

Early signs of organizational cynicism: An exploratory case study to understand the  
connection between burnout and cynicism

By

Jennifer N. Holland

A Major Research Project Submitted to  
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Business Administration

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Date: December 1, 2015

## **ABSTRACT**

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**Abstract:** This major research paper explores if understanding the symptoms of burnout can help in the explanation of the perceived behaviours of organizational cynicism. Using a qualitative quasi-archival research approach, this case study uses Maslach's (1996) theoretical burnout framework and Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) six areas of worklife as an a priori guide for the thematic analysis of organizational open documents. Based on the findings, it is clear that the case study organization has warning signs of burnout. Several recommendations are discussed as practical applications for the mitigation of burnout and the gradual dilution of feelings of organizational cynicism.

December 1, 2015

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

In today's economic climate, service organizations are faced with the conflicting demands of providing an efficient and reliable service while utilizing less operational and financial resources. In order for an organization to be successful under these constraints, they must rely on their personnel to not only fulfill their daily job tasks, but also have a strong organizational commitment in order to maintain a consistent and elevated level of service. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to understand the level of engagement and satisfaction of employees to ensure a unified momentum towards future organizational success.

Research suggests that an employee possessing an emotional and cognitive commitment to the organization displays known engagement attitudes of “energy, involvement and efficacy” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p. 24). In order to understand how a service organization can achieve organizational commitment and engagement attitudes, it is critical to understand the antithesis attitudes of exhaustion, detachment, and inefficacy as these three attitudes negatively impact the relationship between the agent of the stress for an employee and organizational outcomes. Without constructive interventions, negative attitudes can fester and over time create a cynical lens from which employees view their working environment and the people within it, specifically leaders.

Some researchers suggest that cynicism is a learned response developed within the complex social constructs of the employee-employer relationship (Ozler & Atalay, 2011). A mismatch in the employee-employer value principles contributes to the feelings

of distrust in the working relationship leading to feelings of direct cynicism called organizational cynicism (OC). OC is defined as a negative attitude toward one's employing organization and is rooted in negative feelings of distrust, disillusionment, hopelessness, alienation, resignation, contempt and suspicion are warning signs for cynical behavior (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Abraham, 2000). Depending on the organizational culture and climate, these negative feelings can be reaffirmed daily by the mediating factors of the six areas of worklife as defined by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001). These factors include an employee's perception of workload, control, community, fairness, reward and value; all play influencing roles in where the employee places on the continuum between burnout and engagement (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). For a service organization, these feelings are likely to arise amongst more than one individual, especially within the socially influenced employee sub-cultures. The sub-cultures create a cyclical reaffirmation of a stressful work environment, where organizational cynical attitudes mediate the level of stress and therefore perpetuate feelings of cynicism. Thus creating a self-fulfilling phenomenon. When this cycle becomes evident at the employee unit level, meaning it is impacting a group of people; cynicism poses a serious threat to the ability of the employees to provide a consistent and high standard of service. It is this level of impact on performance that makes the study of the burnout and organizational cynicism especially important to service-based operations that rely so heavily on contributions from highly skilled workers.

## PURPOSE

In recent years the Atlantic Pilotage Authority (APA) has anecdotally identified the presence of cynical attitudes among our highly skilled employees across all functional

employment groups. These employees are providing a high-risk pilotage service and there are many influencing factors that can be associated with creating job stress for employees. Cognizant of this, leaders within the APA recognize the detrimental effects that burnout and organizational cynicism can have on the engagement of their workforce and the long-term success of their operation. In order to understand the impacts of these unique dynamics, there is a need for further understanding of the concepts of organizational cynicism and burnout.

To achieve this goal, this research uses a quasi-archival research methodology, examining historic organizational documents to determine if there is in fact evidence of the observed behaviours related to organizational cynicism and burnout. The research design for this project begins with an exