (MLR)</td>
<td>0.8666</td>
<td>0.7848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameters</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ Log-likelihood (MLR)</td>
<td>13.42**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>108.10</td>
<td>106.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIC</td>
<td>130.73</td>
<td>137.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample-size adjusted BIC</td>
<td>105.43</td>
<td>102.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n (Level 1)</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n (Level 2)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Entries in the main part of this table are unstandardised regression weights, with standard errors in parentheses.

* p < .05, ** p < .01.
3.4 Discussion

3.4.1 Theoretical contribution.

In demonstrating important moderating effects of knowledge implementation opportunities on the thriving–turnover relationship, the findings extend self-regulation theory, as well as models of the turnover process, and test a contextualised approach to thriving. I provide support for the social cognitive approach to self-regulation, with its focus on the interaction between personal elements (i.e., thriving), team context (i.e., knowledge implementation opportunities) and behaviour (i.e., turnover). The results suggest that when individuals experience high levels of cognitive growth and personal vitality, the team context in which thriving is occurring becomes extremely important. In line with social cognitive theory, this suggests that during self-regulation, individuals weigh up internal processes with external environmental opportunities and constraints in order to guide their behaviour. My
finding is consistent with studies showing that contextual factors moderate relationships between variables (Johns, 2006; Saks, 1995; Wood, et al., 1990). I extend those findings by identifying an additional contextual factor that is specific to applied settings—that is, the opportunity to implement knowledge within a team moderates the self-regulatory processes—and with independent sources of organisational data (i.e., survey and archival turnover data), I demonstrate self-regulatory processes outside the laboratory.

This study also contributes to our understanding of how self-regulatory processes may occur over a period of months, which is likely to have embedded within it multiple tasks and opportunities. If individuals do not perceive work opportunities in which they can use their thriving, they are more likely to direct behaviour towards finding new opportunities outside their current organisation. This suggests that individuals may feel it is easier for them to seek out a new environment than to attempt to change the team they are currently in. Alternatively, they may have tried to change the current environment and, faced with resistance, chosen to go elsewhere. While I do not know whether turnover was ultimately an adaptive self-regulatory action to preserve or increase their thriving once they left the organisation, the findings suggest that in an environment in which opportunities to implement learning were scarce, high-thriving individuals decided that leaving the organisation was a more desirable strategy than remaining. This provides some degree of insight into the actions individuals may take under these circumstances over a period of six months.

This study further contributes to the turnover literature by extending research into person–team context interactions. To date, the turnover literature has for the most part investigated these antecedents separately. The findings highlight the fact that only investigating the main effects may mask important predictors. This study demonstrated that the interaction between an individual attribute, thriving and the team context of knowledge implementation opportunities influences whether employees remain or leave. There was no
direct effect of thriving on turnover, which suggests that a consideration of context may be crucial to a deeper understanding of what influences turnover. It is important that organisations ensure that thriving individuals perceive opportunities to implement their skills at work that match their desired career goals. Extending suggestions that organisations should focus on fit between development programs and individuals’ career planning (Benson et al., 2004), it is likely to be important to incorporate individuals’ perceptions of their self-development opportunities at work into career planning.

Moreover, the type of team context that appears to be important here is one that is informational in nature (Dierdorff, Rubin & Morgeson, 2009). That is, knowledge implementation opportunities potentially signal to employees whether they are likely to gain fulfilment from remaining with their current organisation. In contrast, previous contextual variables that have been investigated in relation to turnover have primarily been at the macro level—for example, organisational climate—or interpersonal in nature, such as affective aspects focusing on attachment or supervisory support (Holtom et al., 2008). This focus on interpersonal concerns is critical, but ignores whether other work conditions are important for motivating knowledge workers such as those in this sample from a technical sales organisation. For such workers, this study demonstrated the effects of knowledge implementation opportunities within their team, and there may be other contextual features such as supportiveness of information technology or adaptability of human resource systems that are important in these settings.

Finally, for the POS field, and more specifically the thriving literature, these findings highlight that thriving is a contextually embedded construct: the impact of thriving on turnover is contingent upon the team context. This further differentiates thriving from other job attitudes that affect wellbeing, such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction, which typically have a direct effect on turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). The results suggest
that thriving thus has a more complex relationship with business outcomes; simply improving employee thriving through training programs is not sufficient to build a sustainable workforce. The organisation also needs to design work contexts that enable employees to translate thriving into their everyday activities by providing clear opportunities to utilise knowledge in a way that makes a contribution to the team environment. Further, this study demonstrated that thriving at work has an influence on voluntary turnover beyond the effect of the job attitudes of satisfaction and commitment. That is, when age, team size, job satisfaction and commitment are held equal, the interaction between thriving and knowledge implementation opportunities has an effect on voluntary turnover.

One of the major assumptions of the POS field is that individuals consider growth and development to be important (Cameron et al., 2003). Yet, POS research to date has rarely investigated whether this assumption holds for a variety of demographic groups. This study’s sample contained a variety of actors, from shop-floor employees who typically had not finished high school, to sales representatives with specialist trade knowledge, to managers who were responsible for customer relations as well as profit-and-loss centres. Age also ranged from those who had just entered the workforce to those about to retire. Differences in age were controlled for and yet an interaction between thriving and knowledge implementation opportunities in relation to turnover was still found. Specifically, the results of the study suggest that thriving at work combined with opportunities to implement knowledge within the team is important to this diverse range of individuals. Hence, the findings lend support to POS theory, which argues that individuals find self-development to be of significant value, regardless of background.

3.4.2 Practical implications.

There are some important practical implications of this study. Recent research has focused on ways to enhance employees’ thriving (Niessen et al., 2011; Paterson et al., 2014;
Spreitzer & Porath, 2013) and other job attitudes (Caza & Cameron, 2008). However, this study’s findings highlight that management also needs to consider how to retain employees who are thriving. Knowledge implementation opportunities represent an aspect of the team context that can be influenced by management and is important for retaining thriving employees. Advancing employees to different or higher-level jobs might not always be a viable option for facilitating knowledge implementation. Other, more informal, avenues for channelling thriving could be in the form of transmitting new knowledge to others within the team, such as sharing best practices, empowering employees to act on new insights they obtain rather than managers taking such responsibilities, or a lateral move within the organisation. Such informal systems may start with a human resource development system that draws employees’ attention to their own levels of thriving in order to explore and initiate the best ways to increase, maintain and use their thriving at work. The important thing is to recognise thriving individuals and, where appropriate, provide them with options other than leaving the organisation. I also provided feedback on this study as part of a wider presentation to the partner organisation, Inenco. The presentation slides are included in Appendix D.

3.4.3 Limitations and future research.

Although a time lag was used to help infer causality—the research model was investigated over six months—whether the theory is generalisable to shorter or longer periods is an empirical question worthy of additional investigation. A shorter time frame could provide insight into how quickly individuals respond to feedback and opportunities, both internal (i.e., thriving) and external (i.e., knowledge implementation opportunities), while a longer time frame could provide greater scope for investigating whether thriving functions as a self-regulatory gauge over extended periods.
A natural question that arises is the degree to which individuals are conscious of their levels of thriving, and thus to what extent this might influence their decision to leave the organisation. Spreitzer et al. (2005) suggested that the subjective experience of thriving at work serves as positive reinforcement for current contextual conditions. That is, if conditions are perceived as enabling thriving, the sense of thriving need not be overtly conscious or considered for it to affect an individual’s behaviour. However, this does not wholly account for the results given the complexity of the finding that the same moderating variable both enables and constrains the effect of thriving on turnover. Future research should address this issue by exploring the extent to which perceptions of thriving are consciously used to inform behavioural changes. Future research could also be conducted on whether decisions based on individual levels of thriving have positive or negative consequences for the individual. Thus, Studies 1 and 2 have presented evidence that thriving may be dynamic over time. This is investigated more closely in Study 3.
Chapter 4: Sustained High versus Low Thriving:

Dynamic Modelling of Thriving over Time and its Effects

Thriving has been defined as a psychological state, implying that thriving is dynamic over time. In addition, changes in thriving are conceptualised as providing self-regulatory feedback. Studies 1 and 2 in this thesis provide empirical insights that thriving provides feedback, and is thus most likely to be dynamic. Thus, this study seeks to explicitly explore thriving as a dynamic self-regulatory construct. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of all study variables. This study finds that there are two distinct subgroups of thriving individuals, ‘high’ and ‘low’ thrivers. Further, these two subgroups appear to differ in terms of self-regulatory outcomes, with high thrivers having improved work and home outcomes. In discussing the findings of this research, I continue to extend our understanding of the thriving construct.
Figure 4.1 Overview of Study 3 variables
4.1 Introduction

Thriving at work has been described as a desirable, informative and subjective psychological state that indicates to individuals when they are developing positively in their work environment (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Spreitzer et al. (2005) suggested that thriving functions as a self-regulatory gauge, with changes in thriving indicating when people should ‘take action … to sustain or renew their thriving’ (p. 537). In this way, thriving plays a useful role in self-regulation, assisting and directing people’s behaviours to achieve individual outcomes (e.g., growth and job performance) and improve adaptation to the work environment.

Self-regulation, defined as the processes that allow an individual to guide goal-directed activities over time and across contexts (Karoly, 1993), is essential to understanding motivation at work. Early motivation scholars focused on individual differences between people (Locke & Latham, 2004), but more recently the focus has shifted to longitudinal and within-person perspectives (Lord et al., 2010). Self-regulation is thus an integral element of this process. This is of importance for organisations because managers are increasingly asking employees to self-manage their tasks, cope with an increasingly turbulent marketplace, and handle multiple goals, often under time pressure and changing deadlines (Lord et al., 2010; Tsui & Ashford, 1994). From an individual’s perspective, self-development has become increasingly important, as the concept of a career has changed from one job that would last a lifetime to the viewpoint that one might engage in multiple jobs and contexts over one’s working life, and thus require adaptable multipurpose skillsets and self-directed exploitation of opportunities (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 2001). Therefore, it is of interest to both organisations and individuals to understand how people can manage themselves more efficiently. Since it signals growth, or the lack of it, an individual’s sense of
their own current level of thriving provides an important mechanism to sustain individual motivation at work.

Importantly, thriving suggests a broader approach to self-regulation compared with that taken in the past (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Rather than having specific goals to be achieved, the idea is that people desire to feel well and improve such that they are generally feeling good about what they are doing in their lives. While having specific goals can help drive performance, it can also lead to anxiety and stress (Latham & Locke, 1991). Monitoring a sense of wellbeing, or other positive psychological states such as thriving and mood (Thayer, Newman & McClain, 1994), may assist in helping people to maintain their overall wellbeing and optimal levels of functioning. This is in contrast to the typical approach to self-regulation, which has adopted a cognitive perspective. That is, people set a goal, monitor their progress towards the goal, and then achieve or re-evaluate the goal (Kanfer, 1990; Karoly, 1993; Latham & Locke, 1991). Less attention has been paid to the idea that people may self-regulate based on a broader set of affective cues (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) including energy (Nix et al., 1999; Spreitzer et al., 2005) and feelings and emotions (Aspinwall, 1998). This study considers the experience of thriving as an alternative to the cognitive perspective of self-regulation.

Specifically, this study proposes that thriving may function as a self-regulatory gauge, investigates the dynamics of thriving over time, and how high-thriving individuals might differ from low-thriving individuals with regard to self-regulatory work and home outcomes. In doing so, this study contributes to our understanding of thriving as a dynamic construct and how it may operate as a self-regulatory process.

### 4.1.1 Thriving as a self-regulatory gauge.

Thriving is characterised by the combined experiences of learning and vitality, both of which are expected to fluctuate over time. Spreitzer et al. (2005) conceptualised thriving as a
‘temporary internal property of an individual’ (p. 538), arguing it is a state that is ‘temporary, brief, and caused by external circumstances … [as opposed to traits that are] stable, long-lasting and internally caused’ (Chaplin, John & Goldberg, 1988, p. 541). Thriving at work has thus been conceptualised as a dynamic rather than a static construct, while acknowledging that there are likely to be individual traits that promote thriving, such as openness to experience (Porath et al., 2012; Spreitzer et al., 2005).

These changes in thriving are expected to signal to individuals whether they are progressing as desired or if perhaps action needs to be taken to address a lack of thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Overall, the sense of thriving also serves as positive reinforcement for people’s behaviour (Spreitzer et al., 2005). If an individual is not thriving, this suggests that they are not on track with their self-development, and may need to make some changes in their work context to achieve their goals. If an individual is thriving, this suggests that they should continue what they have been doing, although this is not intended to imply that individuals should do nothing; rather, the sense of thriving informs them that they should persist in the actions that they have been taking.

Individuals may thrive by actively shaping their work content, context and development at work through their behaviours. From a more specific viewpoint, this could occur on a day-to-day basis, for example, an individual who is feeling low in terms of either learning or vitality in the morning might orchestrate an opportunity to enhance either or both of these by, in the afternoon, going to talk with a colleague who is an expert in an area with which they are unfamiliar. On a longer-term basis, they might volunteer to participate in a training exercise, or speak with their manager about options to change what they are currently doing at work. Thriving individuals may also self-regulate by consciously organising their work tasks in such a way as to ensure that their thriving is sustained over time. This does not necessarily mean that thriving will be stable in the short run, but rather that through actively
making changes, employees can ensure that it is sustained in the long run. In this way, thriving is expected to vary over time as part of a self-regulatory feedback loop.

However, the literature on thriving to date has primarily focused on establishing the nomological network, that is, the antecedents and outcomes of thriving at work (e.g., Paterson et al., 2014; Porath et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2016). There is some preliminary evidence related to thriving as self-regulatory, dynamic across different time points, and across contexts such as work and home, which I will briefly outline below, but no single study has combined these three characteristics of thriving, resulting in an inability to understand how these facets might interact.

The self-regulatory focus of thriving is acknowledged by Paterson, Luthans and Leung (2014). They found that thriving was positively related to job performance and self-development at work, which included goal setting to improve job performance, career planning and learning new knowledge. This supports a link between thriving and self-regulatory mechanisms. In addition, researchers have found support for thriving as a mediator of the relationship between individual differences in regulatory focus (promotion versus prevention) and innovation, arguing that thriving functions as a self-regulatory mechanism that drives behaviours and generates resources leading to increased innovation (Wallace et al., 2016). Specifically, Wallace et al. (2016) found a positive relationship between promotion focus and thriving, and a negative relationship between prevention focus and thriving. Further, the relationship between promotion focus and thriving was moderated by the employee involvement climate. The employee involvement climate was also a positive predictor of thriving. Employee involvement climate was selected because it was theorised that it would be a key contextual influence on thriving employees’ ability to satisfy their self-regulatory needs, and this was indeed found to be true (Wallace et al., 2016). That study is important in that it empirically tests thriving within existing frameworks of self-regulation.
However, although the study is rigorous, in that it occurs over a period of three months, changes in thriving were not captured; hence, the study does not describe short-term daily changes in thriving that would be expected with self-regulation, nor does it indicate how these might influence self-regulatory outcomes.

With regard to short-term fluctuations in thriving, there is some preliminary evidence for the variable nature of thriving. Niessen, Sonnentag and Sach (2011) explored vitality and learning (this was not operationalised as Porath et al.’s [2012] ‘thriving’ measure, although it was quite similar) and found that experiencing positive meaning at work and the acquisition of relevant knowledge at the start of the day predicted increased feelings of vitality and learning at the end of the work day. Indeed, the study found that there were significant day-to-day fluctuations; 64% of the variance in vitality and 37% of the variance in learning were the result of day-to-day variations. This exemplifies that fact that thriving fluctuates across days. Niessen et al. (2011) used a multilevel modelling design, and thus did not investigate the trajectory of thriving over multiple days. Rather, they focused on predictors of thriving each day. This study builds on these insights that there are daily fluctuations in thriving, with the specific aim of investigating whether there is a discernible pattern in these fluctuations over multiple days. For example, do some employees have a sustained level of thriving, or are the fluctuations cyclical?

The only other study that has investigated thriving beyond one time point, thus providing some clues about the dynamics of thriving, is the work of Porath et al. (2012). Individuals were measured on thriving during an EMBA program and then again one month after the EMBA program had concluded. It was found that the individuals had experienced changes during that period; in particular, the cessation of the EMBA program meant that they were no longer undertaking study alongside full-time work. Many also changed jobs or positions because of their new qualifications. Thus, the researchers found that there were low
to moderate correlations in the shared variance of thriving measured during and after the EMBA due to the change in their personal contexts \((R^2 = .28, p < .05)\). This suggests that thriving will vary over time as individual circumstances change, but does not provide information on how the thriving process may unfold on a shorter-term basis, which may not necessarily be characterised by significant changes in context. This is important to understand, as these short-term fluctuations in thriving are more likely to be driven by individual self-regulatory processes than by contextual changes, and thus are a crucial part of understanding how and why individuals may either shape their context or respond to changes in context.

To briefly summarise the existing research on thriving, the tendency has been towards one-off measurements, with some studies using lagged designs, in an attempt to identify thriving’s relationship with other constructs. Investigating how thriving changes over time has not been the focus. Thus, while thriving has been linked to self-regulation and conceptually defined as a dynamic self-regulatory gauge, it has seldom been explicitly developed or measured as such. The promise of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge that drives sustainability at work is part of what makes thriving unique as a construct compared with similar concepts such as work engagement and job satisfaction. Therefore, it is important to test whether changes in thriving affect self-regulatory actions and outcomes. Further investigation of thriving as dynamic will also extend our understanding of the construct by exploring how thriving varies, the time frames in which these variations occur, and what these changes predict. This information will provide insight into how thriving may operate as a self-regulatory cue. For example, perhaps the change trajectory of thriving predicts different self-regulatory outcomes. This would suggest that the change trajectory of thriving provides cues about the self-regulation process.
Beyond these important issues, this study also adds a novel perspective to the literature on self-regulation, and in particular to the development of the thriving concept. Specifically, the existing empirical work on thriving has adopted a variable-centred, rather than a person-centred approach. Variable-centred approaches describe relationships among variables of interest, in which it is important to identify how independent and dependent variables are related (Muthén & Muthén, 2000). Person-centred approaches emphasise how individuals are both similar to and different from one another, with the goal being to categorise individuals into different groups such that ‘individuals within a group are more similar than individuals between groups’ (Jung & Wickrama, 2008, p. 303). Both approaches are important, and the adoption of the person-centred approach allows one to focus on understanding how processes at the person level might generalise to similar people rather than to the entire population (Snyder & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2013). That is, a sole focus on the variable-centred approach would assume that, on average, all individuals will experience the same overall trajectory in thriving over time and that the relationships among variables are alike for all individuals (Laursen & Hoff, 2006; Makikangas, Bakker, Aunola & Demerouti 2010). In contrast, there may be mean-level differences in the thriving process experienced between people, with different antecedents and consequences for each subpopulation (Muthén et al., 2002).

Taking the person-centred approach has implications for how thriving individuals might differ across contexts. For example, people may be more similar or different in their preferences and strategies in relation to managing their work and home domains. Researchers have argued that some individuals might be thriving in both areas of life, such that there may be spillover between the two; however, thriving in each area may also be distinct (Porath et al., 2012). For example, another type of potential linkage between domains is compensation, which has been defined as a deficit in one domain being balanced by experiences in another
(Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). It is not clear whether the linkage between thriving in one domain, such as work, and thriving in another, such as home, is spillover or compensation, or whether perhaps some individuals compensate, while other individuals experience spillover. Some individuals may experience thriving across work and home in one way, while other individuals might experience thriving in a different way.

This study uses a person-centred approach to further verify both the self-regulatory and the dynamic nature of thriving by examining individuals over three days, exploring thriving as a dynamic trajectory. This study thus reveals how thriving may differ across contexts and persons, and extends the construct of thriving by investigating self-regulatory outcomes such as burnout and thriving at home.

### 4.1.2 The dynamics of thriving

An important step in investigating the dynamic nature of thriving is to demonstrate that dynamic effects can be empirically differentiated from a more general sense of thriving. Prior research has not differentiated these two, and yet as with other constructs such as self-efficacy and positive mood or affect, it is possible that there exists a general sense of thriving that is distinct from a fluctuating state-like daily thriving that occurs in specific domains, in this instance, at work. For example, Chen, Gully and Eden (2001) describe generalised self-efficacy as being an overall belief in one’s competence across a variety of situations, while state self-efficacy refers to a more specific belief in ability with regard to a particular type of situation. Akin to this relationship, I propose that the two constructs of general and daily thriving differ in scope, with general thriving referring to a person’s tendency to thrive across situations and to be more resistant to transitory influences. Further, I expect that general thriving will positively influence the overall level of daily thriving. Thus, I hypothesise:

**Hypothesis 1:** General thriving is positively related to initial levels of daily thriving at work.
Thriving at work has been theoretically distinguished from work engagement. Thriving is the joint experience of vitality and learning, whereas engagement is defined as a positive affective experience characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008). Although both constructs focus on vitality at work, they are qualitatively different in that engagement is about the interest and connection people have with their work, while thriving is about people feeling a sense of growth, energy and learning (Porath et al., 2012; Spreitzer et al., 2010). In addition, researchers argue that engagement captures people’s current level of connection with their work, while thriving is more about a future orientation towards progress and development (Spreitzer et al., 2010). However, the two are likely related. Given this, it is likely that work engagement will be related to the initial level of dynamic thriving. That is, when a person experiences a connection with their work, exemplified by vigour, dedication and absorption, they are likely to experience thriving. Thus, I propose that engagement will influence initial levels of daily thriving, such that:

Hypothesis 2: General work engagement is positively related to initial levels of daily thriving at work.

Having argued for daily thriving and how this is differentiated from similar general constructs, I now turn to examining the question of whether there may be different subpopulations of thriving individuals.

4.1.3 High and low thrivers.

There is some evidence to suggest that there may be two subgroups at work, ‘high’ and ‘low’ thrivers. In particular, research by Spreitzer et al. (2012) suggested that there are different outcomes for high and low thrivers. High thrivers were classified as those who scored one standard deviation above the mean on thriving, and this was found to predict greater job performance, organisational commitment and job satisfaction, and less burnout.
than for those who were one standard deviation below the mean. Rather than a simple explanation of higher levels of thriving leading to better outcomes, it may be that there are fundamental differences between high thrivers and low thrivers in terms of the way in which thriving relates to behaviour. For example, those who score highly on thriving may do so because they use thriving as a self-regulatory gauge, which assists them in achieving the desired level of performance and maintaining wellbeing. In contrast, those low in thriving may not be successful in using thriving in their self-regulation; therefore, they have less guidance as to how to better achieve wellbeing. Thus, this study seeks to extend on Spreitzer et al.’s (2012) study by establishing whether there is a pattern of high versus low thriving over time, resulting in the identification of two subpopulations. Identifying subpopulations means not assuming there is a single homogenous population that has been sampled (Muthén, 2004) with regard to the construct of interest. Therefore, one seeks to identify subpopulations in the data that persist over time—in this instance, two classes, high thrivers and low thrivers—while also considering intra-individual variations.

High thrivers are likely to be reinforced by the experience of thriving and observant as to when this feeling of thriving is diminished, which prompts them to take action to restore or renew their thriving. Therefore, high thrivers are likely to demonstrate two sets of actions that are very different from those of low thrivers. First, high thrivers are more likely to behave in ways that will increase their thriving, for example, taking up learning opportunities (Paterson et al., 2014) and being careful to maintain their sense of vitality by being aware of what energises and de-energises them. They are likely to either seek out or create work contexts that will enable their thriving. Second, for high thrivers, if the sense of thriving functions as a self-regulatory gauge, then decreases in thriving should prompt a rapid response to increase thriving. That is, high-thriving individuals are likely to be prudent in addressing decreases in their thriving, enabling them to act in a timely manner to prevent more deleterious
consequences, securing their classification in the high-thriving subgroup. In contrast, those who are low on thriving are less likely to act. They may simply not use thriving as a means of self-regulation, they may not know how to address low thriving, or they may be unsuccessful in their strategies to enhance their thriving. This serves to maintain their low level of thriving and results in sustained classification in the low-thriving subgroup. Given this logic, the third hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 3:* There are two subgroups with varying trajectories over time: 1) individuals with higher levels of thriving and 2) individuals with lower levels of thriving.

It is important to note that there will likely be individual variation within these high- and low-thriving subgroups. For example, it could be that for some individuals, their thriving at work consistently decreases across the work week until they experience a period of longer recuperation, such as over the weekend. Other individuals may maintain their thriving at work throughout the week. Given that this is the first study to examine these groups over time, I begin by focusing on empirically establishing the subgroups rather than exploring the extent to which, and timing of when, individuals may differ within these subgroups.

Building on the existence of two subgroups, high general thriving is likely to predict classification into the high-thriving subgroup at work. Having a high level of general thriving should assist individuals to sustain high daily thriving over time, despite changes in daily thriving that might be due to, for example, minor variations in task or workload. Therefore, it is predicted that:

*Hypothesis 4:* General thriving is positively related to whether an individual is classified into the high-thriving subgroup at work, which has a consistently high trajectory of daily thriving over time.
Having argued for the existence of these two subgroups, this chapter now turns to arguing for the importance of outcomes for high and low thrivers.

4.1.4 Work and home outcomes.

As previously mentioned, high thrivers have been found to have a range of improved work outcomes (Spreitzer, Porath & Gibson, 2012). However, this has not been investigated dynamically to identify whether patterns of thriving that persist across multiple days have differential outcomes. Further, we know little about how thriving at work might influence subsequent thriving at home. Rather than a continuum whereby higher thriving leads to improved outcomes, it is suggested that it is the high-thriving subgroup, which uses thriving in a self-regulatory manner, that will experience better work outcomes, as well as thriving at home.

This study focuses on three specific outcomes—burnout, work effort and thriving at home—to represent a range of self-regulatory consequences that might distinguish between the subgroups of high and low thrivers. Burnout, defined as a prolonged psychological response to chronic job stressors (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001), captures a chronic or distal outcome in terms of self-regulation. Although prior research has investigated burnout using a cross-sectional design (Porath et al., 2012), this study extends this work by examining thriving over time as a predictor of later burnout. In contrast, work effort, defined as the energy, behaviours and processes through which motivation is translated into performance (De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, Jegers & Van Acker, 2009) is likely to be a short-term component of self-regulation. That is, work effort is considered a more proximal outcome of motivation than other results-oriented performance measures (Kuvaas, Buch, Gagné, Dysvik & Forest, 2016). Finally, as proposed below, the use of a sense of thriving in self-regulation is unlikely to be compartmentalised to one area of life. When an individual is thriving at work, it is expected that this individual will be more likely also to be thriving at home.
Investigating the relationship between thriving at work and at home will identify whether there is spillover from one domain (work) into another (home).

Burnout is a multidimensional concept characterised by three components: exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Thriving is directly opposed to burnout in two ways—feelings of vitality are contradictory to feelings of exhaustion, while feeling a positive sense of growth and development is inconsistent with feeling a reduced sense of professional accomplishment. Further, thriving at work is unlikely to accompany a sense of cynicism towards and distance from one’s job. Therefore, if individuals are experiencing high thriving at work, they are less likely to burn out at work. For instance, if the thriving experience functions as a component of self-regulation, it may be that thriving is self-sustaining, and that this sense of thriving therefore aids people in applying strategies or changing their behaviour before they suffer burnout. In a day-to-day approach, high thrivers are likely to receive early cues that indicate when their sense of energy is low or feelings of stagnation are increasing, prompting them to alter their behaviour or environment to boost their levels of thriving, thus reducing the chances of burnout in the long run. Porath et al. (2012) demonstrated that there was a negative relationship between thriving and burnout, although their data was cross-sectional. This study explores this relationship further to investigate whether there is evidence that thriving predicts reduced burnout in a lagged timespan, indicating the potential use of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge.

Work effort is another expected outcome. Individuals who are experiencing high thriving at work are likely to put these feelings of learning and energy to use by exerting more effort at work. Firstly, the vitality component of thriving suggests that an individual is feeling subjective energy. Subjective energy is related to expenditure of physical energy, in fact subjective energy has been defined as having the capacity to act (Quinn, Spreitzer &
Lam, 2012; Quinn & Dutton, 2005; Thayer, 1989). Therefore, people who are thriving may put in more effort at work. Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that individuals who are thriving are motivated by opportunities to use their learning, thus when they feel they are learning, they put in more effort. For example, in Study 1, respondents reported being stimulated by being in a work culture that values learning and knowledge. In Study 2, the relationship between thriving and turnover suggests that individuals are more likely to stay if they are in a team that shares knowledge, that is, they are motivated by opportunities to learn. I suggest that this motivation may result in increased work effort. Further, researchers have found that thriving is positively associated with performance (Paterson et al., 2014; Porath et al., 2012), and thus it seems likely that increased effort is a mechanism for translating thriving into performance. Therefore, a positive relationship is expected to be found between high thriving and work effort.

The final outcome of interest is thriving at home. Research on thriving has currently been focused on the context of work, and there is little research demonstrating any spillover from thriving in one domain to another, such as from work to home. A definition of spillover as a linking mechanism between constructs is ‘similarity between a construct in the work domain and a distinct but related construct in the family domain’ (Judge & Watanabe, 1993; Zedeck, 1992), such that one would expect a positive relationship between the two. Some examples of this are job and family satisfaction, mood at work and at home, and values at work and at home (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Thriving in the home domain would thus be the psychological state of experiencing a sense of learning and vitality at home.

What research there is suggests that thriving at work is indeed positively correlated with thriving in one’s personal life, but these have not necessarily been seen as indicative of one another because of differences in context (Porath et al., 2012; Spreitzer et al., 2012). It has been theorised that individuals may not be thriving at work, but using the resources
generated through thriving at home to compensate for this lack of thriving at work, and vice versa (Porath et al., 2012). Yet, an individual’s experience of thriving at work may be similar to that of thriving at home because the strategies invoked at work may be similar to those used at home. Specifically, I contend that those who are high thrivers and use thriving in their self-regulation are more likely also to do so at home. Simply put, these individuals are likely to be paying attention to their levels of learning and vitality both at work and at home. Further, a strict division between work and home is likely to be somewhat artificial when considering the use of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge. That is, ‘people do not always check their problems or triumphs at the door when walking into the office or coming home from work’ (Rothbard, 2001, p. 655). As people are increasingly engaging in multiple roles, managing the boundaries between work and family and balancing these multiple roles, and goals, has become increasingly important. Being attentive to maintaining a sense of thriving may be one way in which individuals are successful in managing their work and home lives alongside one another. Therefore, it is predicted that:

*Hypothesis 5:* Individuals who are ‘high thrivers’ at work are more likely to experience 1) less burnout, 2) enhanced work effort, and 3) greater thriving at home.

This study explores how thriving may function as a dynamic self-regulatory gauge. This involves investigating how thriving may fluctuate over time, while accounting for the potential general component of thriving and distinguishing thriving from work engagement and thriving at home. In doing so, this extends current trends within the self-regulation literature to focus on longitudinal and within-person approaches (Lord et al., 2010).

### 4.2 Method

#### 4.2.1 Design.

Experience sampling methodology (ESM) is a method of data collection whereby participants are sampled via a short self-report measure several times a day while functioning
in their own environment (Fullagar & Kelloway, 2009). ESM has been categorised into three broad types: 1) interval-contingent, 2) event-contingent, and 3) signal-contingent (Scollon, Prieto & Diener, 2003). This study uses the interval-contingent type, that is, the completion of self-reports at set intervals of time (Scollon et al., 2003). As research on thriving is currently emergent, specific intervals were used to establish a clearer picture of how thriving fluctuates across the day and the week, rather than attempting to attend to events or ask participants to respond to signals. ESM has a number of benefits. It allows for greater ecological validity, permitting greater generalisability of the findings. ESM can also be used to investigate patterns of within-person and between-person change, and thus enables better capture of the differentiation between individuals that may emerge over time (Scollon et al., 2003). It also provides more precise assessments of fluctuations within variables of interest over time by reducing retrospective bias (Reis, 2012).

4.2.2 Participants and procedure.

Participants were from two subsidiary companies of Inenco, as described in Section 1.5. Data were obtained from the sales divisions (i.e., retail branches). The primary task of employees in the retail branches is to serve customers while also being responsible for all tasks involved in running the branch. This includes tasks such as maintaining branch stock and inventory, completing shipping orders, calling customers, serving customers, packing customer orders, maintaining the branch and completing paperwork.

Data were primarily gathered using online surveys, with the option of completing hard-copy surveys if preferred. The final sample consisted of 137 participants of which 135 completed the survey online and two completed the hard-copy version. There was an initial general survey that was completed by each participant prior to beginning the daily surveys. The daily surveys were collected twice each day (at 11:30 am and 3:30 pm) for three consecutive days at the end of the work week, that is, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. A
final pair of daily surveys was completed on Tuesday afternoon and evening (3.30 pm and 8.00 pm) of the following week. The timing of the surveys was chosen for a combination of theoretical and practical reasons. I wanted to assess thriving at multiple times across a day, but the survey had to be relatively simple for participants to complete to ensure a high response rate. Therefore, survey times could not be near the retail opening or closing times, as these are the busiest times for employees, nor at mealtimes.

Participants were given a one-and-a-half-hour window within which to complete the survey, which took a maximum of five minutes to complete. This timeframe was chosen to allow for participants having to complete the morning and afternoon surveys while they were working, and was also used for the evening survey the following week for consistency. Participants were sent an initial text message or email reminding them to complete the survey, with a follow-up reminder one hour later. On average, 92% of participants completed the survey within 30 minutes of receiving the initial reminder.

Morning and afternoon surveys were intended to be collected during work hours, thus if a participant completed the survey outside of work, this response was marked as missing. Overall, less than 5% of surveys were marked as missing for this reason. (The number of surveys marked as missing from the first through to the seventh daily survey was two, two, two, seven, seven, nine, and ten, respectively.) The final daily survey was intended to be collected while participants were away from work, hence the evening time frame, thus if participants were still at work when this survey was completed, their response would have been marked as missing. However, no surveys were marked as missing for this reason.

The initial general survey had a response rate of 100%, as participants could not take part in the daily surveys until they had completed the general survey. Of the 137 participants, 86 (63%) completed all eight daily surveys. Regarding the daily surveys used for latent growth modelling analyses, 104 participants completed all six surveys, an overall response
rate of 76%. There were 132, 129, 135, 127, 125 and 125 responses to the first, second, third fourth, fifth and sixth daily surveys, respectively. Regarding the final pair of daily surveys used to assess outcome data in the week following the ESM, there were 113 and 130 responses to the seventh and eighth daily surveys, respectively, resulting in an overall response rate of 80% (110 of 137 participants completed the final pair of daily surveys).

The end of the work week was selected as the period for work daily surveys, as I theorised that this might be more salient for participants’ levels of thriving at work. This also allowed for the weekend as a longer period of recovery prior to investigating lagged outcomes (i.e., burnout, work effort and thriving at home) in the following week.

Due to the involved nature of the study, an incentive in the form of a gift card to the value of $100 was offered to participants who completed at least seven of the nine surveys (the initial general survey and eight daily surveys).

Data were screened for multivariate outliers using the Mahalanobis distance, but no outliers were detected.

4.2.3 Measures.

4.2.3.1 General thriving (alpha = 0.94).

This was measured using an eight-item scale (Porath et al., 2012). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements indicating their level of vitality and learning using the item stem ‘in general’. Items were ‘I feel alive’, ‘I have energy’, ‘I look forward to each new day’, ‘I feel alert and awake’, ‘I find myself learning often’, ‘I continue to learn more as time goes by’, ‘I am developing a lot as a person’, and ‘I see myself as continually improving’ (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

4.2.3.2 General work engagement (alpha = 0.90).

This was measured using the shortened nine-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement scale (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006) using the item stem ‘in general’.
Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: ‘At my work, I feel bursting with energy’, ‘At my job I feel strong and vigorous’, ‘I am enthusiastic about my job’, ‘When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work’, ‘My job inspires me’, ‘I feel happy when I am working intensely’, ‘I am proud of the work that I do’, ‘I get carried away when I am working’ and ‘I am totally focused in my work’ (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

4.2.3.3 Daily thriving at work (alpha = 0.50).

This was measured using two items from the eight-item scale (Porath et al., 2012). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements ‘I felt energetic’ and ‘I learned something’ during the past few hours at work (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Here, the reliability is low. ESM studies have reported low reliabilities, for example, a recent diary study by Prem et al. (2017) reported an alpha of 0.59. It is known that low reliabilities can be driven by a small number of items (Cho & Kim, 2015). It is important to note that alphas are also reported in different ways in ESM studies to address this issue, including looking at averages (e.g., Prem et al. [2017] reported thriving averaged across days). Therefore, reliabilities were measured in two additional ways. First, it was averaged over the days (morning and afternoons), which resulted in an alpha of 0.71. Second, it was averaged over all items together, which resulted in an alpha of 0.87. This suggests that in this instance the low reliability is generated by the small number of items. Given prior arguments that thriving is the combination of learning and vitality, it was crucial to look at the combination in the growth models. Thus, this reliability is reported based on measuring the two items together.

4.2.3.4 Burnout.

This was measured using one item from the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, ‘Lately more often I talk about my work in a negative way’ (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou & Kantas,
Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with this statement on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

### 4.2.3.5 Work effort.

This was measured by asking participants to rate their level of effort over the past few hours at work on a scale of 0–100%.

### 4.2.3.6 Daily thriving at home (alpha = 0.50).

This was measured using two items from the eight-item scale (Porath et al., 2012). This reliability is low, as discussed above. Unfortunately, I did not have additional items available to investigate averages for this measure. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statements ‘I felt energetic’ and ‘I learned something’ during the past few hours at home (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

### 4.2.4 Discriminant validity.

Prior to the analyses, the discriminant validity of the four main research variables (i.e., general thriving, general work engagement, daily thriving at work [all six measures were included], and daily thriving at home) was investigated using CFA. The four-factor model provided optimal fit for the data ($\chi^2$ [428] = 985.41, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.77, SRMR = 0.07). This was better than the fit provided by alternative models, including a three-factor model with general thriving and general work engagement variables combined, a three-factor model with daily thriving at work and daily thriving at home variables combined, a two-factor model with general work engagement and all thriving variables combined, and a one-factor model. Compared with the best-fitting alternative three-factor model (the model with daily thriving variables combined), the four-factor model with daily thriving at work and daily thriving at home specified as separate factors demonstrated a significantly better fit to the

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2 Burnout and work effort could not be investigated using factor analysis as a result of having only one item per measure.
data ($\Delta \chi^2 (3) = 8.64, p < 0.05$). Given that the CFA provided evidence of discriminant validity, I specified all thriving variables as separate factors in the analyses.

4.2.5 Analysis.

This study uses latent growth modelling (LGM), growth mixture modelling (GMM), including latent growth class analysis (LCGA), and regressions. LGM explains change over time as a latent process (Duncan & Duncan, 2009), but is limited by the assumption that all data are collected from one observed population (Wang & Bodner, 2007). LGM provides ‘a single average growth estimate, a single estimate of variance of the growth parameters, and assumes a uniform influence of covariates on the variance and growth parameters’ (Jung & Wickrama, 2008, p. 303). As an extension of LGM, GMM can identify unobserved subpopulations, that is, classes that follow similar latent trajectories over time (Wang, 2007). GMM does this by allowing multiple classes to be modelled, and also permits within-class variation of the intercept and slope of the classes (Jung & Wickrama, 2008; Wang, 2007). This technique allows one to model heterogeneity in a sample and account for differences between people within groups in their developmental trajectories over time. LCGA is a restricted version of GMM. This is a growth mixture model with the variance of the intercept and slope factors restricted to zero within classes, meaning it is assumed that all individual growth trajectories within a class are the same (Jung & Wickrama, 2008). The benefit of using LCGA is its ability to identify distinct classes prior to conducting GMM. LCGA is recommended as a starting point for GMM because it allows for clearer identification of classes as a result of the restriction of variance and also requires less computational power (Jung & Wickrama, 2008).

The growth modelling analyses were performed using Mplus (version 7.3). As recommended, the standard missing data method is ‘missing at random’ (Muthén & Muthén,

The extant literature suggests using a combination of statistics and information criteria to assess the goodness of fit of alternative models and robustness of the number of classes. These include the Bayesian information criterion (BIC), entropy, class sizes, class probability, the Lo–Mendell–Rubin likelihood test (LMR-LRT) and bootstrapped LRT (BLRT) (Jung & Wickrama, 2008; Muthén & Muthén, 2000; Nylund, Asparouhov & Muthén, 2007; Wang, 2007). Specifically, of the information criteria (Akaike information criterion [AIC], adjusted Bayesian information criterion [ABIC] and BIC) and likelihood-based tests, those recommended as being most consistent and robust are the BIC and the BLRT (Nylund et al., 2007). However, the BLRT is not commonly used, as it can be difficult to reach convergence and greatly increases computational time, thus the LMR-LRT is more typically used (Jung & Wickrama, 2008; Nylund et al., 2007).

To identify the correct number of classes, one usually examines a series of models with increasing numbers of classes until the LMR-LRT and/or BLRT are not significant. That is, a significant LMR-LRT and/or BLRT indicates that the k + 1-class model should not be rejected in favour of the model with k classes (Muthén, 2004). Lower values of the information criteria are better and entropy values above .80 are indicative of good classification (Lubke & Muthén, 2007; Muthén, 2004), while class probabilities above .90 (Muthén & Muthén, 2000), and class sizes greater than 50 are desirable (Muthén & Muthén, 2000).

In addition, GMM begins by estimating models accordingly to complexity, from simpler models to more complex ones. Unconditional models (i.e., without covariates) are

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3 Although commonly performed, testing for measurement invariance was not possible because of the reduced number of indicators. However, this is of less concern, as the short time lags mean that it is unlikely that this construct is changing over time (Eid, Courvoisier & Lischetzke, 2012).
estimated prior to conditional models (i.e., those with covariates). However, if it is likely that covariates have significant direct effects on the intercept, slope and class, then the model without covariates may lead to incorrect results (Jung & Wickrama, 2008). Thus, I began by fitting unconditional one-class latent growth models, and then conditional latent growth models, to establish the validity of the one-class models, followed by conditional LCGAs to establish the likely correct number of classes, until finally proceeding to a conditional GMM.

As a final step, regressions were analysed using SPSS 23.0 to identify whether the classes identified by GMM predicted outcomes. This procedure has been utilised by others to examine developmental trajectories over time including adjustment to retirement, academic achievement and disease (Muthén et al., 2002; Muthén & Muthén, 2000; Wang, 2007).

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Descriptive statistics.

Means, standard deviations and correlations are shown in Table 4.1.

4.3.2 LGM analyses.

Unconditional and conditional one-class latent growth curve models were specified with a) linear growth shape, b) quadratic growth shape, and c) free growth shape (factor loadings for time points 3–6 were freely estimated). Freely estimating the growth shape allows one to detect nonlinear growth, or how much the growth deviates from a linear trend (Liu, Mo, Song & Wang, 2016). All model results are shown in Table 4.2. Where fixed, time points were defined by the measurement time in hours and divided by ten (this division is

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4 Unconditional LCGAs are reported in Appendix E.
5 Additional latent growth analyses were conducted with age and business unit included as control variables to identify whether they had any effect on the results. However, the results were practically identical. Therefore, the latent growth analyses results are reported without these control variables.
necessary to achieve model estimation). The results of the unconditional models, followed by the conditional models, are presented below.

**4.3.2.1 Unconditional models.**

Both the linear model and the quadratic model showed poor fit using chi-square, RMSEA, CFI, TLI, and SRMR fit statistics. The model with a quadratic growth shape was not significantly different to the model with a linear growth shape, while the model with a freely estimated growth shape did not converge. Given that I expected two covariates—general thriving and general engagement—would be important predictors of the growth models, it is not surprising that these models did not converge. Recall that if it is likely that covariates have significant direct effects on the intercept, slope and class, then the model without covariates may lead to incorrect results (Jung & Wickrama, 2008). Therefore, conditional models were estimated, as described previously.

**4.3.2.2 Conditional models.**

Latent growth models were run with the covariates general thriving at work and engagement to predict initial status and slope. Both the linear and quadratic models showed poor fit, although they fit the data better than the unconditional models. The model with a freely estimated growth shape produced acceptable fit and was statistically significantly different from the conditional model with linear growth shape using a log-likelihood ratio chi-square test ($\chi^2 (1, N = 137) = 28.54, p < 0.05$).

General thriving at work and engagement were significant positive predictors of the intercept of daily thriving at work (general thriving: $b = 0.40, p < 0.05$; engagement: $b = 0.27, p < 0.05$) highlighting that general thriving at work and engagement are positively related to the overall level of daily thriving. However, neither general thriving nor engagement were significant predictors of the slope ($p > 0.05$), and therefore do not predict fluctuations in daily thriving. This supports Hypothesis 1 that general thriving, and
Hypothesis 2 that general engagement, predicts the initial level of daily thriving at work. Although not the focus of this analysis, the shape of the free growth shape model indicated nonlinear change. My investigation of nonlinear models is discussed in more detail in Appendix E.

All subsequent analyses used the covariates general thriving and work engagement, as well as a free growth shape.
Table 4.1

Correlations and descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
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<tr>
<td>General thriving</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.70**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work (Time 1)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.62**</td>
<td>0.54**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work (Time 2)</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.50**</td>
<td>0.45**</td>
<td>0.61**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work (Time 3)</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>0.39**</td>
<td>0.40**</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work (Time 4)</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.49**</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>0.49**</td>
<td>0.48**</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work (Time 5)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.47**</td>
<td>0.49**</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>0.49**</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work (Time 6)</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>0.54**</td>
<td>0.53**</td>
<td>0.37**</td>
<td>0.68**</td>
<td>0.59**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>-0.57**</td>
<td>-0.51**</td>
<td>-0.44**</td>
<td>-0.35**</td>
<td>-0.36**</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
<td>-0.31**</td>
<td>-0.37**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work effort</td>
<td>88.47</td>
<td>11.77</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.23*</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at home</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>-0.29**</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>36.64</td>
<td>11.37</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.24**</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05, ** p < .01
Table 4.2

*Chi-square and fit indices of one-class model comparisons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Free parameters</th>
<th>Log-likelihood</th>
<th>Chi-square, df</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>−697.57</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (16, N = 137) = 61.28, $p &lt; 0.05$</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadratic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>−692.78</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (12, N = 137) = 51.69, $p &lt; 0.05$</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional linear</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>−654.70</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (24, N = 137) = 68.66, $p &lt; 0.05$</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional quadratic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>−648.63</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (18, N = 137) = 56.52, $p &lt; 0.05$</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional freely estimated</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>−640.43</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ (25, N = 137) = 40.13, $p &lt; 0.05$</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3 GMM analyses.

To establish the number of classes in the longitudinal (i.e., growth) model, I followed the procedure outlined by Jung and Wickrama (2008) and others (e.g., Muthén, 2004; Wang, 2007). As the previous LGM analyses demonstrated that a free growth shape provided the best fit to the model, I began with this shape. However, the final two models would not converge with a freely estimated growth shape. Therefore, for these two models, the factor loadings were fixed to those estimated by the conditional LCGA two-class model. This is a common procedure because leaving these freely estimated often results in failure of models to converge due to increased complexity. Hence, fixing parameter estimates based on freely estimated models is a typical approach when more complex models are used (Mulaik & Millsap, 2000).

In the conditional LCGA model controlling for general thriving and work engagement, a model with two classes produced a significant LMR-LRT and BLRT ($p < 0.05$), indicating that a two-class model is a better fit to the data than a one-class model. The model with three classes produced a non-significant LMR-LRT (the BLRT did not converge), which indicates that the two-class model should not be rejected for the three-class model. Therefore, a two-class model was used for all subsequent analyses. All relevant statistics are shown in Table 4.3.
Table 4.3

*Fit indices, entropy and model comparisons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Free parameters</th>
<th>Log-likelihood</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>BIC</th>
<th>ABIC</th>
<th>Entropy</th>
<th>LMR-LRT</th>
<th>BLRT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LGM with covariates Thriving and Engagement, one class</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-640.11</td>
<td>1318.21</td>
<td>1373.69</td>
<td>1313.59</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCGA with covariates Thriving and Engagement, two classes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-694.21</td>
<td>1422.41</td>
<td>1472.05</td>
<td>1418.27</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td><em>p &lt; 0.05</em></td>
<td><em>p &lt; 0.05</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCGA with covariates Thriving and Engagement, three classes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-661.23</td>
<td>1358.45</td>
<td>1411.01</td>
<td>1354.07</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMM with covariates Thriving and Engagement, two classes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-648.63</td>
<td>1327.26</td>
<td>1371.06</td>
<td>1323.61</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td><em>p &lt; 0.05</em></td>
<td><em>p &lt; 0.05</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, a conditional two-class GMM was run. This model produced a significant LMR-LRT and BLRT ($p < 0.05$) and a better (lower) BIC value, indicating that this two-class model is a better fit to the data than the one-class model. Fit statistics are shown in Table 4.3. In addition, the estimated number of individuals in each class in the GMM with two classes is split approximately two-thirds to one-third, and, as can be seen in Table 4.4, there are high probabilities assigning each individual to classes, suggesting that two classes are an appropriate fit to the data (Muthén & Muthén, 2000). These results support Hypothesis 3, that there are two different subpopulations of thriving individuals: high and low thrivers. Class 1 included 86 individuals; these were the high thrivers, representing 63% of the sample. Class 2 included 51 individuals; these were the low thrivers, representing 37% of the sample.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent class</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the GMM suggest that the mean intercept in Class 1 (high thrivers) was statistically significant (3.84, $p < 0.05$), and the mean slope was also statistically significant and negative ($-0.27$, $p < 0.05$). In Class 2 (low thrivers), the mean intercept was statistically significant (2.94, $p < 0.05$), while the mean slope was not statistically significantly different from zero ($-0.15$, $ns$). The estimated average trajectories for each class can be seen in Figure 4.1. The variance is held equal across classes. There is significant intercept and slope variance (mean intercept variance $= 0.07$, $p < 0.05$, mean slope variance $= 0.11$, $p = 0.05$).
This suggests that within classes, individuals differed in terms of their initial levels and rate of change in dynamic thriving. General thriving was a significant predictor of class ($b = 3.35$, $p < 0.05$), supporting Hypothesis 4, which predicted that general thriving would be a significant predictor of class.

![Estimated data](image)

**Figure 4.2** Fitted estimated points of Classes 1 and 2 using time in hours (survey measurements occur at times 0, 4, 24, 28, 48 and 52 hours).

Finally, having established the likely correct number of classes and selected the model with the best overall fit, the analysis proceeded to test regressions using class as a predictor of work and home outcomes.

### 4.3.4 Regressions using class as the predictor.

Latent class membership probabilities obtained from the two-class GMM analysis were used to assign each individual to a class. A series of regression analyses was then performed controlling for subsidiary company and age of respondent. The outcomes were burnout, work effort, and thriving at home.
Class was a significant predictor of all three outcomes. The high-thriving class predicted lower burnout \((b = -1.05, \Delta R^2 = 0.19, p < 0.05)\), higher work effort \((b = 4.78, \Delta R^2 = 0.04, p < 0.05)\), and higher thriving at home \((b = 0.35, \Delta R^2 = 0.08, p < 0.05)\). This supported Hypothesis 5, that individuals who are high thrivers are more likely to experience increased work effort and less burnout, and are more likely to be thriving at home.

Given that the choice of statistics to inform the selection of latent classes is still somewhat ambiguous in the literature (Jung & Wickrama, 2008), I conducted additional analyses predicting the outcome variables using a one-class latent growth model. These analyses demonstrated substantively similar results to those presented using the two classes, and are presented in Appendix E.
Table 4.5

Results of hierarchical linear regression analyses for outcome variables in Study 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step and Variable</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>Work effort</th>
<th>Thriving at home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1: Control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidiary company</td>
<td>−0.36</td>
<td>−0.25</td>
<td>−0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2: Main effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>−1.05**</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.10*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Figures represent unstandardised regression coefficients. *p < .05, **p < .01* (two-tailed). Subsidiary company coded (CBC = 0, BSC = 1). Class coded (Class 1 = 1, Class 2 = 0).
4.4 Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate thriving as a dynamic self-regulatory process using longitudinal analysis to explore between-person similarities in within-person trajectories over time.

4.4.1 Refining the thriving construct—general thriving, distinction from work engagement and high versus low thrivers.

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, general thriving was shown to be positively related to the initial levels of daily thriving, and was a predictor of the two subgroups of high and low thrivers. This suggests that in future studies measuring daily thriving, it is important for general thriving to be taken into account. However, general thriving does not appear to influence the changes in daily thriving, perhaps because more proximal contextual and individual factors have a greater impact on these fluctuations. For instance, specific work tasks or interactions with work colleagues and managers may have a greater effect on increasing or decreasing daily thriving.

The findings also provide initial empirical evidence of the distinction between thriving and work engagement, supporting the different conceptual contributions of these constructs. Both general thriving and general engagement were positively related to initial levels of daily thriving (i.e., Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported). However, only general thriving was a predictor of the two subgroups of high and low thrivers; general engagement did not predict these two subgroups. This provides some support for the theoretical distinctions made by Spreitzer et al. (2010). They argued that this is because thriving captures a future orientation and sense of progress, while engagement represents an immediate connection with one’s work.

Hypothesis 3, that there were two subgroups of thrivers, was supported, first by the establishment of two latent classes using the GMM and then through the demonstration of
differential outcomes using regressions with Hypothesis 5. A key implication of this finding is that it may not be enough to simply boost an individual’s thriving at any one point in time. More systemic changes to lift people’s overall thriving to a level of maintained ‘high’ thriving may be required before sustained positive outcomes are seen. Until now, it has generally been suggested that increasing thriving promotes better organisational and individual outcomes, but these results show that the relationship may depend upon differences in people’s experience of thriving over time. For example, demonstrated increased thriving at a single point in time for individuals in the ‘low’ thriving subgroup may not necessarily be predictive of better outcomes for these individuals, whereas if sustained increased thriving can be generated for these individuals, then perhaps that would result in improved outcomes.

Scoring highly on general thriving was a predictor of being a high thriver over time, supporting Hypothesis 4, thus increasing the antecedents of general thriving could be one way to increase the number of high thrivers. For example, there may be other important contextual and individual factors that warrant further investigation, including features of the organisation such as work design elements and dispositional traits such as openness to experience and promotion focus (Wallace et al., 2016). These could increase daily work thriving, either directly, or indirectly through increasing levels of general thriving.

4.4.2 Self-regulatory outcomes.

Hypothesis 5 was also supported, with high thrivers shown to have enhanced work and home outcomes, namely reduced burnout, increased work effort, and increased thriving at home. This result provides additional evidence that thriving may function as a self-regulatory gauge and further suggests that one of the ways in which thriving affects short-term behaviour is through the direction of effort. That is, when thriving is consistently high at the end of the week, this
sense of thriving appears to inform lagged outcomes (in the following week) that assist in both short-term (e.g., work effort and daily thriving at home) and long-term (e.g., burnout) individual functioning. I infer that this sense of thriving enables individuals to act in ways that will sustain them both at work and at home. Future research could investigate a longer-term outcome measure of individuals’ home lives such as life satisfaction.

The existence of the two subgroups suggests that is not necessarily the case that all individuals will experience the thriving process in the same way. That is, it may be that only high-thriving individuals use thriving as a self-regulatory gauge. For these high-thriving individuals, a lack of thriving is a signal to act in ways that will increase their thriving. However, for the individuals who are not thriving, the lack of thriving may not necessarily serve as a self-regulatory cue. For instance, researchers have suggested that people may respond differently to feedback, with some people failing to use information that is collected, while others might only pay attention to information that is consistent with a certain preconceived viewpoint or course of action (Tsui & Ashford, 1994).

Findings indicate that a promising avenue for future research is examining why the low thrivers do not seem to use thriving as a self-regulatory gauge. For example, it could be that individuals who are not thriving are not sensitive to such a state, and therefore do not respond in ways that will increase their thriving, or they might take action, but this action might not be successful in increasing thriving. For the low-thriving group, it is unclear whether it is the absence of thriving that results in thriving not being used as a self-regulatory gauge. It may be that even if they were thriving, this type of internal feedback is simply irrelevant. Thriving may not serve as a self-regulatory indicator for everyone. For example, one reason why the low thrivers might not view thriving as informative to self-regulation is that if they do not feel that
self-development is a goal, thriving may simply not be meaningful. Alternatively, perhaps low thrivers need to reach some optimal level of thriving before it becomes self-regulatory.

4.4.3 Relationship between thriving at work and thriving at home.

The results suggest that being a high thriver at work predicts increased thriving at home. Previously, researchers have argued that thriving at work may not necessarily be indicative of thriving at home, and vice versa, or that people might pursue compensation from one domain to the other (Porath et al., 2012), whereby a deficit in one domain is ameliorated by positive experiences in another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). However, the fact that low thrivers at work did not seem to be experiencing increased thriving at home suggests that this explanation does not hold true for the sample in this study. Rather, it seems that sustained high thriving at work may either be indicative of generally greater or more effective self-regulatory processing that influences both the work and home domains, or that high thriving at work spills over into the home domain. Further investigations measuring daily thriving at home, daily thriving at work, and the interaction between the two are needed to explore this finding and to reveal in which direction spillover might be occurring. Such a design would also enable assessment of whether the common construct of general thriving might be influencing both the work and home domains. This would be evidence of the congruence process described by Edwards and Rothbard (2000). The current design was not intended to examine this, and thus I only measured thriving at work on a twice-daily basis and thriving at home as an outcome in the following week.

4.4.4 Group trajectories of thriving over time.

The group of high thrivers displayed a statistically significant overall trajectory of decreasing thriving over the three days; however, their level of thriving was still higher than that of the low thrivers at the end of the week. The low thrivers seemed to display a more stable
trajectory, albeit at lower levels of thriving than the high thrivers throughout the week. These results suggest that the high thrivers are more sensitive to changing circumstances, and also need more to sustain their high levels of thriving. When decreases occur, this is the prompt that is required for them to take action, either through greater restoration over the weekend or through other behaviours that prompt change. Perhaps a key component of being a high thriver is self-awareness or self-reflection. Low thrivers may not be sensitive to changes in thriving, and thus may not perceive that specific actions need to be taken to increase their thriving. Finally, both groups demonstrated significant variances in terms of the intercept and slope, suggesting that there are further nuances to be investigated in relation to how people experience the thriving process.

4.4.5 Self-regulation.

This study demonstrates evidence of thriving being used as a broader, affective mechanism for self-regulation. Thriving is a cue, as is goal achievement, but it is a different type of cue with affective, rather than simply cognitive, underpinnings. Given that the high-thriving class was related to increased work effort and reduced burnout, maintaining or enhancing thriving may constitute an underlying purpose of self-regulation—that thriving directs self-regulatory behaviours. It is important that future research explores whether a sense of thriving acts as an independent self-regulatory mechanism or whether it works in conjunction with goals.

This also suggests that when an individual self-regulates based on how they are feeling, they do not necessarily end up feeling drained or reduced in terms of their capacity to enact self-regulatory actions. This is likely because the overall purpose of the self-regulatory action is to maintain a sense of wellbeing. This sense of wellbeing is, in turn, likely to enhance self-regulatory actions. This finding is contrary to that of previous work, which has suggested that
there is a limit to people’s capacity to self-regulate (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven & Tice, 1998; Hedgcock, Vohs & Rao, 2012; Vohs & Heatherton, 2000).

However, this study also suggests that it may be that people self-regulate in different ways, with thriving not necessarily functioning as a self-regulatory mechanism over time for all people. For example, the low-thriving group did not demonstrate improved self-regulatory outcomes. Psychological states may not always operate in the same way in relation to self-regulation. For example, the role of emotion has been suggested to play different roles in assessing progress towards a goal. Examples include mood as information, influencing the selection of goals, or providing a psychological resource (Aspinwall, 1998). Future research is needed to more explicitly measure thriving’s role in self-regulation.

4.4.6 Limitations and future research.

GMM is a relatively new technique, and thus guidelines informing the selection of latent classes are still somewhat ambiguous in the literature (Jung & Wickrama, 2008; Muthén & Muthén, 2000). Further, the observed pattern of data for each participant suggests that there is a great deal of fluctuation in thriving, which is not easily captured by current statistical models. The fact that a free growth shape was a better fit to the data is indicative of this. It may be that people’s thriving fluctuates meaningfully around their own base level, similar to, for example, health measures such as blood pressure and quality of life, where deviations from a person’s average or stable level are of more interest than absolute levels (Ryu, West & Sousa, 2012). It may be that a cyclical trend is more representative of the thriving process. Future research could design and test these potential cyclical fluctuations using a sinusoidal or cosine model, including antecedents and contextual variables that may influence thriving (see Hipp, Curran, Bollen and Bauer [2004] for an explanation of how this has been applied to seasonal changes in crime; to
my knowledge, this approach has not yet been applied to organisational behaviour). Alternatively, an event-contingent sampling method may account for differences in people’s thriving. This would be important for understanding within-person differences, such as whether it is meaningful when people deviate from their own average thriving. Assessing cyclical fluctuations would require thriving to be measured at equal time intervals and at a greater frequency, which was not possible with the sample in this study given the nature of their work with customers, meaning that I could not interrupt them with additional surveys. Taking into account these types of cyclical and/or within-person changes and then exploring whether there still appear to be two classes, high and low thrivers, would be a promising area for future research. Additional outcome variables, over a longer period, and within different contexts would also be important in exploring the boundary conditions of high and low thrivers.

The establishment of a general versus daily component to thriving is a novel contribution to the literature. However, further research is needed to establish the stability of general thriving over time and the expected correlations with personality measures such as openness to experience to create a nomological network. My aim in this study was to focus more on daily thriving, as thus far, the theoretical emphasis has been on the state-like, dynamic nature of the construct. An interesting aim for future research will be to tease out potential differential antecedents to general versus daily thriving. For example, perhaps culture, early childhood experiences, or relatively stable dispositional factors drive general thriving, while task and context characteristics predict daily fluctuations. The results shown here are suggestive of differential antecedents that should be explored more fully.

Regarding the dynamism of thriving, the time frame that was studied influences the pattern of the findings (Mitchell & James, 2001; Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). Naturally, the
research questions guide the selection of the time frame in terms of what is most relevant and of greatest interest. This study suggests that thriving may function as a self-regulatory gauge in the short-term (i.e., over days and potentially weeks). Additional research is needed to assess whether this result is replicated over longer periods, or whether a different pattern of thriving is found over different time frames.

The results of this study suggest that thriving at work may enhance thriving at home. This suggests that thriving may enrich multiple contexts, although this relationship needs to be replicated and further investigated in both directions. However, it may be extrapolated that improving thriving in one domain is likely to have beneficial effects not only in that particular domain, but also in other domains. For example, making work a place that enhances individuals’ feelings of learning and vitality is likely to improve their feelings of thriving at home, which may then have other positive repercussions.

The extant positive organisational scholarship literature implies that the more, the better (e.g., thriving, energy and wellbeing), and that increasing the experience of positive constructs is better, but perhaps increasing is only better when the starting point is low. That is, when thriving is already high, perhaps there is a ceiling effect, and it may be impossible to thrive beyond a high level. For example, there were no individuals who constantly rated their thriving at the highest possible level, and only 13 individuals (9% of the sample) rated themselves above a score of four on all daily work thriving measurement occasions. This suggests that most individuals are not experiencing constant high thriving.\(^6\) It would be interesting to explore whether there are organisational contexts in which thriving is constantly rated as high to see whether these findings can be generalised. Alternatively, what may be more important is whether higher levels of

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\(^6\) That is, the two subgroups are classified based on their relative distance from one another, rather than demonstrating objectively ‘low’ versus ‘high’ levels of thriving.
thriving can be shown to reliably lead to substantively better outcomes (e.g., increased effort, thriving at home and reduced burnout).

4.4.7 Practical implications.

The findings of this study suggest that for managers, it may not be enough to simply boost employee thriving at a single point in time, for example, with one-off training programs, job changes or wellbeing initiatives. Rather, there may be a need to incorporate a long-term perspective in relation to wellbeing, considering thriving over time. Thus, a manager may need to identify whether a change, which could be a different role or a secondment, has significantly increased an employee’s level of thriving, and whether this increase is likely to be maintained over time. Perhaps more systemic changes, such as flexible work practices (e.g., flexible time and/or place arrangements), or the use of a variety of management practices such as altering job designs, training and development, or wellbeing programs may be more effective.

At the same time, the results of the study suggest that there may be no need for concern if people experience a certain level of reduction in thriving, as this may be necessary to prompt individuals to manage and increase their own thriving. That is, although individuals may in general experience a high level of thriving over time, this does not mean that they are at that level at every point in time over the day or week. The key takeaway here is to focus on sustainability, looking at the individual processes over time, not just single moments in time. I also provided feedback to the partner organisation, Inenco, as part of a wider presentation. In addition, individuals who participated in the study received individualised reports. A sample report and the presentation slides are contained in Appendix F.
4.5 Conclusion

This study sought to explore how thriving might function as a dynamic self-regulatory gauge over a relatively short period. By doing so, I extended our theoretical understanding of thriving by differentiating general and daily thriving, and distinguishing thriving from work engagement. The findings suggest that there are subpopulations of thriving individuals—high and low thrivers—and that positive consequences may only be experienced by the high thrivers. Further, not all individuals may experience, and thus use, thriving in their self-regulatory processes. Whether it is possible for thriving to be used as a self-regulatory gauge by all individuals needs further investigation. More detailed research is required to understand thriving over time and within-person fluctuations in thriving. The final chapter will summarise and conclude the thesis.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter summarises the findings of the three studies presented in this thesis and integrates their theoretical and practical contributions to the field. Finally, it outlines some of the strengths and limitations associated with the research before suggesting some possibilities for future research.

The thriving construct

General thriving S3

Thriving at work S1, S2

Daily thriving at work S3

Outcomes

Organisational outcomes

Voluntary turnover S2

Work effort S3

Personal outcomes

Burnout S3

Thriving at home S1, S3

Figure 5.1 Broad overview of the three research studies (specific constructs in each study indicated by S1, S2 and S3)

As previously discussed, thriving has been defined as a form of wellbeing that is based on both feeling good and fulfilling one’s potential (Spreitzer et al., 2005). This construct provides a way of looking at sustainability at work, individual self-development and fulfilment, and has been linked to important organisational outcomes such as job performance. The purpose of this thesis is to broaden our understanding of thriving as a construct, exploring how it may function as a self-regulatory gauge, and potential positive and negative organisational and individual
outcomes. Filling these gaps is necessary to strengthen the foundation of the construct of thriving. This thesis also builds our understanding of where and how thriving fits with other important constructs (e.g., job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement), and makes advances in the field of POS.

This thesis began with Study 1, asking in-depth questions about what people’s experiences of thriving were like, whether or not a sense of thriving was used as a self-regulatory cue, and how thriving across the work and home domains might be related. This study found that there was strong supporting evidence for how thriving has been described in the literature, but there were also some important points of departure. Consistent with the extant literature, thriving was found to be socially embedded, driven by interactions with others, contextually bound and associated with positive emotions. However, this study found that while thriving was linked with positive feelings such as satisfaction, it was also associated with unpleasant feelings such as tiredness and feeling challenged. The results of this study also suggested that whether or not there was spillover of thriving depended upon how intertwined individuals perceived their home and work lives to be. Finally, individuals also explained that their thriving was indeed dependent upon the existence of adequate resources in the workplace to support their thriving. Some of these themes can also be seen in Study 2, which also sought to extend the thriving literature by investigating an additional organisational outcome. In particular, interaction with others in the workplace, the context of a supportive environment for thriving, and both positive and negative aspects of thriving were examined in both studies.

Study 2 examined the conditions under which thriving at work was related to voluntary turnover and found that thriving only predicts turnover in the context of team knowledge implementation opportunities. Knowledge implementation opportunities are considered critical
in the work environment if individual thriving is to result in the positive outcome of retention. This study found that when thriving is high, and there are high levels of team knowledge implementation opportunities, individuals are more likely to stay for the next six months. Unlike the study by Ren et al. (2015), which found that thriving predicted expatriate retention for three years, this study did not find a direct relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover, perhaps as a result of the shorter time frame and more generalised sample (Ren et al. [2015] used a sample of expatriates). It may be that in the context of a six-month time frame, an individual’s decision on whether to stay or go is not directly influenced by thriving, but rather is a combination of a sense of thriving and a positive work context, especially when there are other jobs available (i.e., it is not an expatriate assignment). As this study demonstrates, in this instance, when individuals decide whether to stay or go, the team context is crucial in the turnover decision.

Although I posit that it is the interaction over time between the thriving experience and an individual’s perception of whether or not they have opportunities to implement their knowledge in their team context that directs the decision on whether to stay or leave, Study 2 uses only a single measure of thriving. This does not permit an investigation of how changes in thriving might influence decisions on whether to stay or leave. Study 1 also largely looks at thriving in a static way. Yet, thriving has been conceptualised as a state-like variable (Spreitzer et al., 2005), and there may also be differences in outcomes if one considers thriving as a process rather than using single measures. Therefore, in Study 3, this thesis begins to map thriving as a dynamic process.

In Study 3, taking into account both between- and within-person variability in thriving, it was found that there appeared to be two groups of thrivers over time, those who tended to score
higher on daily thriving at work and those who scored lower. This was predicted by a general component to thriving, and I also took into account general levels of work engagement. Looking at thriving as a dynamic process, I found that the two classes of thriving individuals—high and low thrivers—have different levels of work effort, burnout and thriving at home.

Finding improved differential work outcomes for high-thriving individuals at work was consistent with the existing literature (Porath et al., 2012). Study 3 extends the literature by using lagged outcomes and additional constructs of interest (i.e., work effort and thriving at home). Finding that high thriving at work predicted high thriving at home was a particularly pertinent discovery that differed from the findings of prior studies on thriving. Previous research had suggested that high thriving in one domain may not be indicative of high thriving in another (Porath et al., 2012). The existence of two subgroups—high and low thrivers—suggests that there is indeed important between- and within- person variability that needs to be modelled when investigating thriving and its effects, and if not modelled appropriately, might cause us to reach different conclusions. I also extend the construct of thriving by beginning to model general and daily components. The results suggest that this is an important avenue of exploration if we are to continue to develop our understanding of thriving.

Overall, this thesis has presented findings from three empirical studies that refine the empirical and conceptual understanding of thriving and its relationships with other contextual and outcome variables. I have not only reinforced and supported existing descriptions of thriving in the literature, but also highlighted how thriving differs from these descriptions. Having summarised the results of this thesis, this chapter will now integrate the theoretical contributions made to the literature.
5.1 Theoretical Contributions

Overall, this thesis is congruent with future research directions advocated in POS in focusing on longitudinal work involving trajectories, qualitative insights, strengthening of the constructs and the inclusion of potential negative consequences (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011; Donaldson & Ko, 2010; McNulty & Fincham, 2012). Specifically, this thesis contributes to the thriving literature and, more broadly, the POS and self-regulation literature by: 1) further developing the thriving concept; 2) describing thriving in the home domain, drawing links between thriving at work and thriving at home, and other important individual and organisational outcomes; and 3) exploring the role of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge.

5.1.1 Nuancing and extending the concept of thriving.

Detailing and extending the concept of thriving provides a better understanding of this phenomenon of interest, meaning that improved predictions and inferences as to how it may function can be made. The extant literature describes thriving as a positive affective experience combining feelings of learning and vitality, but this is an overly simplistic perspective that may lead to erroneous assumptions. An example of an erroneous assumption may be that more thriving is always better, and making such an assumption might lead one to overlook potential negative consequences of thriving. Therefore, all three studies sought to gain insight into how individuals experience thriving at work, in ways not described in the existing literature. Study 1 explored thriving qualitatively to highlight the nuances needed for a more detailed understanding of thriving, Study 2 found that there were conditions under which high thrivers actually leave their organisation, and Study 3 measured thriving as a process over a number of days and looking at the outcomes of that thriving.
By asking individuals to describe their thriving experiences, Study 1 highlighted important similarities to and differences from the ways in which thriving has been constructed in the existing literature. The themes of ‘thriving as both pleasant and unpleasant’ and ‘thriving as occurring in the unusual and interpersonal’ were especially important for exploring these differences. Specifically, it was found that thriving is not simply a positive experience, but also involves negative or challenging emotions. Further, thriving occurs through interactions with others; social interaction is not merely an antecedent to thriving. These features extend our understanding of thriving as a concept, and suggest alternative avenues of research, such as investigating the positive and negative cycles and dynamics of thriving over time, potentially in conjunction with social interactions. Study 2 gathered evidence of a nuanced interaction between thriving and the work context in terms of how it influences the decision to stay or go. Study 3 provides preliminary information on how thriving may fluctuate over time, with the results indicating that individual levels of thriving appear to change over a few days and even within a single day.

Study 3 also classified individuals into different subpopulations of thriving. Taking this perspective suggests that we cannot assume that all individuals will have the same general level of thriving or experience the same degree of fluctuation around the average. This means that not all conditions or interventions aimed at improving thriving are likely to have the same effect on all individuals. This reemphasises the finding from Study 1, seen in the theme ‘thriving as compartmentalisation’, which indicated that individuals manage the different domains of their lives, such as work and home, in different ways, which may influence the spillover of thriving from one domain to another. The results of these studies highlight the importance of taking within-person variations into account when studying thriving.
The extant literature has conceptually distinguished thriving from resilience, flourishing, flow, subjective wellbeing, self-actualisation (Spreitzer et al., 2005), engagement (Spreitzer, Lam & Fritz, 2010) and empirically differentiated thriving from positive affect, learning goal orientation, proactive personality and core self-evaluation (Porath et al., 2012). Extending this research, Studies 2 and 3 differentiate thriving from important related constructs. Study 2 distinguishes thriving from job satisfaction and continuance commitment in its effects on turnover (in the context of knowledge implementation opportunities), while Study 3 empirically distinguishes daily thriving from general work engagement.

Further, Study 3 empirically separates general and daily components of thriving. As far as I am aware, this is the first study to do so. Porath et al. (2012) suggested that there is likely to be a more generalised, trait-based aspect to thriving, similar to other constructs such as learning orientation, which have both trait- and state-like aspects. In line with this suggestion, Study 3 proposed that there is a general component to thriving that reflects an individual’s tendency to thrive across situations, accompanied by a daily, fluctuating state-like component to thriving. The results of Study 3 provide preliminary evidence that this is indeed the case, as higher general thriving predicted subgroup membership (i.e., high thriving at work), and high initial levels of daily thriving, but was not related to changes in daily thriving. Further research is needed to validate these first steps towards separating general and dynamic daily thriving components.

From these three studies, it is clear that thriving is a more nuanced psychological experience than previously described in the literature. This thesis has highlighted the importance of approaching thriving as an experience accompanied by both positive and negative affective components and as a dynamic process that considers within-person variation.
5.1.2 Outcomes of thriving.

Current research on thriving is largely focused on the experience of thriving at work and variables related to the work domain. It has been found that thriving is positively related to retention (Ren et al., 2015), job performance (Porath et al., 2012) and self-development (Paterson et al., 2014). This thesis sought to build upon this existing research by replicating and investigating additional outcomes of thriving at work. Moreover, if, as I have proposed, thriving has both general and state-like components, this suggests that there is likely to be a parallel experience of state-like thriving at home, to which thriving at work may spill over, and vice versa (similar to job and family satisfaction). With this in mind, I have conceptualised thriving at home and initiated empirical work examining the potential spillover between thriving at work and thriving at home. This also begins to fill the gap in the POS literature on the failure to document links between positive constructs and outcomes at work and outside of work (Cameron et al., 2003; Fineman, 2006). Finally, I also consider the importance of context with regard to these relationships.

In Study 1, I asked individuals to describe experiences of thriving at home, and found that similar to thriving at work, thriving at home appeared to be socially derived through interactions with others in the home domain. Individuals did not consider thriving at work to be the same experience as thriving at home, and from the results of Study 3, it appears that thriving at home, while significantly correlated with measurements of thriving at work, can still be considered a distinct experience because these correlations are low (average $r = 0.31$) and different from correlations between measurements of thriving at work (average $r = 0.52$). One would expect such a theoretical distinction to be made, as evidenced by the literature. For example, Spreitzer et al. (2005) stated that thriving is likely to be context dependent, and subject
to individual psychological perceptions; that is, individuals are likely to perceive their thriving to be different in different contexts. This suggests that thriving as a state is a separate context-specific experience.

Study 1 also asked an open-ended question about the outcomes of thriving experiences, finding that while there was sometimes spillover of thriving from work to home or vice versa, this did not always occur. Studies 2 and 3 sought to quantitatively investigate work outcomes, specifically voluntary turnover, burnout, work effort and thriving at home. I found that, consistent with other studies, there was a relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover (Ren et al., 2015) and burnout (Porath et al., 2012). Being part of the high-thriving subgroup was likely to predict increased work effort and improved thriving at home. These three studies all demonstrate that thriving at work has varied outcomes and implications. Further, the results of Study 2 demonstrated that the relationship between thriving and turnover was contingent upon the team context of knowledge implementation opportunities. This finding highlights the importance of considering that thriving will likely have a multifaceted relationship with other variables, depending upon the contextual features.

5.1.3 Thriving as a self-regulatory gauge.

Prior literature has proposed that a sense of thriving may serve as a self-regulatory gauge, providing information as to whether an individual is on or off track regarding their self-development, and aiding individuals in their adaptation to the work environment (Spreitzer et al., 2005). The use of thriving in self-regulation has been posited to be broad in nature, such that thriving generally serves as positive reinforcement for current conditions (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Put another way, experiencing thriving is an indicator for an individual to continue acting as they have been, whereas not thriving suggests that perhaps an individual is not progressing towards
their goals as desired. However, just as the capacity to self-regulate has been suggested to lead to improved outcomes, especially performance and success in attaining goals (Kanfer, 1990; Karoly, 1993), researchers have inferred that a sense of thriving might predict other positive outcomes. Thus, there is some empirical evidence suggesting that thriving does play a role in self-regulation, with thriving linked to increased innovation, depending upon promotion versus prevention regulatory focus (Wallace et al., 2016), increased self-development (Paterson et al., 2014), increased career development initiative, and reduced burnout (Porath et al., 2012). These studies suggest that increases in thriving lead to improved self-regulatory functioning and increases in positive outcomes. However, what these studies do not tell us is 1) whether fluctuations in thriving over a short period, for example, a few days, function as a self-regulatory gauge; 2) the potential benefits of a decreasing sense of thriving; and 3) how individuals might differ from one another in terms of their experiences of thriving (i.e., within-person changes in thriving over time).

There are mixed findings in relation to the effect of thriving as a short-term gauge. Existing diary studies involving thriving have measured thriving once a day, specifically at the end of the work day (Niessen et al., 2011; Prem et al., 2017). These studies have also used a multilevel rather than a growth modelling approach. Niessen et al. (2011) investigated lagged effects in additional analyses (these effects were not hypothesised); however, they found that thriving at the end of one work day had no effect on behaviour at lunchtime the following day. They suggested that this was because their approach was not sufficiently fine-grained, as there were likely to be several intervening factors, such as other events at work, or at home, between the measurement of thriving at the end of one day and behaviour the following day. Other studies cover much longer periods, for example, one month (Paterson et al., 2014), three months
(Wallace et al., 2016), and three years (Ren et al., 2015). Study 2 of the thesis, which investigates turnover as an outcome of thriving over a six-month period, is consistent with this existing literature. Unfortunately, there do not appear to be any published studies on thriving over a shorter period (other than from one day to the next).

Therefore, building on the recommendation from Niessen et al. (2011) that thriving be examined for more short-term associations, and to investigate thriving as a short-term self-regulatory gauge, Study 3 presents evidence that thriving at work is dynamic in a short-term context (two measurements each day, morning and afternoon), across three days at the end of the work week. The results of Study 3 suggest that when thriving is considered longitudinally across the days, an increase in thriving or higher thriving predicts better self-regulatory outcomes in the following week (i.e., in relation to burnout, work effort and thriving at home). Importantly, this type of analysis takes into account both within-person and between-person variations in thriving, that is, it accounts for not only increases, but also decreases in thriving. These findings are consistent with thriving investigated over months and years, thus I provide an extension to show that thriving improves self-regulation in the short-term, as well as over the longer term.

In a key departure from how thriving has been described in the existing literature, the results of Study 1 suggest that there may be an optimal level of thriving such that while having too little thriving may be a prompt to change, having a high level of thriving may not necessarily serve as positive reinforcement for continuing activities as usual, as evidenced by the theme ‘thriving as both pleasant and unpleasant’, further supporting the dynamism of the construct. Having too little thriving has been suggested to be an indicator of stagnation, or not progressing (Spreitzer et al., 2012), hence the need for change. Having a high level of thriving that ceases to function as positive reinforcement does not appear to have been explored to date. I suggest that
because there is an inherent association of challenge, individuals may perceive high thriving as occurring when there are too many challenges, even if this is initially considered positive, such that they need to be reduced. Put another way, perhaps maintaining the same level of thriving changes in the way that it functions as an indicator over time. In addition, supporting the results found in Study 1, Study 3 finds evidence to suggest that a reduction in daily thriving may not always be undesirable, but rather necessary to prompt self-regulatory behaviour. This was illustrated by the subgroup of high thrivers showing a significant decrease in overall thriving across three days at the end of the work week, while the subgroup of low thrivers, on average, appeared to experience no change. Importantly, the high thriving group had better self-regulatory outcomes the following week (i.e., more work effort, less burnout and increased home thriving). Thus, it may be that in the short-term, decreases in thriving are equally salient as, or possibly even more salient than, increases in thriving in affecting individuals’ self-regulatory behaviour, at least for individuals classified as high thrivers. Perhaps the sensitivity to these small decreases is the key to their sustained higher levels of thriving. For example, it may be that the high thrivers who had a decrease in thriving at the end of the work week used time on the weekend to recharge their levels of thriving; this requires future research.

The finding in Study 3 that high thrivers at work have higher thriving at home is somewhat contradictory to previous findings that thriving at work, while correlated with thriving outside of work, is not indicative of it (Porath et al., 2012). That is, in their sample, Porath et al. (2012) found little overlap between people who scored highly on thriving at work and those who scored highly on thriving outside of work. It may be that the result found in Study 3 has not previously been found because others failed to separate their sample into subgroups of high and low thrivers. I suggest that the reason some people are high thrivers may be because they self-
regulate using a sense of thriving across contexts. That is, individuals who are conscious of their levels of vitality and learning, and are sensitive to changes in those levels, are more likely to be aware of what affects their thriving and alter their environment and behaviour accordingly. I anticipate that this is likely to occur across contexts.

The findings of these studies indicate that a sense of thriving is used in self-regulation, and suggest that the self-regulation process may occur in different ways depending on the time frame. That is, in the short term, it may be that daily decreases in thriving are equally as important as increases in thriving in stimulating behaviour because it is departures from the average that influence behaviour. Under these circumstances, a temporary decrease in thriving may not be cause for concern, but rather serve as a prompt for short-term recovery; no greater change is required to address the low thriving. However, in the long run, it may be one’s general level of thriving, either high or low, as evidenced by the finding of the two subgroups in Study 3, that interacts with broader contextual factors to influence behaviour and outcomes. For example, an individual who feels that their thriving is low considers that this is cause for concern, and thus they may assess their level of thriving in relation to the role, business or industry they are working in, identify that one or more of these is failing to generate a satisfactory level of thriving, and decide that they need to make a change.

Overall, this thesis refines the construct of thriving conceptually by proposing the concepts of thriving at home and general thriving, as distinct from thriving at work, which has been the focus of the literature to date. I also empirically differentiate thriving from related constructs, reinforce and extend the existing literature regarding outcomes of thriving, highlight the importance of context to highlight contingencies when thriving leads to positive and negative organisational outcomes, and further our knowledge of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge.
Having integrated the theoretical contributions of the thesis, the next section discusses the practical implications of the findings.

5.2 Practical Implications

In addition to the theoretical contributions, this thesis adds to knowledge in the form of practical implications. While I have discussed specific practical implications of each study within each related chapter, this section details more general implications of the findings.

One clear finding across the three studies is that the process of thriving is a complex experience. Although previous literature has suggested that more thriving is always better, the results of my studies suggest that there may instead be an optimal level of thriving, with different patterns over time for each individual. That is, although a generally high level of thriving may be desirable, as shown in Study 1, thriving can involve both positive and negative emotions. Precisely when experiencing thriving is a positive versus a negative indicator is likely to be specific to the individual. Therefore, maintaining an optimal level of thriving requires each individual to understand their own inclinations. It could also be that it is the way in which individuals evaluate their experience of thriving (as positive or negative mood) that could influence their cognitions and behaviours, perhaps in line with the mood-as-input model (Martin et al., 1993).

As such, individuals could benefit from fostering an awareness of their thriving in order to learn when to take action to address plateauing levels or too little thriving, taking into account their own preferences regarding work–home balance. First, individuals would need to pay attention to both their levels of learning and vitality on a daily basis and also over the longer term. In the short term, if they are low on thriving, individuals might ask themselves what kinds of activities increase their sense of thriving and begin to incorporate more of these into their
daily life. If they are beginning to feel as though there is too much challenge associated with their thriving, individuals might reduce their participation in such activities. In the long term, individuals could ask themselves whether what they are doing now, and what see themselves doing in the future, will support their self-development goals to guide their decisions on questions such as whether to stay with or leave an organisation. The extent to which an individual reflects upon their thriving could be daily, weekly, monthly, yearly or on an as-needed basis.

Similarly, organisations need to use individually tailored programs to support optimal thriving, perhaps as a retention strategy targeting high performers. Often, organisations provide learning and development opportunities for their employees such as training programs, workshops and study assistance. However, keeping a focus on thriving means ensuring that there are adequate resources in place to support the learning that is occurring, such as with flexible time and place arrangements, monetary assistance or peer support. There should also be follow-up systems in place to ensure that people have opportunities to use what they have learned, which could include such things as changes in work tasks, sideways or upwards role movements, secondments, or training others in what they have learned.

It is unrealistic to expect that individuals will be thriving at a high level all the time. For example, people are going to experience certain life events, such as loss or trauma, or may have certain factors that cannot be changed, such as poor health, illness or external demands. Further, this thesis provides evidence that thriving may not function as a self-regulatory gauge for every individual—the low thrivers in Study 3 did not have improved self-regulatory outcomes. These issues aside, an agenda that promotes ways to maximise beneficial outcomes for individuals at work, encouraging some level of thriving, is still worthwhile.
A practical implication of focusing on POS is that adopting this perspective in a research setting tells us important things about human wellbeing and achievement. That is, rather than relying upon anecdotal ideas on what might increase wellbeing, POS emphasises the scientific process in establishing valid and reliable findings. Although there are valid criticisms of POS, I believe that these criticisms are a sign of a healthy, engaged debate in the research community, and they add rigour to the research processes underpinning this agenda. In the business sphere, it can be all too easy to neglect less tangible, easily measured targets such as individual thriving and wellbeing. Taking a POS perspective brings these back to the table and argues for why they should be assessed and included. Focusing on measuring thriving, for example, adds value through the emphasis it places on human sustainability at work.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations

While specific strengths and limitations have been addressed in each study, this section discusses more general strengths and concerns about the research presented in this thesis.

One of the strengths of this thesis is the use of a field-based sample, in particular, in an area (mechanical engineering and blue-collar workers) in which there is stereotypically less of a focus on the importance of fulfilment and energy. The existing research on thriving at work has tended to use a variety of samples: EMBA students, both studying and working (Porath et al., 2012), blue- and white-collar workers (Spreitzer et al., 2012), individuals studying but working in different industries (Paterson et al., 2014), teachers (Ren et al., 2015), social services employees (Niessen et al., 2011) and repair generalists from physical facilities organisations (Wallace et al., 2016). This thesis continues this theme of testing thriving in a different social environment (Paterson et al., 2014), which is important, as thriving has been shown to be socially embedded and derived from social interactions. An additional strength is that I sampled
individuals across a range of job levels, as previous work has suggested that the findings may not generalise to more managerial, cognitively laden work (Wallace et al., 2016) and vice versa. Finally, the use of this sample reinforces the general finding highlighted in the literature of the importance of thriving’s effect on business outcomes, in this case, work effort, burnout and voluntary turnover.

An additional strength of the thesis is the use of a mixed-methods research design, that is, the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods and different timespans across the quantitative studies. The use of these methods reveals different yet congruent facets of thriving, and increases the validity and completeness of the research, adding greater depth to our understanding of thriving (Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009). Using different timespans in the quantitative studies also has similar benefits for the research rigour (Mitchell & James, 2001). For example, greater support is indicated for the usefulness and existence of the thriving construct by investigating thriving both quantitatively and qualitatively.

However, it is also a limitation that this sample is all from the same organisation. Therefore, these findings should be replicated and extended in different contexts, for example, across a variety of organisations and cultural contexts. It has long been established that there is a need for replication research in business management (Hubbard, Vetter & Little, 1998). Scholars continue to suggest new ways in which credibility in management science can be enhanced (e.g., Byington & Felps, 2017). In addition, although temporally separated, all measures (aside from demographic variables) came from survey responses. Further research could incorporate outcome variables gathered from external sources such as supervisor ratings or HR records.

A further limitation of the studies is the problem of potential omitted variable bias, particularly in Study 3. Specifically, the omission of any variables that are related to the
predictors and the outcome variables (burnout, work effort, and thriving at home), is likely to cause mis-estimation of the relationship found between the subgroups and the outcome variables such that the relationship may be either over- or under-stated. However, as suggested in Chapter 4, the relationship between thriving and these outcome variables warrants further investigation, which would include testing a suite of variables that may affect both thriving, burnout and work effort.

Another limitation is that the measure of thriving used in this thesis (Porath et al., 2012), although previously validated and used in research, does not entirely capture the conceptualisation upon which it rests. Specifically, the level of thriving is obtained by adding the values of the items assessing vitality and learning. If thriving is the intersection of when an individual’s levels of vitality and learning are high, it may be better, if one is obtaining a single assessment of thriving, to use items that more accurately reflect this combination. Alternatively, if assessing thriving over time, this could be modelled statistically. These ideas are further outlined below.

5.4 Directions for future research

There are a number of general directions for future research into thriving that will contribute to the field and more broadly to POS. These include strengthening the construct by validating general and daily components, in particular, exploring the influence of within-person variability in thriving, investigating thriving longitudinally, improving its operationalisation, and exploring its role as a self-regulatory gauge.

One way to test the general component of thriving would be to develop a scale of general thriving and validate this, in particular establishing test-retest reliability to demonstrate the stability of general thriving over time and contexts. The CFA conducted in Study 3 provides
preliminary evidence that general thriving differs from both daily thriving at work and daily thriving at home. It may be that the general-level construct is of a higher order than the two state-like constructs of daily thriving. Then, when exploring thriving as a state, it is important to consider within-person fluctuations in thriving. Most research into thriving has consisted of investigating between-person relationships for thriving and various constructs. However, these relationships may change when examined at the within-person level, either in sign (positive or negative), effect size or shape (Dalal, Bhave & Fiset, 2014). For example, the relationship between job performance and self-efficacy is significant at the between-person level, but may not be significant at the within-person level (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013). In addition, looking at constructs at the within-person level tells us more about how thriving operates as a process (Dalal et al., 2014). For example, it could be that the relationship between thriving and performance is positive at the between-person level, but the relationship may exhibit lag when considered at the within-person level. That is, perhaps higher thriving is accompanied by time taken to process and achieve thriving, resulting in the lack of an immediate relationship between thriving episodes and performance.

Different timeframes may also affect the relationships that are found between thriving and other variables. Future research may test different intervals, either time-based, for example, over hours, weeks, or years, or event-based, looking at what happens between episodes of thriving. For example, looking at different time frames could answer questions such as how thriving in the short term influences outcomes as opposed to thriving in the long term. Researchers have theorised that in the short term thriving improves individual functioning and in the long term it increases adaptability to the work environment (Spreitzer et al., 2005). This
could be tested by examining whether thriving episodes improve outcomes such as efficiency and performance in the short term, and perhaps improved career outcomes in the long term.

The operationalisation of thriving could be strengthened by developing new survey items that better capture the dual nature of thriving, for example, ‘When I am learning at work I feel energised’ or ‘I feel alive when I feel that I am continually improving’. An alternative approach could be to statistically model the interactions between levels of vitality and levels of learning to see whether it is indeed the intersection (when both are high) that represents a sense of thriving and predicts outcomes of interest. Or perhaps it is more the learning component or vitality component that drives the dynamics of thriving? Future research might also explore whether there is an optimal level of learning, while there is perhaps no optimal level of vitality, or vice versa. Each of these examinations would help to add further precision to the conceptualisation of thriving.

The role of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge was not explicitly empirically tested in any of the research designs, although as this thesis has argued, important inferences with regard to the role thriving might play in self-regulation are able to be made from the research studies. For example, that it is spillover between work and home, and not compensation, which occurs with high thriving at work, is suggested by the results of Study 3. Study 1 suggested that the extent to which spillover occurred might depend on individual differences, and Study 3 suggests that this individual difference could be the extent to which an individual has high thriving over time. Moreover, it seems that the mechanism by which spillover may be occurring could be self-regulatory in nature. That is, those individuals who are high thrivers and using thriving as a self-regulatory gauge are doing so over multiple domains, which is enriching these domains. Future research could test this by measuring thriving both at home and at work over time and
identifying how they influence one another. Outcomes such as wellbeing could be measured to identify whether thriving does serve an adaptive function in influencing behaviour. In addition, preliminary findings seem to indicate that high thriving at work is an indicator of high thriving at home, but further investigation is required to support this finding. For example, researchers have suggested that high thriving at work might detract from thriving at home if thriving at work were to leave little time for home activities (Porath et al., 2012). An examination of whether it is the ways in which people manage both their thriving at work and thriving at home that produces better overall long-term outcomes is needed.

Another way to build on these conceptual implications would be to test whether thriving over time predicts changes in behaviour, such as job crafting, and/or leads to improved adaptation such as performance, wellbeing or increased fit. For example, in Study 2, some individuals mentioned scheduling specific times to capitalise on energy required for certain tasks such as learning. Thus, one would expect that these individuals are perhaps generating thriving experiences, and that this increased thriving might improve outcomes such as performance and wellbeing. Experimental designs could be used to test interventions and improve our ability to explicitly draw conclusions regarding causality and thriving as a self-regulatory gauge, in line with previous suggestions (Porath et al., 2012).

Other ways in which research on thriving could be strengthened include investigating antecedents to thriving, looking at more macro levels of analysis, and conducting cross-cultural comparisons. For example, are there better ways of structuring organisations (at higher levels) to improve thriving for employees? What types of cultural influences influence individuals’ experiences of thriving? Do these affect work–home interactions? These are the types of questions that could be answered by this type of research.
5.5 Conclusion

In closing, this thesis has presented three studies that highlight and extend a number of different aspects of the thriving construct. Across the three studies, it is clear that thriving in the home domain exists and is a separate yet related construct to thriving at work. Evidence has been presented for the use of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge, and the thesis has demonstrated the effects of thriving at work on important individual and organisational outcomes. While acknowledging the limitations of this research, the studies presented in this thesis provide a more nuanced understanding of the thriving construct, at work and at home, over time and across outcomes, while also generating practical insights and providing the groundwork for future research opportunities.
References


http://www.isquare.com/turnover.cfm


Appendix A. Interview protocol used in Study 1 (Chapter 2)

1. Can you tell me about a time when you felt like you were really learning at work?
2. How did that learning experience make you feel physically and mentally?
3. Can you describe what helped support or didn’t help support you in your learning experience?
4. What outcomes, if any, did you experience as a result of your learning?
5. In what ways, if any, did your experience at work influence your time at home?
6. Can you tell me about a time when you felt like you were really learning at home?
7. How did that learning experience make you feel physically and mentally?
8. Can you describe what helped support or didn’t help support you in your learning experience?
9. What outcomes, if any, did you experience as a result of your learning?
10. In what ways, if any, did your experience at home influence your time at work?
Slide 1

**Thriving at work: Qualitative interviews - initial analysis**

Project Ideal
Steering Committee meeting
25 July 2013

Slide 2

**Thriving at work**

- The combined experience of learning and vitality at work.
- **Learning**: feelings of development and acquiring new knowledge at work.
- **Vitality**: energy and enthusiasm about work.

- Research has shown that thriving at work is linked to important organisational outcomes such as increased job performance, reduced burnout, increased health outcomes and higher commitment & satisfaction.
Interview protocol

(1) Can you tell me about a time when you felt like you were really learning at work?
(2) How did that learning experience make you feel physically and mentally?
(3) Can you describe what helped support or didn’t help support you in your learning experience?
(4) What outcomes, if any, did you experience as a result of your learning?
(5) In what ways, if any, did your experience at work influence your time at home?

Then applied for questions at home e.g. Now can you tell me about a time when you felt like you were really learning outside of work? Etc.

NB. This protocol was a guide – not all questions were asked of every interview participant (might be dependent on time constraints or what participants had already said in the interview)

Questioning the data

Q1. Is it easy for people to describe thriving experiences at work?
Q2. Do people describe simultaneous learning and vitality?
Q3. Do people describe being drained of vitality?
Q4. Are there instances where they talk about thriving at work having had an influence at home? What do these influences look like?
Q5. Are there any common workplace aspects that are mentioned as people describe thriving?
Q6. Are there any common workplace aspects that are mentioned as discouraging thriving, or either learning/vitality?
Q7. Are there any differences between CBC and BSC?
Q8. Are there any additional themes that are coming through strongly as we are looking at the data?
Sample

- 16 participants from CBC (8 TSE/TSRs, 8 sales reps)
- 6 participants from BSC

- Why this sample? We selected TSE/TSRs and sales reps from CBC as our focus, as learning is critical for TSE/TSRs and we also wanted to gain variability in the sample, thus contrasting TSE/TSRs with sales reps. The BSC portion of the sample was added in following 10 May 2013 meeting where it was suggested we explore if there are differences between CBC and BSC.

Q1. Can people describe thriving at work?

- The majority of people found it easy to describe thriving experiences at work (21 out of 22, 95%).
  - One exception: did not describe feelings of vitality, or energy and enthusiasm, in relation to learning.
Q2. What do people describe as thriving?

Three main themes as people described simultaneous learning and vitality:

(1) Learning inherently interesting/rewarding and energising.
   “You want to be able to come away from your working day...want to be able to be learning something”

(2) Learning aids success at work.
   “Having success (in learning) allows you to keep on selling”

(3) Thriving at work keeps people coming back to work.
   “It was good coming to work, it put an enjoyment factor back into it”

Q3. Do people describe being drained of vitality at work?

• A third of people described feelings of being tired or drained at work (7 out of 22, 32%). However this could refer to particular times in their lives or more generally in relation to work e.g. the end of the day.

• Specifically in relation to learning, some people commented that training courses could be fatiguing due to “being in the classroom environment” and that they “take their toll mentally and physically due to inactivity”.

Q4. Do people talk about thriving at work having influence at home?

- Half of the sample recounted times when thriving experiences at work had an influence in their home lives (11 out of 22, 50%).
- Main themes:
  - Learning at work enhancing individual knowledge, skills and abilities.
    "Learning brings self confidence in your own abilities and prestige in your product — you carry that everywhere you go, that flows everywhere"
    "Developing attitudes and habits at work necessarily carries over into home — it’s the same"
  - Specific courses — interpersonal skills applied at home.
    "Certainly, with the training courses I’ve completed it always helps your work and helps you with family...all different types of things at home for sure"

Q5. Common workplace aspects that encourage thriving at work.

- Responses catalogued from “can you describe what helped support/not support your learning experience?” (20 out of 22, 91%)
- Three main themes:
  1) Interaction with co-workers & management: co-workers a source of technical knowledge, support and information, and management being supportive and understanding.
  2) Training courses: People mentioned training courses in general and also specific courses - sales training, Leading for Performance, SSS training.
  3) Opportunity to switch roles within business and/or progress.
Q6. Common workplace aspects that discourage thriving at work.

- Responses catalogued from “can you describe what helped support/not support your learning experience?” (5 out of 22, 23%)
- **Work design:** driving long distances, the part numbering system, sifting through vast amounts of technical information.
- **Management:** when decisions are made that affect you that you are not consulted on.
- **Training:** conducted in a similar format.

Q7. Differences between CBC & BSC?

- Smaller BSC sample looks the same as the larger CBC sample. For example:
  - 3 out of 6 people (50%, same as CBC) described thriving at work having an influence at home; they all reported this as skills from training programs being applied at home.
  - Only one person mentioned interaction with co-workers & management as supporting thriving.
  - Only one person reported one factor as discouraging thriving (training being done in a similar format).
  - 3 of the 6 reported constant learning, consistent with CBC.
Q8. Strong themes

- **Constant learning** was a strong theme throughout the interviews. In response to the question “tell me about a time when you were really learning at work?” 13 out of 22 (60%) people replied with comments including “daily”, “weekly”, “all the time”.

  - “It’s just all the time, it never changes; that’s what I like about the job. So it’s a constant learning curve”
  - “That basically nearly happens every day, especially in this industry...you’re continually learning every day”
  - “Pretty much learning all the time, really, on the job”
  - “I’m forever learning at work. Every day is a learning day for me”
  - “I’m learning all the time, you’re always learning. In this company and in this industry you’re forever learning; there’s something new all the time”

Summary

- 95% of people can describe thriving experiences at work.
- 33% of people describe being occasionally tired or fatigued from work.
- 50% of people describe thriving at work influencing their home lives – specifically learning not just positive/negative emotion.
- 91% of people described interaction with co-workers and management & training courses as promoting thriving.
- 23% of people described factors that don’t support thriving.
- There did not appear to be differences between CBC & BSC.
- 60% of people said that they were constantly learning at work.
### Practical implications & steps forward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview insight</th>
<th>Practical implications</th>
<th>Steps forward for research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thriving more than fleeting positive emotion; sustained learning is a critical component.</td>
<td>Employee thriving important for Inenco employees in TSE/TSR roles. Use for coaching discussions to improve performance.</td>
<td>Explore if thriving can occur whilst low satisfaction &amp; commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work affects home-life.</td>
<td>Use this information in recruitment, marketing and training.</td>
<td>Explore why, how, and when transfer occurs so this employee benefit can be further facilitated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC &amp; BSC have more enablers than barriers of thriving.</td>
<td>• In the main, a positive work culture that encourages thriving. • Barriers mainly about processing large amounts of technical information. How can this be done smarter? Are IT changes ahead going to solve this? Heard from other sources this is key challenge for training new staff.</td>
<td>Replicates survey message indicating reliable data. Continue to monitor with future surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving themes similar across CBC &amp; BSC. Suggests profit differences due to economy or individual issues (eg skills, networks).</td>
<td>Employees can thrive even under difficult situations.</td>
<td>Next survey we can continue comparisons of high and low performance areas on cultural issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C. Study 2 (Chapter 3) conference papers

Conference paper accepted and presented at the Australian Psychological Society 10th Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference 2013.

When do thriving employees choose to turnover or stay with an organisation?

The importance of work design

ABSTRACT

Thriving at work is the dual combination of vitality and learning. Thriving has been shown to positively predict a variety of organisational outcomes such as performance, career initiative and health outcomes, above and beyond traditional attitudinal predictors such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment. We argue and demonstrate that the relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover is more complex, being either positive or negative depending on the organisational context the employee is embedded in. Drawing on work design theory, we argue that role clarity and knowledge implementation moderate the thriving – turnover relationship. Participants were 359 employees from two business units within a larger family organisation that sells engineering products and services to a variety of industries. Hypotheses were tested with surveys (thriving, role clarity, knowledge implementation) and objective turnover data from human resource records over an eight month period. The hypotheses were supported. Specifically, thriving employees were more likely to turnover when role clarity and knowledge implementation were low, and less likely to turnover when role clarity and knowledge implementation were high. Theoretically the paper extends our contextual
understanding of thriving at work and provides concrete practical implications about how to design work so as to retain employees.

**Keywords:** thriving; turnover; work design; role clarity; knowledge implementation.
Work is an area of life that often takes up a significant amount of people’s waking hours. As such, it is of interest how organisations can provide opportunities for human development and fulfilment (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012) and additionally, increase the element of human sustainability at work (Pfeffer, 2010). Research conducted on well-being and the workplace has included the investigation of concepts such as flow (Fullagar & Kelloway, 2009), recovery (Demerouti, Bakker, Sonnentag, & Fullagar, 2012), burnout (van Beek, Hu, Schaufeli, Taris, & Schreurs, 2012), engagement (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012), satisfaction (Bowling, Eschleman, & Wang, 2010), and commitment (Panaccio & Vandenberghhe, 2010). When work is designed in a way that improves well-being, there are likely to be positive effects for both employees and the organisation. Positive effects for employees may encompass feeling greater meaning, autonomy, competence and belonging in their work, leading to increased well-being (Harrison & Humphrey, 2010). While effects for the organisation may include increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and less turnover (Meyer & Maltin, 2010).

Thriving at work, a relatively new construct in the positive organisational scholarship literature, has been defined as a psychological state whereby individuals experience both a sense of vitality and learning at work (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). Vitality refers to a sense of energy and enthusiasm for work, while learning is about improving, acquiring and using skills to build work capability and confidence (Porath et al., 2012). Both of these dimensions must be in balance for the individual to thrive, that is, by having both sufficient energy and also learning opportunities. Prior to this conceptualisation, thriving had been seen as a state of growing or flourishing, but the introduction of vitality as a necessary factor in thriving was not clearly explicated (Spreitzer et al., 2005). This dual component structure – the combination of vitality and learning – is what distinguishes thriving from similar concepts such
as flow, flourishing, subjective well-being, and work engagement (Niessen, Sonnentag, & Sach, 2011). The dual structure is critical for human sustainability. For oneself, thriving serves as a desirable subjective experience that individuals can use as a gauge to assess whether what they are doing at work is helping them to develop in a positive way (Porath et al., 2012). For others, thriving is more than a positive affect or cognition; having the energy to extend oneself through learning enhances work performance and organisational commitment (Porath et al., 2012).

The theoretical emphasis of current research has been on thriving as socially embedded at work, as opposed to at home. Thriving at work has been shown to be positively associated with career development initiative, health, and individual job performance, and negatively related to burnout (Porath et al., 2012). Furthermore, these effects were found while controlling for job satisfaction and organisational commitment, demonstrating that thriving at work accounts for additional variance above and beyond traditional predictors for important organisational outcomes (Porath et al., 2012).

This paper aims to extend this research by investigating the influence of thriving on voluntary turnover – a costly outcome for organisations that has yet to be linked to thriving. We hypothesis that the thriving – turnover relationship is moderated by surrounding contextual influences (Spreitzer et al., 2005), that facilitate or constrain the positive outcomes of thriving to emerge.

While some voluntary turnover is beneficial for organisations when there has been a high investment in human resource management (HRM) systems and it is then these employees, especially the high performers who leave, voluntary turnover becomes a major cost to the organisation (Shaw, 2011). High investment in HRM systems has been postulated to create the type of organisational context that enables thriving at work (Spreitzer & Porath, 2013). Thus,
such workforces may be especially vulnerable to high levels of voluntary turnover; ironically this is an unwanted negative side effect of organisations creating a sustainable workforce. After investing in expensive HRM systems (e.g., extensive training) to create a sustainable performance, voluntary turnover of high thriving employees will be a large cost to the organisation. On the one hand, employee thriving is expected to enhance organisational outcomes. Indeed thriving has demonstrated to enhance employee commitment (Porath et al., 2012). However, employee thriving simultaneously enhances career development initiative (Porath et al., 2012). It is possible that in the longer term, thriving employees may engage in voluntary turnover because they see better employment opportunities external to their current organisation. This suggests that there is perhaps a positive or negative relationship between thriving and turnover. Organisational context frequently accounts for such opposing relationships.

Context is defined as “situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organisational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables” (Johns, 2006, p.386). Despite abundant evidence that context can have multiple effects upon individual behaviour, the role of context has been underappreciated in organisational research (Johns, 2006). Thus there has been a call for particular attention to be paid to the influence of context on individual behaviour, including how different aspects of context enable or constrain employee behaviour. We investigate aspects of discrete context, that is, “the specific situational variables that influence behaviour directly or moderate relationships between variables” (Johns, 2006, p.393), namely work design. Work design encompasses the multiple ways in which work can be designed, including task, social and physical aspects, and has been shown to influence a number of individual, group and organisational outcomes (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006).
Given the important role of work design for well-being (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006), we focus on two aspects, role clarity and knowledge implementation. Role clarity is important because it provides employees with information about where to direct energy and learning. Knowledge implementation concerns whether these employees have the opportunity to process and act on information to solve problems. We argue that role clarity and knowledge implantation moderate the thriving – turnover relationship. If employees do not have role clarity and knowledge implementation opportunities, their thriving remains idle, unable to be translated into positive outcomes; thus voluntary turnover is more likely as the employee will look for another context where they can realise their talents.

**Role clarity**

A recent meta-analysis of work design in industrial and organisational psychology highlighted the importance of role ambiguity (Humphrey et al., 2007). Role clarity may be considered as the positive end of the dimension of role ambiguity, and is defined as the extent to which individuals feel they have a clear understanding of the expectations associated with a particular role (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Role clarity is likely to be useful when individuals experience high levels of thriving, as it will provide guidance for the expenditure of energy and learning. Being situated in a context that provides clear guidelines as to expected behaviour for a particular role would also further enhance individuals’ knowledge of whether they were using their skills and directing effort appropriately. Conversely, if employees are thriving but are unsure where to direct their energy and learning, this may in the long term result in employee frustration by not actioning how they
can progress their role, and in turn increase the employees’ likelihood of leaving the organisation.

**Hypothesis 1.** Role clarity will moderate the relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover, such that: employees who are thriving but have low role clarity will be more likely to leave than employees who are thriving and have high role clarity.

**Knowledge implementation**

Knowledge implementation is about transforming and exploiting new knowledge to transform information into established processes and procedures through problem solving (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2005). As such, knowledge implementation is also expected to moderate the thriving – turnover relationship. Some organisational contexts are likely to differ in the extent to which employees have opportunities to implement knowledge. For example, different business units and teams have been shown to vary in the extent to which they can access new external knowledge and have the ability to flexibly integrate new knowledge (Jansen et al., 2005). When employees have the capability to act on newly acquired information, skills and further direct their energy (i.e. thriving), it sends a signal that one’s individual contributions are being valued by the organisation, and that the employee is on track for the energy of those skills to come to fruition (Spreitzer & Porath, 2013).

Thus we expect that individuals who are thriving, and operate in situations where there is high knowledge implementation, are likely to be presented with multiple opportunities for translating their new knowledge to influence existing processes, increasing satisfaction and perhaps leading to greater thriving and thus generally, positive experiences at work. Conversely, under contexts where there are reduced or low opportunities for knowledge implementation, individuals who are thriving may feel that the organisation does not value their contribution or
that there is no scope for them to integrate their new knowledge or skills in their existing organisational context, leading them to seek alternative work avenues.

**Hypothesis 2.** Knowledge implementation will moderate the relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover, such that: employees who are thriving but have low knowledge implementation will be more likely to leave than employees with are thriving and have high knowledge implementation.

**Method**

**Sample**

The sample was two business units that form part of a larger family organisation which distribute mechanical engineering products and technical engineering services (e.g., bearings, fasteners, sealing and power transmission solutions) to a variety of industries including mining, agriculture, industrial, automotive, wine and fast manufacturing consumer goods.

Given the dependent variable of turnover, it is important to understand the industry and organisational context. Indicators suggest a stable macro level environment in which employees do not have an overriding reason to turnover. At the time of the data collection, unemployment was moderate-low for Australian standards at approximately 5.1% (ABS, 2012). Average turnover in Australian industry for large organisations is approximately 16%; this is reflected in the organisational sample which has 16.6% over the last year. Indeed the organisation has many attractive features to retain the workforce: business outcomes are growing with an expansion of >60% sales and gross profit over the last 5 years, achieved through existing business (expanded product offerings, geographic coverage and higher valued services) as well as acquisitions; and there is an extensive range of training and development systems from intensive face-to-face
coaching to online training that have been demonstrated to enhance both business and employee well-being outcomes (Collins & Gibson, 2011).

The sample included a total of 359 participants in the survey, (211 and 148 from each business unit). This represents a response rate of 86%. Of the 14% of non-respondents, approximately 10% were on holiday or sick leave, thus there were only 4% of employees who chose to decline being involved in the survey.

**Measures**

**Thriving at work.**

Thriving was measured using an eight-item scale (Porath et al., 2012), 4 items assessing learning and 4 items assessing vitality (e.g., “I find myself learning often”). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements indicating their level of vitality and learning at work (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

**Role clarity.**

Role clarity was measured using a four-item scale, adapted from Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman 1970 (e.g. “Do you know what your responsibilities are?”). Participants were asked to what extent they understood what was expected of them in their role (1=to no extent; 5=very large extent).

**Knowledge implementation.**

Participants were asked to rate how frequently their branches engaged in implementing new knowledge (1=very infrequently; 5=very frequently) on a three-item scale (e.g., How frequently does your branch implement new products and services easily?) adapted from Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda (2005).
**Turnover.**

Voluntary turnover was operationalized as a binary variable (0= still with the organisation; 1= left the organisation).

**Level.**

Participants were asked to report their current position or role title and selected from a set of six responses. Participants also had the opportunity to select ‘Other’ and enter their own response.

**Procedure**

Data was collected using an online questionnaire. Employees completed the survey, individually in work time.

**Results**

**Descriptive statistics.**

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients and reliability estimates for all variables in this study.

There was no significant main effect between turnover and of any of the predictor variables: thriving (r = -0.03, ns), role clarity (r = -0.09, ns), and knowledge implementation(r = -0.07, ns).

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**Results of hypotheses testing.**

To test our two hypotheses, we conducted two moderated logistic regressions, one for each moderator (role clarity or knowledge implementation). In the first step we entered the
controls: business unit (0-1) and job level (1=lowest employee level; 6=highest employee level). In the second step, we entered the main effects – thriving and the moderator (role clarity or knowledge implementation). In the third step, the thriving-moderator interaction term was entered. Following Cohen and Cohen’s (1983) recommendation, the predictor and moderator variables were mean-centered to reduce multicollinearity effects and to increase the interpretability of the beta-weights for the interaction terms. The significant interaction terms were plotted as recommended (Aiken & West, 1991).

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Insert Table 2 about here
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**Controls**

For all of the interaction analyses, the controls – business and job level - were significant ($p < .05$). Employees in one business unit had an increased likelihood of turnover than those in the other business unit, with the odds of a person leaving their organisation being on average 2.57 times higher, all other factors being equal (See table 2, $p < .01$). As job level increases by one unit, on average, the likelihood of turnover decreases. For every level increase, the odds of a person leaving their organisation decrease by on average, a factor of 0.76, all other factors being equal (See table 2, $p < .05$).

**Thriving and role clarity**

The results of Hypothesis 1 are seen in Table 2. After controlling for organisation and position level, there was a significant moderation effect of role clarity upon the thriving-turnover relationship ($p < .05$). These results support Hypothesis 1. Figure 1 illustrates the form of the interaction effect for turnover. When thriving is low, the level of role clarity has no effect on the
likelihood of turnover. When thriving is high and role clarity is low, the likelihood of turnover is increased. When thriving is high and role clarity is high, the likelihood of turnover is decreased.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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**Thriving and knowledge implementation**

The results of Hypothesis 2 are seen in Table 2. After controlling for organisation and position level, there was a significant moderation effect of knowledge implementation upon the thriving-turnover relationship ($p < .05$). The form of the interaction effect can be seen in Figure 2. When thriving is low, high knowledge implementation increases the likelihood of turnover, while low knowledge implementation reduces the likelihood of turnover. When thriving is high and knowledge implementation is low, the likelihood of turnover is increased. Conversely, when thriving is high and knowledge implementation is high, the likelihood of turnover is decreased. These results support Hypothesis 2.

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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**Discussion**

The results of the moderated logistic regression analyses support the hypothesis that contextual work design variables, role clarity and knowledge implementation, moderate the relationship between thriving and turnover.

For the thriving literature this is an important finding. The results highlight that thriving is a contextually embedded construct; the impact of thriving on turnover is contingent upon the
context of work design. This further differentiates thriving from other well-being constructs such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction which typically have a direct effect on turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Thriving thus has a more complex relationship with business outcomes; simply improving employee thriving through training programs is not sufficient to build a sustainable workforce. The organisation also needs to design work to enable employees to translate thriving to their everyday activities by providing clear roles and opportunities to implement knowledge.

For the turnover literature, recent advances have focused on the impact of organisational context variables on turnover (e.g., Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). We extend this trend by focusing specifically on the moderating influence of work design factors. For organisational behaviour more broadly, this study highlights the power of the organisational context. None of the variables - thriving at work, role clarity and knowledge implementation - directly predicted turnover alone. Thus we build on the growing literature that highlights work design is an important aspect of organisational context that enables or restrains the impact of employee behaviour on business outcomes such as turnover (Lang, Thomas, Bliese, & Adler, 2007).

Prior to the Australian Industrial and Organisational Psychology conference, this paper will be extended in three ways. First, we obtained from the human resource records the reasons for turnover; these will be categorised and investigated to refine our dependent variables. Second, we will explore the difference between early versus late turnover. The reasons for an employee leaving an organisation soon after joining are likely to be different to an employee who leaves after some time (Holtom et al., 2008). Third, we have a range of other well-being variables (e.g., commitment, satisfaction) which we will investigate; primary analysis indicates that thriving has an impact on turnover, over and above these additional variables.
There are a number of limitations of the research that need to be considered when generalising the findings. First, is the lack of detail on the reasons why people left the organisation, for example, for retirement, occupational change, or a different organisation. This is an ongoing area pinpointed for further research (Holtom et al., 2008); as highlighted above we have the data to explore this. Second, we tested a limited number of moderators, focusing only on two aspects of work design. We identified in the introduction that these aspects were theoretically relevant. Also, knowledge of the organisation pinpointed these as important. Employees work in small teams distributed across city and regional locations, in which the team leader has a large amount of discretion about how work is designed. Perhaps in organisations that have more globally integrated, centralised and coordinated organisational structures, work design may not have such a large impact because there would be less variance in this aspect of employees’ context. A third limitation, concerning generalisation of the findings is that the organisation studied in this paper encompasses a range of employees from entry level to middle management employees involved in selling engineering products and services. The relationships identified in this study may differ if studied in different organisations, such as specialised professional organisations.

These limitations suggest further avenues for future research. Research could investigate in further detail how multiple organisational variables might moderate the positive relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover. For example, Johns (2006) articulates the need to consider how variables may work together, citing the example of how human resource practices that are effective when considered in isolation may be detrimental to organisational outcomes when combined. At the more micro, the specific influence of job level should also be investigated further across different organisational contexts. While this was controlled for in the
analyses, it does not reveal the reason why there was a difference between different position levels. For example, Holtom et al. (2008) suggest that there is a need for research that systematically links job level or type to turnover decisions, as the reasons for turnover may consistently differ depending on these factors. This may also help explain patterns in the timing of turnover after being employed. For instance, in jobs with low complexity individuals may be able to quickly ascertain their satisfaction or not, thus leaving quite soon after being employed (Holtom et al., 2008).

The practical implications arising from this paper to date suggest that organisations need to be conscious that increasing employees’ thriving at work could have less than ideal consequences if the context in which the employee works is not also considered. For example, in the context of a lack of opportunities to implement increases in learning and energy, this may lead thriving employees to look elsewhere to apply their skills. It is clear that if organisations are attempting to cultivate employees’ positive experiences at work, they must also carefully consider how jobs are designed. There may in fact be an optimal balance of thriving at work.

In conclusion, the results call attention to the need for research into how the organisational context enables and restrains how employees’ thriving translates into organisational outcomes such as employee turnover.
References


### Table 1.

*Means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients and internal consistency estimates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Business unit</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Role clarity</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Knowledge implementation</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Thriving at work</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Turnover</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 359. Values along diagonal represent internal consistency estimates.

* = $p < .05$ (2-tailed). ** = $p < .01$ (2-tailed).
Table 2.

*Moderating effects of role clarity and knowledge implementation on turnover*\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
<th>Role clarity</th>
<th>Knowledge implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business unit</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.71**</td>
<td>2.43**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.78*</td>
<td>0.74**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator (role clarity/knowledge implementation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving x moderator (role clarity/knowledge implementation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.44*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\(^a\)Logistic regressions. The entries are exponentiated b’s. Entries above 1.00 indicate positive effects, and entries below 1.00 indicate negative effects.*

* \( p \leq .05 \) (2-tailed).

** \( p \leq .01 \) (2-tailed).
Figure 1. Form of the interaction relationship between thriving and role clarity on the probability of turnover.
Figure 2. Form of the interaction relationship between thriving and knowledge implementation on the probability of turnover
Conference paper submitted and presented at Academy of Management
Annual Meeting 2014

‘Should I Stay Or Should I Go?’ Context Moderates Whether Thriving Employees Turnover

ABSTRACT

Turnover is a huge cost to organizations. Both individual attributes such as job attitudes, as well as contextual aspects like organizational climate are important for understanding turnover. However, little research explores the synergistic impact of these antecedents; this is important theoretically since the moderating role of context has demonstrated to reverse relationships. Drawing on a social cognitive approach to self-regulation, we argue that the relationship between the personal attribute of thriving (a psychological state consisting of the dual combination of vitality and learning) and behavioral outcome of voluntary turnover is expected to be either positive or negative depending on whether the context provides employees with knowledge implementation opportunities. Hypotheses were supported with a longitudinal research design over six months incorporating archival turnover data, and 359 participants. Thriving employees were more likely to turnover when knowledge implementation opportunities were low and less likely to turnover when knowledge implementation opportunities were high. Importantly these findings hold when controlling for other job attitudes. Theoretically the paper extends our understanding of thriving as a self-regulatory gauge, provides insight into self-regulation theory in a real-world setting over extended time, as well as offering concrete implications about how to design work so as to retain employees.

Keywords: Thriving; self-regulation; turnover.
In times of economic prosperity, recovery and even in economic downturns, organizations struggle with employee retention. Average yearly turnover rates in Australia tend to hover between 11-16%, and in some industries such as hospitality, are as high as 65% (ABS, 2013). Turnover is incredibly expensive for organizations, with some estimates as high as 150% of employees annual compensation figure, albeit higher for managerial and sales positions (Bliss, 2013). These costs include: time and effort spent replacing employees that have turned over; down time and lack of productivity which arise due to the vacancies; start up and training costs for the new hires; as well as the loss of knowledge and experience that employees who have turned over take with them.

Coinciding with the magnitude of this challenge, organizational scholars have long examined the causes and consequence of turnover, with the topic being addressed in 1,545 articles published in management and psychology journals, just in the last decade. This is a conservative estimate as it reflects a search in PsycINFO only. The most common predictors examined include demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, tenure, education), individual attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment), work outcomes (e.g., absenteeism, performance), and human resource systems (e.g., pay, alternative job opportunities) (Griffith, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Specifically, employee job satisfaction and commitment are often considered critical in understanding turnover, with the rationale that employees who are disgruntled with their job or organization will consider opportunities to work elsewhere. A recent meta-analysis indicates that productive avenues for future research on turnover include “a focus on new individual difference predictors of turnover, an increased focus on contextual variables, an enhanced focus on factors looking specifically at retention, and dynamic modeling of turnover processes over time” (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008: 243). We focus on extending two
of these theoretical areas, that is, the retention of employees and influence of contextual variables. We do so by investigating how context may enable or restrain how other antecedents such as job attitudes (or as we explain below, similar variables such as thriving) impact turnover. In doing so, we identify a fresh perspective regarding what organizations can do to retain employees, in particular, how to keep from losing those who are considering leaving, and in so doing, reduce the significant costs associated with turnover of key personnel.

A promising domain of the field with potential insights for the problem of turnover is Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), an umbrella term for research focused on investigating positive states, traits and outcomes in individuals, groups, organizations and societies (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). ‘Thriving’ at work – defined as a psychological state composed of the joint experience of learning and vitality, embedded in the context of work (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005) – is one of the most recent concepts to receive attention in the POS movement. The learning component of thriving is about improving, acquiring and using skills to build capability and confidence, while vitality component of thriving refers to a sense of energy and enthusiasm for work (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012).

Thriving at work has been differentiated from associated positive constructs, such as flow, flourishing, resilience and subjective well-being (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Empirically, thriving has also been distinguished from theoretically-related constructs such as learning, performance goal orientation, core self-evaluations, positive and negative affects and proactive personality (Porath et al., 2012). Thriving at work has also been positively linked to a variety of beneficial individual and organizational outcomes. This has included a range of work behaviors such as increased job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, leadership
effectiveness, and innovative work behaviors. Outcomes valuable for the employee have also been identified as products of thriving, including increased career development initiative, self-development, and health, as well as decreased burnout and job strain (Niessen, Sonnentag, & Sach, 2011; Paterson, Luthans, & Jeung, in press; Porath et al., 2012; Spreitzer & Porath, 2013; Spreitzer, Porath, & Gibson, 2012).

It is of interest and importance, as well as consistent with the aims of POS (Cameron et al., 2003; Caza & Cameron, 2008) to continue this research trajectory by identifying whether thriving at work predicts additional important organizational outcomes, such as voluntary employee turnover. It is generally accepted that voluntary turnover results in increased costs to organizations (Shaw, 2011). Furthermore, when it is high performers who leave, voluntary turnover is also likely to be detrimental to organizational performance (Shaw, 2011). It has been demonstrated that thriving individuals have higher levels of job performance, suggesting that when it is thriving individuals who turnover, it will be both costly for the organization and also impair organizational performance. Thus, in addition to understanding whether thriving is related to another significant organizational outcome, investigating voluntary turnover provides insight into factors that increase the chances of retaining thriving individuals within the organization.

Thriving as an explanatory mechanism for reducing turnover departs from the more traditional focus on job satisfaction and commitment, because thriving is not so much a job attitude as it is a psychological state that scholars have contended is often used proactively by employees as a self-regulatory gauge (Spreitzer et al., 2005). As will be elaborated below, experiencing a sense of thriving encourages one to do “more of the same” whereas a lack of thriving signals a need for change. Specifically, when an employee begins to sense that he or she is no longer learning, and simultaneously that he or she is drained and lacking energy at work,
then this is likely to prompt the employee to consider alternative scenarios to address this absence of thriving, including a change in job content (e.g., moving to a different project), role (e.g., moving to a different part of the organization), or perhaps in the extreme, moving to a different organization altogether. Job attitudes such as job satisfaction and commitment are conceptualized differently in the literature on turnover; they are seen as symptoms of an acceptable job situation, but not necessarily prompts for self-regulation. Hence, we contribute to the turnover literature by adding a self-regulatory perspective as to why employees turnover and what organizations can do about it. In addition, our approach is nuanced by a mindfulness of the role of organizational context in interacting with self-regulatory processes to determine organizational outcomes. That is, we argue that whether employees turnover is not just a function of thriving and its manifestation in the self-regulatory process, but that its effects will also be determined by specific contextual features of the employee environment. This fits with the recent focus in the research on thriving to understand the role of context (Porath et al., 2012).

Demonstrating that positive constructs are beneficial to organizations as well as individuals highlights the utility and sustainability of the positive organizational field’s focus on theory and evidence-based outcomes to practitioners (Luthans, 2002). The aim of this paper is to empirically examine the relationship between thriving at work and voluntary turnover. Specifically, we investigate the role of the organizational context in moderating this relationship, using a social cognitive approach to self-regulation. Next we turn to hypothesizing these relationships, which we then investigate with a rigorous longitudinal research design over a six month period utilizing objective turnover data for human resource records. Another strength of our design is that our analyses controlled for demographic variables (i.e., age and job level) as
well as job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction and organizational commitment) that are demonstrated to be important antecedents to turnover.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Self-regulation

Self-regulation is a broad term encompassing conscious human processes that typically concern acts of volition, self-adjustment and behavior guided by goals (Baumeister, 2002; Carver & Scheier, 2011). Spreitzer et al. (2005: 545) suggest that thriving functions as a subjective indicator that individuals use to recognize whether they are “on or off track in their own development at work”. It has been argued that thriving achieves beneficial individual and organizational outcomes because it enables enhanced self-regulation, for example, a way in which to monitor and enhance performance at work through feedback from internal rather than external states (Spreitzer & Porath, 2013).

Using this framework, thriving may be broadly conceptualized as part of a feedback model whereby individuals self-monitor their cognitive and affective experiences, use the outcomes of this self-assessment as an indicator regarding whether there is a discrepancy between goals and the current state of affairs, and seek to remedy this discrepancy through their behavior (Carver & Scheier, 1981). Goals are a necessary part of the loop as they serve as the initial driver for the beginning, maintenance and adjustment of these feedback loops. Specifically, individuals are seen as exerting proactive control through the selection of goals before any initial feedback occurs. This control is the driver of motivation and continuing adjustments to later feedback (Bandura, 1991). For example, when an individual is thriving at work, they feel a sense of cognitive growth and physical energy: this may serve as an internal cue that they are progressing as desired. Such an internal assessment may then prompt the
individual to continue in their current task, role, and over the longer term, remain with the same organization. The aforementioned evidence that thriving employees are higher performers and experience less job strain suggests that this is the path employees may take.

When not thriving, there is an absence of learning and vitality – the individual may feel bored, unstimulated, and drained. In other words, they are likely to sense that they are not functioning optimally. This is a signal to monitor their situation more closely and adjust their behavior and efforts accordingly (Porath & Spreitzer, 2013). As mentioned earlier, this may result in a prompt to modify tasks, roles, or might ultimately lead to the decision to turnover. Therefore, from a theoretical perspective, if thriving predicts voluntary turnover, this is preliminary evidence that individuals do use thriving as a self-regulatory gauge that indicates when changes in behavior should be made.

However, the relationship between thriving and turnover may not be as straightforward as we might think. Prior research has shown that thriving is positively related to career development initiative (Porath et al., 2012). This suggests that there might be a positive relationship between thriving and turnover, such that the thriving employee engages in career development, gains new skills, and then perceives ease of movement to pursue alternative career pathways in other organizations. This is especially likely to occur if the thriving employee does not sense encouragement and developmental opportunities in their own organization. For example, Benson, Finegold and Mohrman (2004) found that when individuals gained advanced education degrees but were subsequently not promoted at work, they were more likely to leave the organization.

Organizational context frequently accounts for such opposing relationships (Johns, 2006). What might be a positive relationship between some aspect of organizational behavior and
outcomes in one context could be a negative relationship in another. For example, group efficacy is typically positively related to group performance, however, there is some evidence that in highly individualistic contexts, the relationship is negative (Gibson, 1999). Similarly, there is conflicting evidence about how positive and negative moods influence creativity, with research demonstrating this may be due to whether or not there is a supportive workplace environment (George & Zhou, 2007). This is because behavior is likely to be a product of the individual and the context (Bandura, 1986). In fact, using a social cognitive lens for self-regulation is unique in that the regulatory process is viewed as an interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental processes (Bandura, 1986). Specifically, Bandura (1997) argued for triadic reciprocal causality in determining human behavior. By this, he meant that explaining any one instance of behavior (e.g., a change or reduction in effort on a task), requires understanding elements of the person as well as elements of the context which interact to result in that behavior, and that behavior in turn affects the person and environment. Empirically, this has been supported in many domains, including relationships among self-efficacy, task parameters and task performance in settings such as newcomer adjustment to an organizational setting (Saks, 1995), managerial performance (Wood, Bandura, & Bailey, 1990) and coping with career related events (Stumpf, Brief, & Hartman, 1987).

When applied to thriving, a social cognitive lens to self-regulation suggests that when a person experiences a lack of thriving (i.e., a personal component) their subsequent reactions and choices (i.e., the behavioral component) will be determined in part by the organizational context in which this experience is occurring (i.e., the environmental component). The organizational context may facilitate or constrain certain reactions and choices. Hence, it is predicted that the thriving – turnover relationship is moderated by surrounding contextual influences that facilitate
or constrain the behavior of the individual, and thus determine whether positive or negative outcomes of thriving will emerge with turnover.

Indeed, context is often defined as “situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior as well as functional relationships between variables” (Johns, 2006: 386). Despite abundant evidence that context can have multiple effects upon individual behavior, the role of context has been underappreciated in organizational research (Johns, 2006). Thus there has been a call for particular attention to be paid to the influence of context on individual behavior, including how different aspects of context enable or constrain employee behavior.

We investigate an aspect of discrete context, that is, “the specific situational variables that influence behavior directly or moderate relationships between variables” (Johns, 2006: 393). Given that thriving is an experience of personal cognitive growth and vitality, we focus specifically on the extent to which employees have the opportunity to process and act on information to solve problems, which we refer to as knowledge implementation. We argue that knowledge implementation moderates the thriving – turnover relationship. If employees do not have knowledge implementation opportunities, their thriving remains idle, unable to be translated into positive outcomes; thus voluntary turnover is more likely as the employee will look for another context where they can realize their talents. However, when thriving employees are given the opportunities to implement knowledge, they are more likely to remain with the organization and use their skills to further benefit themselves and the organization.

Consider the following scenarios. An employee at Genenco attends a series of training and development courses offered by the organization, and through simulations and practice on the job, experiences a great sense of cognitive growth, as well as feeling energized and excited
about applying his new knowledge base. He is thriving, and begins to search for opportunities to realize the new expertise and channel his energy into productive outcomes. Genenco responds by assigning him to a new project which involves setting up an innovative marketing protocol. Through self-monitoring, the employee gauges his level of thriving, agrees to the assignment, immerses himself in the new project, and remains productively employed in the organization, which has succeeded in putting both his cognitive growth and vitality to good use, averting any potential turnover.

In a contrasting scenario, an employee at Revertco attends a series of training and development courses, experiences an equal sense of cognitive development and energy, and is also excited about applying this newly acquired expertise. However, Revertco fails to provide any new opportunities for the employee to implement that expertise, and the employee remains in his same post, engaging in the same tasks as prior to the training. Through self-monitoring, this employee senses a disconnect: he is thriving, but has no way to channel that growth and energy into new opportunities. It is much more likely he will leave the organization. Stated another way, during the self-regulatory process, the interaction of the personal characteristics of thriving, with the contextual limitations that afford no knowledge implementation opportunities in his current environment, he may take the behavioral choice to turnover, and find a new organizational context that provides such opportunities. This scenario illustrates that it is not just the employee who is lacking in the experience of thriving that is likely to turnover. Even the thriving employee may turnover if he or she is not provided with the opportunities to implement knowledge in a context that makes use of his or her cognitive growth and vitality.

Further, it is expected that thriving will predict turnover beyond the more straightforward effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction and organizational
commitment have both been demonstrated to influence voluntary turnover decisions in meta-analyses (Griffeth et al., 2000; Holtom et al., 2008). As such, job satisfaction, affective, continuance and normative commitment were included in the study. Job satisfaction is defined as the extent to which the employee is satisfied and happy with the job (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Affective commitment is defined as an individual’s emotional attachment to their organization. Continuance commitment refers to the costs perceived by the individual were they to leave their organization, while normative commitment is defined as the feelings of obligation the individuals feels to remain with their organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Each of these three aspects of commitment is expected to potentially influence the turnover decision. We also control for business unit, job level and age. Knowledge implementation climate may differ between business units. Job level and age have been shown to predict turnover (Holtom et al., 2008).

In summary, we predict:

**Hypothesis 1.** Knowledge implementation will moderate the relationship between thriving at work and voluntary turnover, even after controlling for business unit, job level, age, commitment and satisfaction, such that:

1a: Under contexts characterized by high knowledge implementation, there will be a negative relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover.

1b: Under contexts characterized by low knowledge implementation, there will be a positive relationship between thriving and voluntary turnover.
METHOD

Participants and Procedure

The sample was two business units in a large private organization which distributes mechanical engineering products and technical engineering services (e.g., bearings, fasteners, sealing and power transmission solutions) to a variety of industries including mining, agriculture, industrial, automotive, wine and fast manufacturing consumer goods. The organization has approximately 1,500 total employees. The organization is structured into six streams based on similar product and markets, with between one to seven business units in each stream, for a total of 23 business units. Each business unit is an independent profit and loss center, with central services such as accounting, information technology, training, and human resources being provided by the parent organization.

Given the dependent variable of turnover, it is important to understand the industry and organizational context. Indicators suggest a stable macro level environment in which employees do not have an overriding reason to turnover. Average turnover in Australian industry for large organizations is approximately 16% (ABS, 2012); this is reflected in the organizational sample which had 16.6% turnover in the year we collected the data. Indeed the organization has many attractive features to retain the workforce: business outcomes were growing within the year data was collected with a 60% increase in sales and gross profit over the last 5 years, achieved through existing business (expanded product offerings, geographic coverage and higher valued services) as well as acquisitions; and there is an extensive range of training and development systems from intensive face-to-face coaching to online training that have been demonstrated to enhance both business and employee well-being outcomes (Collins & Gibson, 2011).
The procedure included both an online anonymous survey and collection of employment data from organizational archives. The survey was offered to all employees in both business units, and was framed as an opportunity to provide confidential feedback to the organization about the current working environment. Employees completed the survey individually, in work time. It included a wide variety of measures, addressing issues such as training and development opportunities, leadership and decision making processes, learning and teamwork. A total of 359 participants responded to the survey (211 and 148 from each business unit). This represents a response rate of 86% across both business units. Of the 14% non-respondents, approximately 10% were on holiday or sick leave, thus there were only 4% who chose to decline being involved in the survey.

**Measures**

**Thriving at work.**

Thriving was measured using an 8-item scale (Porath et al., 2012), 4 items assessing learning (e.g., “I find myself learning often”) and 4 items assessing vitality (e.g., “I feel alert and awake”). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with statements indicating their level of vitality and learning at work (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). Reliability for the 8-item scale was alpha = .94. As a result of this high degree of internal consistency, following prior work (Porath et al. 2012), the score on thriving for each employee was computed as the arithmetic mean of the 8 items on the thriving scale.

**Knowledge implementation opportunities.**

Participants were asked to rate how frequently they perceived an opportunity to engage in implementing new knowledge in their branch (1=very infrequently; 5=very frequently) on a 3-item scale (e.g., “How frequently does your branch implement new products and services
easily?”) adapted from Jansen, Van Den Bosch and Volberda (2005). Reliability for the 3-item scale was alpha = .81.

Affective commitment.

Affective commitment was measured on a 5 point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree) using 3 items (e.g., “I have a strong sense of belonging to the business”) adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Reliability for the 3-item scale was alpha = .92.

Continuance commitment.

Continuance commitment was measured using 3 items on a 5 point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree; e.g., “It would be very hard for me to leave right now even if I wanted to”) adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Reliability for the 3-item scale was alpha = .68.

Normative commitment.

Normative commitment was measured on a 5 point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree) using 3 items (e.g., “I talk about my organization in positive ways”) adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Reliability for the 3-item scale was alpha = .89.

Job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction was measured using 3 items (e.g., “Overall, I am satisfied with the kind of work I do”) using a 5 point scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strong agree) adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1975). Reliability for the 3-item scale was alpha = .89.

For each of the above Likert measures, the score was computed as the arithmetic mean of the items.
**Job level.**

Participants were asked to report their current position or role title and selected from a set of six responses. Participants also had the opportunity to select ‘Other’ and enter their own response.

**Age.**

Age was obtained from human resource records.

**Turnover.**

Turnover data was obtained from human resource records, operationalized as a binary variable (0= still with the organization; 1= left the organization). Participants who were classed as leaving due to non-voluntary reasons, in particular, having been dismissed, were removed from the sample. This left a data sample of 357 participants with 43 participants in the survey having left the organization within a time period of up to 6 months after they had taken the survey. A 6 month timeframe was chosen as this covers two financial quarters, during which time employees receive both monthly and quarterly feedback, suggesting an ample scope for employees to consider whether they had opportunities to realize the cognitive growth and vitality they experienced.

**Discriminant Validity**

The discriminant validity of the variables measured using multi-item scales (thriving, knowledge implementation opportunities, commitment, and satisfaction) was examined using factor analysis. Using maximum likelihood extraction, and oblimin rotation, the variables factored separately as expected. Results available from the authors upon request.
Analysis

Data was analysed using moderated logistic regression, as the dependent variable – turnover – is binary. A three-step model was used; in the first step the controls were entered: business unit, job level, age, job satisfaction, affective, continuance and normative commitment. In the second step, we entered the main effects - thriving and knowledge implementation opportunities. In the third step, the thriving-knowledge implementation opportunities interaction term was entered. Following Cohen and Cohen’s (1983) recommendation, the predictor and moderator variables were mean-centered to reduce multicollinearity effects and to increase the interpretability of the beta-weights for the interaction terms. The significant interaction terms were plotted as recommended (Aiken & West, 1991).

RESULTS

Correlation coefficients, means, and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. Regression results are presented in Table 2.

Negative raw coefficients and exponentiated coefficients lower than 1 indicate a negative relationship with turnover, while positive raw coefficients and exponentiated coefficients greater than 1 indicate a positive relationship with turnover. Of the control variables, business unit and job satisfaction were significant predictors of turnover. The probability of turnover was higher for one of the business units than the other ($b = 0.91, \beta = 2.48, p < .05$). There was a negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover, indicating that employees who rated themselves as more satisfied were less likely to turnover ($b = -0.66, \beta = 0.52, p < .05$). All other
controls - job level, age, affective, continuance and normative commitment - were not significant 
\( p > .05 \). There was no significant main effect of the predictor variables thriving at work \( b = 0.67, \beta = 1.96, p = .07 \) and knowledge implementation \( b = -0.22, \beta = 0.80, p = .35 \) on turnover.

As expected, after entering the controls (business unit, job level, age, job satisfaction, affective, continuance and normative commitment) and main effects (thriving and knowledge implementation opportunities), the interaction of thriving and knowledge implementation opportunities demonstrated a significant effect on turnover \( b = -.64, \beta = 0.53, p < .05 \). The form of the interaction effect was as expected, and can be seen in Figure 1. When knowledge implementation opportunities are high, there is a negative relationship between thriving and turnover, such that as thriving increases, the probability of turnover decreases. When knowledge implementation opportunities are low, there is a positive relationship between thriving and turnover, such that as thriving increases, there is an increased probability of turnover. These results support the hypothesis that knowledge implementation opportunities moderate the thriving-turnover relationship.

\begin{center}
Insert Figure 1 about here
\end{center}

\textbf{DISCUSSION}

Our results support the hypothesis that knowledge implementation opportunities moderate the relationship between thriving at work and voluntary turnover. We find it
fascinating that there was no direct effect of thriving on turnover, but that instead, it was only when context was considered that the effects of thriving are revealed. This provides support for the social cognitive approach to self-regulation, with its focus on the interaction between the personal elements (i.e., thriving), the environment (i.e., knowledge implementation opportunities), and behavior (i.e., turnover). Particularly given the independent sources of data (e.g., an employee survey to measure thriving and actual objective archival turnover data), we extend theory in a number of different areas, including the POS field and specifically literature on thriving, self-regulation, turnover, as well as work design.

For the POS field, and more specifically the thriving literature, the results highlight that thriving is a contextually embedded construct – the impact of thriving on turnover is contingent upon the organizational context. This further differentiates thriving from other job attitudes that tap well-being, such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction, which typically have a direct effect on turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). Thriving thus has a more complex relationship with business outcomes; simply improving employee thriving through training programs is not sufficient to build a sustainable workforce. The organization also needs to design work contexts that enable employees to translate thriving, their energy and learning, into their everyday activities by providing clear opportunities to utilize knowledge in a way that makes a contribution to the work environment. Furthermore, we controlled for job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which have been suggested to have a relationship with thriving at work (Porath et al., 2012), and demonstrated that thriving at work has an influence on voluntary turnover beyond the effect of these job attitudes.

One of the major assumptions of the POS field is that individuals consider growth and development to be important (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Yet POS research to date has
rarely investigated whether this assumption holds for a variety of demographic groups. Our sample contained a variety of demographic groups, which we controlled for. Specifically, the results of our study suggest that thriving at work combined with organizational opportunities to implement learning are important to a diverse range of individuals; encompassing a range of ages and job levels that involve work on different tasks (from shop-floor employees involved in physical work who typically had not finished high school, sales representatives with specialist trade knowledge, to managers who had completed MBAs and were responsible for customer relations as well as profit and loss centers). As such, our findings lend support to POS theory that argues individuals find self-development to be of significant value, regardless of background.

For self-regulation theory, this study investigates how personal, behavioral and environmental processes interact to create self-regulatory processes outside the laboratory setting. The results suggest that when individuals experience high levels of cognitive growth and personal vitality, the organizational context in which thriving is occurring becomes extremely important. This supports the social cognitive approach to self-regulation which suggests that individuals weigh up internal processes with external environmental opportunities and constraints in order to guide their behavior. Our finding is consistent with the results of a meta-analysis on laboratory research into the ego depletion effect, which indicates contextual factors such as task number and difficulty moderate the extent to which individuals persist in exerting themselves (Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010). We extend those findings as we identified an additional contextual factor that is specific to applied settings, that is, the capability to implement knowledge moderates self-regulatory processes.

Furthermore, this study contributes to our understanding of how self-regulatory processes may occur over a period of months, which is likely to have embedded within it multiple tasks.
and opportunities. If the individual does not perceive work opportunities where they can employ their thriving, they are more likely to direct behavior towards finding new opportunities outside of their current organization. This suggests individuals may feel that it is easier for them to seek out a new environment rather than attempting to change the one that they are currently in. Alternatively, they may have tried to change the current environment, and faced with resistance, chosen to go elsewhere. Although we do not know whether turnover was ultimately an adaptive self-regulatory action to preserve or increase their thriving once they left the organization, that is, we do not have information on whether individuals were more successful at achieving their self-regulatory goals in a different environment, our findings suggest that in an environment of low opportunity to implement learning, high thriving individuals perceived leaving the organization to be a more desirable strategy than remaining. This provides some degree of insight into the actions individuals may take under these circumstances, that is, over a time period of six months.

Our study also contributes to the turnover literature, by extending research into person-context interactions. Individual attitudes are typically seen as the drivers of turnover, but the results highlight that it is the interaction between an individual attribute, thriving, and the work context that influences whether employees remain or leave. That is, there was no direct effect of thriving on turnover, which suggests that a consideration of context may be crucial to a deeper understanding of individual factors that influence turnover.

In terms of the contribution our study makes to the work design literature, we provide more nuanced detail to organizational context – which is often referred to in the work design literature as ‘work conditions’. Of the research conducted on work conditions, the focus has been on ergonomic aspects such as health hazards, temperature, and noise. This focus on biological and physical concerns is critical, but ignores whether other work conditions are critical for
motivating knowledge-workers (our sample was a technical sales organization). We argue that a context that supports knowledge implementation is critical for knowledge workers.

Practical implications

There are some important practical implications of this study. Research to date has focused on ways to enhance employees’ thriving (Niessen et al., 2011; Paterson et al., in press; Spreitzer & Porath, 2013) and other job attitudes (Caza & Cameron, 2008). Whereas we highlight in this paper that management also needs to consider how to retain thriving employees. Knowledge implementation represents an aspect of the organizational context that can be influenced by management, and is important for retaining thriving employees. Advancing employees to different jobs or promotions might not always be a viable option to assist knowledge implementation. Other more informal avenues to channel thriving could be in the form of transmitting new knowledge to others within the organization, such as sharing best practice, empowering employees to act on new insights they obtain rather than letting managers take such responsibilities, a lateral move within the organization, or work on a new project. The important factor is to recognize thriving individuals and, where appropriate, provide them with options other than leaving the organization.

Limitations and future research

Despite the strengths of our study which we highlighted earlier, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, although a time lag was used in order to help infer causality – our research model is investigated over six months – whether our theory is generalizable to time intervals shorter or longer than what we assessed is an empirical question worthy of additional investigation. A shorter time frame could provide insight into how quickly individuals respond to feedback, both internal (i.e., thriving) and external (i.e. knowledge
implementation opportunities). A longer time frame could provide greater scope for investigating whether thriving works as a self-regulatory gauge for sustained periods of time.

A natural question which arises is the degree to which individuals are conscious of their levels of thriving, and thus to what extent this might influence a decision such as leaving the organization. Spreitzer et al. (2005) suggest that the subjective experience of thriving at work serves as positive reinforcement for current contextual conditions. That is, if conditions are perceived to enable thriving and as such, the sense of thriving need not be overly conscious or considered for it to affect an individual’s behavior. However, this does not wholly account for our findings given the complexity of our results, that is, that the same moderating variable, knowledge implementation, both enables and constrains thriving on business outcomes. We suggest future research addresses this by exploring the extent in which perceptions of thriving are consciously used to inform behavioral changes.

Also, although we have extended research into the impact of context, we only investigated one contextual variable. There are likely to be other types of contextual variables that function as moderators that are fruitful avenues of investigation such as task autonomy, social networks and supportive climate.

In conclusion, this study provides additional evidence for the importance of thriving at work by demonstrating its relationship to voluntary turnover in the context of knowledge implementation opportunities. In doing so, we extend self-regulation theory by applying a social cognitive lens, and we demonstrate the value added of positive organizational scholarship. For research, our results highlight how the organizational context interacts with thriving at work to influence employee behavior; importantly this was a cross-over interaction – there was no main effect of thriving. The internal cues from thriving are only one part of the self-regulatory gauge,
the environmental context is also critical. And for practice, the results highlight the need for organizations to carefully consider how to retain thriving individuals.
REFERENCES


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>s.d.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<td>7. Business unit</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Job level</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Age</td>
<td>38.81</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Affective commitment</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Continuance commitment</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Normative commitment</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td>.58**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Knowledge implementation</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Thriving at work</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
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<td>16. Turnover</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p < .05

** *p < .01
### TABLE 2

Results of logistic regression analysis\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
<th>Knowledge implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business unit</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91 (0.37)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job level</td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.16 (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.02 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.066 (0.33)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.037 (0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.12 (0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.09 (0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.22 (0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving at work</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.67 (0.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving x knowledge implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.064 (0.30)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Entries in the main part of this table are unstandardized regression weights, with standard errors in parentheses.

\(* p < .05\)
Figure 1. Form of the interaction relationship between thriving and knowledge implementation on the probability of turnover
Appendix D. Study 2 (Chapter 3) Feedback to partner organisation

(Inenco)

Presentation delivered to upper management at CBC

As my PhD was part of a wider Australian Research Council Linkage project, results from Study 2 were included as part of a broader presentation on drivers of retail store performance (see Slide 8).

Slide 1

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Slide 2
## Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research insights</td>
<td>25 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming actions: Individually</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming actions: In 3 groups</td>
<td>20 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collating actions into a plan</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research: Next steps</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moving insights into action to deliver higher branch performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key message</th>
<th>Research insights</th>
<th>Question for the CBC Leadership team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Business level**: CBC systems & initiatives | - ABM structure  
- Quality management system support  
- Branch Manager training | How do we embed knowledge & skills gained from formal CBC systems & initiatives? |
| **Branch level**: Drivers of Branch Effectiveness | - 4 drivers of GP% & engagement | What can we do to optimise these drivers of branch effectiveness? |
| **Employee level**: Retaining our high performing employees | - Knowledge implementation critical for retention  
- Comments on pay levels | How do we retain our high performing employees?  
How do we share their knowledge & experience without burning them out?  
What role is there for incentives? |

Research insights: Business level

Branch Manager Training & Quality Management Systems both needed to increase branch GPP

- High quality management systems support
- Low quality management systems support
Research insights: Business level

ABM structure (2010-2012) facilitated external learning activities & in turn branch GP

Time (financial quarters over 3 years)

Graph 1: Clear Roles & Responsibilities
Graph 2: Opportunities for Development
Graph 3: Supportive Work Environment
Graph 4: Coaching & Mentoring

Research insights: Branch level
Four drivers of Branch GP% & engagement
Research insights: Branch level

Four drivers of Branch GP% & engagement - Summary

a. ABMs: role clarity decline (graph 1) seems to follow the shift in their focus from coaching to sales.

b. TSEs & TSRs report the low levels of role clarity (graph 1) & supportive work environment (graph 3); important to address given their key role in CBC.

c. Branch Managers: increase in coaching (graph 4) over training period but may now be declining.

d. Opportunities for development (graph 2) supportive environment (graph 3) appears to be declining &/or low across roles. How do you foster development & learning from mistakes / missed budgets?

Research insights: Employee level

(NB not just CBC data)

Approx 30% of turnover explained by whether employees have capability to implement knowledge within their branches. High knowledge implementation.

Remember: Cost of turnover approx. 1.3 - 1.6 times annual salary.
Research insights: Employee level

Remuneration theme in open comments (6% of responses, unprompted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle Manager</td>
<td>Change the bonus structure which people manipulate to their pocket advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABM</td>
<td>To fix the bonus part of the salary. Its too big a percentage of our wage and can be sometimes unattainable due to factors that are out of our control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>More my remuneration is up in line with current market value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>More money (relevant to the work I do) and a very large amount of unpaid overtime and regular take work home with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>A system which matches my experience and expertise so I have to be joking if you do not think pay has any influence on your attitude towards your work and then your attitude determines how engaged and effective you are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>What I understand the bonus system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Rep</td>
<td>Be more prepared to spend on staff and replace people quickly and pay to get the right team not just free loaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Move my remuneration up in line with current market value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>More money (relevant to the work I do) as I do a very large amount of unpaid overtime and regularly take work home with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>A pay level which matches my expertise and experience!! You have to be joking if you do not think pay has any influence on your attitude towards your work and then your attitude determines how engaged and effective you are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Market related salaries thus relieving financial pressure enabling more focus on work requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Rep</td>
<td>Don't understand the bonus system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2IC</td>
<td>Employee's are way underpaid. Employees are the company's backbone. Why upset us with pathetic wages?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2IC</td>
<td>Considering the X branch has been one of the most outstanding branches in the country, a decent pay rise would be appreciated...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Sales</td>
<td>Market related salaries to be fairer and rewarding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>Bonus structure for all employees geared towards overall profit. Current system creates conflicting goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>A DAMN pay rise, instead of getting told no wage rise yet new people walk in all the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse</td>
<td>Internal sales setting goal what deserve, why bother trying to be the best when you get paid like a degenerate?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key message
Moving insights into action to deliver higher branch performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key message</th>
<th>Research insights</th>
<th>Question for the CBC Leadership team</th>
<th>Who?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Business level: CBC systems & initiatives | • ABM structure  
• Quality management system support  
• Branch Manager training | How do we embed knowledge & skills gained from formal CBC systems & initiatives? | Sam Houston  
Jeff Reeves  
Lou Amato |
| Branch level: Drivers of Branch Effectiveness | • 4 drivers of GPR & engagement | What can we do to optimise these drivers of branch effectiveness? | Brad Tomlins  
Allan Orr  
Terry Cole  
George Khoury  
Michael Hall |
| Employee level: Retaining our high performing employees | • Knowledge implementation critical for retention  
• Comments on pay levels | How do we retain our high performing employees? How do we share their knowledge & experience without burning them out? What role is there for incentives? | Michael Santigati  
Nick Kerwin  
Ross Lee  
Adam McKiernan |
Brainstorming actions

Actions may:
• Already exist, just need emphasising / refreshing
• Be new

1. How can your conversations &/or behaviour role model these insights?
2. How can Branch Managers be supported to implement these insights?
3. Are there CBC systems &/or initiatives to assist these insights?
4. How do we – the CBC leadership team - prioritise these actions?
Collating actions into a plan (30mins)

- Group 1 – 5mins
- Group 2 – 5mins
- Group 3 – 5mins
- Everyone collate into a plan – 15mins

- Implementing the plan. How will we:
  - Hold each other accountable?
  - Measure progress (before more survey results are available)?

Research Next Steps

- Illustrative questions
  1. What drives individual outcomes?
  2. Are work resources (eg management systems, coaching, support) available to individuals daily / weekly?
  3. What can employees do themselves (eg goal setting, changing tasks, recovery at home) to improve work outcomes?

- Data collection:
  - Initial survey
  - 3 x 5mins surveys per day for a week
  - 150 employees from branch (except sales rep) & support employees during October
  - Smart phone / computer / paper

- Incentives
  - Individual report
  - $100 Coles voucher if 80% if surveys completed
  - In draw for $500 Coles vouchers; 5 to be won
Slide 15

• Additional slides if needed from discussion

Slide 16

Synergy needed between Branch Manager Training & Quality of Management Systems

![Graph showing the relationship between Team performance (gross profit %) and Quality of Management Systems with training and no training scenarios.](image)
Slide 17

ARC Grant insights: Let’s change focus for 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>2011-2013: Microscope with wide angle lens</th>
<th>2014: Lets zoom microscope in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Annual surveys &amp; interviews</td>
<td>3 short surveys per day over 1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Branch GP% &amp; individual turnover</td>
<td>Individual performance &amp; impact on home life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>Culture &amp; systems</td>
<td>Conversations with colleagues &amp; personal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>Months &amp; years</td>
<td>Days &amp; week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who takes action</td>
<td>Directors, middle managers and L&amp;D</td>
<td>Front line employees &amp; immediate managers (equivalent to Branch Manager)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target participants</td>
<td>All employees</td>
<td>?Branch sales (exclude Branch Managers) &amp; support employees?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slide 18

2014 data collection:
‘A week in a life of CBC employees’ Research Questions

What happens each day?

Resources
- From work (eg management systems, coaching, support)
- Personal (eg self-efficacy, emotions)

Behaviours
- Work (eg goal setting, changing tasks)
- Home (eg recovery)

Outcomes
- Performance
- Burnout

Job demands from different roles

Thriving
Appendix E. Additional analyses in Study 3 (Chapter 4)

Unconditional LCGAs

Unconditional LCGA models with two and three classes were run. The model with two classes produced a significant LMR-LRT and BLRT ($p < 0.05$) suggesting that a two-class model is a better fit to the data than a one-class model. The model with three classes produced a non-significant LMR-LRT, which indicates that the two-class model should not be rejected for the three-class model. Model statistics are reported in Table E.1.

Table E.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Free parameters</th>
<th>Log-likelihood</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>BIC</th>
<th>ABIC</th>
<th>Entropy</th>
<th>LMR/ Adjusted LRT</th>
<th>BLRT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unconditional freely estimated LCGA with 2 classes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-722.39</td>
<td>1474.78</td>
<td>1518.58</td>
<td>1471.12</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconditional LCGA with 3 classes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-107.21</td>
<td>1430.42</td>
<td>1471.30</td>
<td>1427.01</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One class conditional latent growth model with intercept predicting outcome variables

A one class conditional latent growth model with free growth shape (factor loadings for time points 3-6 were freely estimated) was run with covariates general thriving at work and engagement to predict the intercept and slope. The intercept was also specified to predict the dependent variables burnout, work effort, and thriving at home. (The intercept was used to predict the outcomes as what is of interest here is the low and high thriver classes, and this is best represented by the intercept.) This model fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2 (39) = 62.91$, $p < 0.05$).
$p < 0.05$, CFI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.07. The covariates general thriving at work and engagement were significant predictors of the intercept (general thriving: $b = 0.41, p < 0.05$; engagement: $b = 0.26, p < 0.05$) but not the slope. In addition, the intercept significantly predicted all three outcome variables (burnout: $b = -1.34, p < 0.05$; work effort: $b = 7.24, p < 0.05$; thriving at home: $b = 0.48, p < 0.05$). That is, higher daily thriving initial status was negatively related to burnout, and positively related to work effort and thriving at home.

**Use of cosine models to describe cyclical change**

I investigated the potential use of cosine functions in a latent growth model to explore cyclical change. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be a viable option as such models typically require regularly-spaced measurement intervals and specific statistical programming knowledge. Furthermore, these models have not yet been widely used in the field of organisational behaviour and thus there is a lack of information on applied standards for such models. I do however strongly encourage further exploration in this area, both in theoretical content and research methods.
Appendix F. Study 3 (Chapter 4) Feedback to partner organisation
(Inenco) and Study 3 participants

Presentation delivered to upper management of Inenco, 17 December 2014
and Sample feedback report for ABM role in CBC

As my PhD was part of a wider Australian Research Council Linkage project, results from Study 3 were included as part of a broader presentation on drivers of performance. As business practitioners are more familiar with term ‘engagement’, this was used to represent thriving despite the academic distinction between the two terms (see Slides 17-23, and Slide 54).

Slide 1

‘Week in a Life’ Project Champion
Research 2014:
Baseline Data to Leverage Higher Performance from

Presentation on Dec 17 for:
Roger Jowett, Jim Grbevski, Mark Chalmers, Brett Bartholomew, Andrew Lepan, Stephen Forbes, Richard Jenman & Brad Tomlins

UNSW Business School

INENCO Group
Agenda
A. Reason for this 'Project Champion' research & response rates
B. Key message & your 'Action Plan Worksheet'
C. Data & interpretation
D. Discussion to refine
   - Key messages
   - Action items

A. Reason for the Project Champion Research...
Tracking the impact of business & DC changes
Impact of DCs expected to be uneven across branches

Business systems:
1. Change management (communication & setting positive expectations)
2. Clear & aligned business priorities (branch / CBC / BSC / Inenco)

Branch Manager skills:
1. Perspective talking about whole business
2. Active problem-solving (business goals & relationships)
3. Transition employees work identity from branch to BSC/CBC/Inenco

Pre DC Implementation
Business outcomes
• GPP
• Lines of activity
• Credit note %

Post DC Implementation
Business outcomes
• GPP
• Lines of activity
• Credit note %
Illustrative hypotheses

- **Pre-DC 2014 Oct/Nov**
- **Post-DC 2015 / 2016**

**Business outcomes (lines of activity & GPP)**

- No DC change (Qld)
- DC change (Vic & NSW)
- DC change with positive business systems & Branch Manager skills (Vic & NSW)
- DC change (Vic & NSW)
- No DC change (Qld)
- DC change with negative business systems & Branch Manager skills (Vic & NSW)

Response Rates

Tracking the impact of business & DC changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact on individuals</th>
<th>Combined insights from BSC &amp; CBC</th>
<th>BSC</th>
<th>CBC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracking DC &amp; business changes in Vic &amp; NSW: ‘Experiment group’</td>
<td>76 22</td>
<td>24 9</td>
<td>52 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking business changes in Qld: ‘Control group’</td>
<td>57 14</td>
<td>31 9</td>
<td>26 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- We have solid baseline data to look at combined insights from BSC & CBC.
- Data is sensitive to changes across the week.
Survey Response Rates: 2011 -> 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business</th>
<th>BSC</th>
<th>CBC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>57%*</td>
<td>58%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These figures are conservative because ‘drivers’ are included in the ‘total sample’, yet they did not fit the study criteria.

In our research design 2014 – 2015/6, the overall response rate is less important than gathering same employees both pre & post.

Survey Response Rates: By State & Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>BSC</th>
<th></th>
<th>CBC</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABM/BDM</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Branch Manager</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Sales</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>ABM/BDM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Branch Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Sales</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17%*</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>ABM/BDM</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Branch Manager</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Sales</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* BSC Internal Sales for NSW & Vic needed to be combined.
### B. Key messages & your ‘Action Plan Worksheet’
Let’s Refine Throughout Meeting

1. Employee perceptions of change are currently negative
   a. Communication needs to be improved, especially about the impact on branches & employees roles.
   b. Employees currently expect DCs will negatively impact their jobs, reducing their skills, freedom, access to support / capability to work with others.

2. Employee engagement is related to the perceptions of change
   a. Current levels of thriving indicate engaged employees.
   b. However some areas have increased intention to leave.
   c. Engagement is likely to decrease if perceptions of change not improved.

3. HR drivers provide one way to change employee perceptions of change & business outcomes
   a. At branch level clear roles & responsibilities, plus coaching & mentoring
   b. Culture that combines performance management AND support

4. What are the implications for branch work tasks?
   a. Relationships between branch work tasks & business outcomes: As expected ‘high value’ & ‘essential’ tasks are most important for business outcomes.
   b. Branches with more positive perceptions of change are spending more time on ‘essential’ tasks.
   c. Can we leverage knowledge about time spent on branch work tasks to have realistic expectations for the DC change? Time spent on ‘possible task reduction’ category for BMs is approx. 20% & for ISs is approx. 50% (NB tasks included were ‘ambitious’)

### C. Data & interpretation
Slide 10

1. Employee perceptions of change are currently negative

   a. Communication needs to be improved, especially about the impact on branches & employees roles.

   b. Employees currently expect DCs will negatively impact their jobs, reducing their skills, freedom, access to support / capability to work with others.

Slide 11

BSC by Role: The following information about the DC changes has been directly communicated to me?

- Strongly agree
- Neutral
- Strongly disagree

- How the DC will help the business.
- The physical location.
- Impact on the warehouses.
- Impact on branches.
- Impact on my role.

- All BSC employees are saying that they are between neutral (3) and agree (4) that information has been communicated. Information about how it will impact their role is missing.
**CBC by Role:** The following information about the DC changes has been directly communicated to me?

- How the DC will help the business.
- The physical location.
- Impact on the warehouses.
- Impact on branches.
- Impact on my role.

- Strongly agree
- Neutral
- Strongly disagree

Similar take-away message for CBC, albeit ABMs have slightly more information; that’s one communication bottleneck.

**BSC by State:** The following information about the DC changes has been directly communicated to me?

- How the DC will help the business.
- The physical location.
- Impact on the warehouses.
- Impact on branches.
- Impact on my role.

In BSC, communication about impact on warehouses, branches and employees’ roles is similar in Vic where changes are happening and Qld where the change is not happening. Indicates more targeted information needed in Vic and NSW.
Slide 14

CBC by State: The following information about the DC changes has been directly communicated to me?

- How the DC will help the business.
- The physical location.
- Impact on the warehouses.
- Impact on branches.
- Impact on my role.

Similar take-away for CBC; where the change is going to occur (Vic & NSW), people are not more informed.

Slide 15

BSC: I expect that after the implementation of the DCs my role will ...

- Require more skills (e.g. selling, solving problems).
- Have additional freedom to make important decisions.
- Have more opportunities for support/working with others.

BSC employees see only negative outcomes for their roles (reskilling & loss of freedom) as a result of the DC implementation.
CBC employees have an even more negative view, suggesting a deskilling of their roles & reduction of freedom.

#### Slide 17

2. Employee engagement is related to the perceptions of change

- Current levels of thriving indicate engaged employees.
- However some areas have increased intention to leave.
- Engagement is likely to decrease if perceptions of change not improved.
Relationships between employee perceptions of change & levels of engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of change</th>
<th>Thriving</th>
<th>Intention to leave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How the DC will help the business</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical location</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the warehouses</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the branches</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on my role</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require more skills (eg selling &amp; problem solving)</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have additional freedom to make important decisions</td>
<td>![Symbol]++</td>
<td>![Symbol]--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more opportunities for support/working with others</td>
<td>![Symbol]++</td>
<td>![Symbol]--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employee Engagement: By Business

- **Observations:** Thriving indicating employees are engaged, but in CBC intention to leave is increasing
Employee Engagement: BSC By State

- Observations: (1) Thriving & intention to leave is similar across all states

Employee Engagement: CBC By State

- Observations: (1) Qld: higher thriving & lower intention to leave
Slide 22

Observations:
1. BDM thriving is decreasing
2. BM intention to leave is increasing

Slide 23

Observations:
1. BM intention to leave is increasing
2. IS intention to leave remains high
Summary: Where is best practice to encourage knowledge transfer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement indicator</th>
<th>Where?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thriving</td>
<td>No major differences; CBC Qld slightly higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to leave</td>
<td>CBC ABM, BSC BDM &amp; IS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. HR drivers provide one way to change employee perceptions of change & business outcomes

a. At branch level clear roles & responsibilities, plus coaching & mentoring
b. Culture that combines Performance Management AND Support
Slide 26

**Branch Drivers**

- **Clear Roles and Responsibilities**
  - Are employees crystal clear on what their responsibilities are?

- **Coaching & Mentoring of staff**
  - Is developmental feedback and advice provided for how employees can improve their performance?

- **Opportunities for Staff Development**
  - Do staff get all the information needed to grow the business? Regular updates about current developments and future plans in my business? Useful training on the job? Rewards for excellent sales / work performance?

- **Supportive Work Environment**
  - Do people in the business provide access to information, help others to develop professionally, and treat failure (when there has been effort) as a learning opportunity?

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Slide 27

**Business Drivers**

- **High Performance Work Setting**
  - A high performance work setting enables people to achieve the benefits of Coordination and Flexibility (i.e. be ambidextrous)

- **Country Club Work Setting**
  - Combination of support and trust: Provides employees with security and freedom needed to perform at a high level

- **Low Performance Work Setting**

- **Burnout Work Setting**

Stretch goals and discipline. Promotes the delivery of high quality results, and includes accountability for outcomes.
### Slide 28

**Relationships between employee perceptions of change & HR drivers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of change</th>
<th>Clear roles &amp; responsibilities</th>
<th>Coaching &amp; mentoring</th>
<th>Opportunities for development</th>
<th>Supportive work environment</th>
<th>Performance mgmt</th>
<th>Coordination</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication:how the DC will help the business</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical location</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the warehouses</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the branches</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on my role</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expectations**

| Require more skills (eg selling & problem solving) | -                              | -                   | +                           | +                           | +                 | +           |
| Have additional freedom to make important decisions | +                              | -                   | +                           | +                           | +                 | +           |
| Have more opportunities to support/working with others | +                              | -                   | -                           | -                           | +                 | +           |

### Slide 29

**What branch & business drivers result in better business outcomes in 2014 Oct/Nov?**

- Green: positive relationship, so want more of these behaviours

- **GPP**
  - Coaching & Mentoring of staff
  - High performance work setting (ie performance mgmt AND support)

- **CNO%**
  - Ambidexterity (ie coordination AND flexibility)

- **Employee thriving**
  - Clear Roles and Responsibilities
  - Supportive Work Environment

- **Retention (ie opposite to intention to leave)**
  - -.42
Branch Drivers: By Business

- BSC is slightly higher than CBC on all Branch Drivers
- Trend between 2013 & 2014 is decreasing for most Branch Drivers
- Coaching & supportive work environment most problematic (i.e., for GPP & retention respectively)

Branch Drivers: BSC by State

- BSC Vic is slightly lower than NSW/Qld on all Branch Drivers.
Slide 32

Branch Drivers: CBC by State

- Clear Roles & Responsibilities
- Opportunities for Development
- Supportive Work Environment
- Coaching & Mentoring

- Qld is slightly higher on all branch drivers than NSW & Qld

Slide 33

Branch Drivers: By Role

- Clear Roles & Responsibilities
- Opportunities for Development
- Supportive Work Environment
- Coaching & Mentoring

- All roles are at similar levels on Branch Drivers for 2014
Slide 34

- BDM downward trend on all Branch Drivers; but most problematic for Coaching & Mentoring as critical for GPP, and Supportive Work Environment as critical for retention.

Slide 35

- All roles are at similar levels on Branch Drivers for 2014
- Opportunities for development improved, but coaching critical for GPP, and support for retention.
Need to increase support & then implement performance management (don’t want to burn people out). Action needed for GPP increase.

 Majority of branches are in low performance work setting. Need to increase support & then implement performance management (don’t want to burn people out); will increase GPP.
For both BSC & CBC, coordination is slightly higher than flexibility, though both are generally low in comparison to other industries worldwide. Since 2011, coordination has always been higher.

Summary: Where is best practice to encourage knowledge transfer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch / business driver</th>
<th>Where?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>Would be best to find branches with best practice; slightly higher for BSC NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching &amp; mentoring</td>
<td>Would be best to find branches with best practice; slightly higher for CBC Qld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High performance work setting</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive work environment</td>
<td>Would be best to find branches with best practice; slightly higher for BSC &amp; CBC Qld</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. What are the implications for branch work tasks?

a. Relationships between branch work tasks & business outcomes: As expected ‘high value’ & ‘essential’ tasks are most important for business outcomes.
b. Branches with more positive perceptions of change are spending more time on ‘essential’ tasks.
c. Can we leverage knowledge about time spent on branch work tasks to have realistic expectations for the DC change? Time spent on ‘possible task reduction’ category for BMs is approx. 20% & for ISs is approx. 50% (NB tasks included were ‘ambitious’)

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Are the 3 categories of branch work tasks related to expected business outcomes?

- Possible task reduction with DC changes
  - Entire branch: r = -0.22
  - BM: r = -0.27
- Essential tasks
  - BM: r = -0.25
- High value add tasks
  - Entire branch: r = 0.27
  - BM: r = 0.47

- Lines of Orders
- GPP
- Lower Credit note percent

- 3 categories jointly determined by BSC & CBC.
- BMs have more impact on GPP
- Balance of tasks to obtain lower Credit note % is complicated.
### Slide 42

#### Relationships between employee perceptions of change & branch work tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of change</th>
<th>Possible task reduction with DC changes</th>
<th>Essential tasks</th>
<th>High value add tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the DC will help the business</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical location</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the warehouse</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on the branches</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on my role</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require more skills (eg selling &amp; problem solving)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have additional freedom to make important decisions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more opportunities for support/working with others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Slide 43

#### What branch work tasks are related to more lines of activity & GPP?

- **Green**: positive relationship, so want to increase these tasks
- **Red**: negative relationship, so want to decrease these tasks

- **Branch Manager**: Calls to customers to maintain high value &/or add value (eg. White-spotting)
- **Branch Manager**: Customer service and satisfaction (eg. P&A, PO status and F/U. Quote follow-ups)
- **Internal sales**: Branch maintenance (cleaning, filing, branch records, maintenance)

Caution: Above are relationships in Oct/Nov; we expect more insights by looking at over time (ie links to business outcomes in 2015)
What branch work tasks are related to lower credit note percentages?

**MORE**
- Branch Manager: QA & OH&S processes, branch security, finance paperwork (invoice, credits, receipts, banking)
- Internal sales: Inventory maintenance, receiving & shipping

**LESS**
- Branch Manager: Calls to customers to maintain high value &/or add value (eg. White-spotting)
- Branch Manager: Coaching, training & performance reviews of branch staff
- Internal sales: Deliveries (ie. driving to customers)

* Lines of credit notes / Lines of orders

Caution: Above are relationships in Oct/Nov; we expect more insights by looking at over time (ie links to business outcomes in 2015)

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**Slide 45**

**Branch Manager Time Use: By Business**

- Observations (general notes): BMs spend similar amount of time on tasks across BSC & CBC.
- Total time on possible task reduction (red): BSC 21%, CBC 24%
- Total time on tasks → business outcomes (ie those listed slides 43 & 44): BSC 26%, CBC 27%
**Slide 46**

**Branch Manager Time Use: BSC By State**

- **Observations:** BMs in Vic & Qld spend more time on 'high value add tasks' than BMs in NSW
- **Total time on possible task reduction (red):** NSW 23%, Vic 16%, Qld 23%
- **Total time on tasks -> business outcomes:** NSW 21%, Vic 28%, Qld 27%

**Slide 47**

**Branch Manager Time Use: CBC By State**

- **Observations:** BMs in Vic & Qld spend more time on 'high value add tasks' than BMs in NSW; BMs in Qld spend less time on the 'possible task reduction' category than other states
- **Total time on possible task reduction (red):** NSW 26%, Vic 26%, Qld 19%
- **Total time on tasks -> business outcomes:** NSW 23%, Vic 28%, Qld 29%
Observations: IS spend similar amount of time on tasks across BSC & CBC
Total time on possible task reduction (red): BSC 53%, CBC 49%
Total time on tasks -> business outcomes: BSC 19%, CBC 17%

Observations: NSW/Vic ISs spend slightly more time on the ‘possible task reduction’ category of tasks than Qld ISs
Total time on possible task reduction (red): NSW/Vic 57%, Qld 51%
Total time on tasks -> business outcomes: NSW/Vic 15%, Qld 23%
Observations: NSW ISs spend slightly less time on the 'possible task reduction' category
Total time on possible task reduction (red): NSW 46%, Vic 49%, Qld 51%
Total time on tasks -> business outcomes: NSW 17%, Vic 18%, Qld 16%

Observations: CBC ABM/BDMs complete more high value add tasks (driving sales growth, coaching/training & performance reviews)
Total time on possible task reduction (red): BSC 17%, CBC 8%
### Summary: Where is best practice to encourage knowledge transfer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch Managers</th>
<th>Internal Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task → Business outcomes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Where?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls to customers to maintain high value &amp;/or add value (e.g., White-spotting) (GPP)</td>
<td>CBC: Qld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service and satisfaction (e.g., P&amp;A, PO status and F/U. Quote follow-ups) (GPP)</td>
<td>*BSC: Vic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching, training &amp; performance reviews of branch staff (lines)</td>
<td>*BSC: Qld *CBC: NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA &amp; OH&amp;S processes, branch security, finance paperwork (invoice, credits, receipts, banking) (CNO%)</td>
<td>*BSC: NSW *CBC: Vic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Differences identified are very small

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### D. Discussion to Refine:

(a) Key Messages

(b) Action Items

Observation & Comment
- Time spent on tasks does not greatly differ across businesses & states.
- However, there are differences in the culture and perceptions of DC change; it is these differences that will impact the success (or otherwise) of the DC change.
How does thriving fluctuate across a week & across the day?

What makes a difference to people’s thriving & what does their thriving predict?

Focus on spill-over effects work to home & vice versa.

Emily’s PhD: Understanding this!
‘Week in a life’ Project Champion Research: Feedback Report for JOE BLOGGS

The aim of this feedback is to help you identify ways to improve work and the benefits you obtain from work. It is recommended that the best way to use this report is to take some time to read this information and write down ways to improve by answering the questions below. Research has shown this process helps create positive change.

Step 1: Where am I spending my time on work activities compared to others in similar job roles?

- **Explanation.** Graph 1 summarises how you spend time on work activities over a week. Graph 2 then summarises how employees in similar job roles spend their time on work activities. As a middle management role, ABM tasks are likely to fluctuate across a year, depending on the current business needs and initiatives being implemented. Activities to grow sales (activities 8 & 9 in the “Work Activities Key” list below), will always be important, as will opportunities to develop the employees you work with (Activity 10 in the list below). It is recommended by Richard Jenman that you talk with your Regional Manager about the current priorities in your role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Activities Key</th>
<th>Graph 1. My Work Activities Across Week</th>
<th>Graph 2. Average CBC ABM Work Activities Across Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Assist with monitoring pricing &amp; purchasing</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Monitor to ensure regional budget is met (branches &amp; Reps)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Sales forecasting</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Competitor analysis</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Suppliers calls structure, review &amp; support</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Customer service via branch, phone, email, or Reps (includes after hours)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Complete Branch Manager activities (ie due to illness, holidays, needed support)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Customer visits (develop customer relationships to win business &amp;/or for staff coaching) *</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Driving sales growth (eg market pricing and stock requirements feedback to BU Managers, drive key market segment &amp; national programs) *</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Coaching, training &amp; performance reviews of staff *</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Graph 1. My Work Activities Across Week**
  - 15% Assist with monitoring pricing & purchasing
  - 6% Monitor to ensure regional budget is met (branches & Reps)
  - 3% Sales forecasting
  - 3% Competitor analysis
  - 2% Suppliers calls structure, review & support
  - 8% Customer service via branch, phone, email, or Reps
  - 1% Complete Branch Manager activities
  - 41% Driving sales growth
  - 13% Coaching, training & performance reviews

- **Graph 2. Average CBC ABM Work Activities Across Week**
  - 21% Assist with monitoring pricing & purchasing
  - 8% Monitor to ensure regional budget is met (branches & Reps)
  - 4% Sales forecasting
  - 3% Competitor analysis
  - 6% Suppliers calls structure, review & support
  - 9% Customer service via branch, phone, email, or Reps
  - 3% Complete Branch Manager activities
  - 29% Driving sales growth
  - 11% Coaching, training & performance reviews

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Step 1 cont.
- Questions.
  a. If any, what are the big differences between where you spend your time on work activities (Graph 1) and the average employee in a similar role (Graph 2)?

  b. Which work activities can you reduce time on in order to spend more time on work activities shown to be linked to high branch productivity and gross profit?

Step 2: What are the benefits I obtain from work?
- Explanation. Thriving is about your level of energy and learning. Our research has shown that thriving is important for increasing your well-being outside work as well as your work performance. Thriving changes for all employees across both the work day (Graph 3, red line) and work week (Graph 4, red line). Your level of thriving is also shown on these graphs (see the blue line). There are many reasons why thriving might be high or low (e.g., what is happening at work or home, stage of life, what happened the week you completed the survey).

- Questions.
  a. At what times during the day and week is your thriving higher? i.e. for your blue line what are the highest points?

  b. What do you do differently at the times of the day/week when thriving is higher?

  c. Can you use these activities when your thriving (i.e. learning and energy) is low?
Step 3: What are some other ways I can improve my work activities and thriving?

- **Explanation.** The factors in Graph 5 have been found to be important for employees in your business to improve their work activities and thriving. Table 1 below explains these factors and makes suggestions about how you can try them out.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role clarity</strong></td>
<td>Having a clear understanding of your role and responsibilities.</td>
<td>• Ask your manager. • Refer to position description. • Seek clarification in your next performance review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching</strong></td>
<td>Having access to a work colleague who actively assists and encourages you to improve your work skills.</td>
<td>• Is there a manager (ABM, Regional Manager) or another Branch Manager you can learn from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changing work tasks</strong></td>
<td>Changes you can make to your own work activities to help work progress, such as changing the order tasks are completed, taking a break, or talking with others at work.</td>
<td>• If finding a task difficult, can you talk with others at work or come back to the task later?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive work environment</strong></td>
<td>Having others around you that treat failure (when there has been effort) as a learning opportunity.</td>
<td>• Is there someone in your branch, or another branch nearby who you can talk with to learn from mistakes? • Lead by example – be supportive to others at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities for Staff Development</strong></td>
<td>Having access to information needed to grow the business, regular updates about current developments and future plans in my business, useful training on the job, and rewards for excellent sales / work performance.</td>
<td>• Ask a manager (ABM, Regional Manager, other Branch Managers) for information and trying new work activities. • Access the Inenco intranet for development opportunities. • Call Inenco Learning &amp; Development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recovery</th>
<th>Time spent relaxing and letting go from stress with non-work activities to increase your energy.</th>
<th>• Perhaps focus on spending more time on activities that help you to both relax and forget about work such as hobbies, family activities, physical exercise or reading/TV. Eg. For some people watching TV helps relaxation, but other more active activities such as exercise are needed to detach from work.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>relaxation</td>
<td>Time spent on activities that help you to forget about work (ie. letting go of thoughts and emotions from work).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Questions.

  a. What is already helping you improve your work and thriving? In Graph 5 these are the factors with a rating of 3 or higher.

  

  b. What could help improve your work and thriving? In Graph 5 these are the factors with a rating of below 3.

  

Best wishes for trying out the suggestions you have developed in this worksheet to improve your work activities and thriving!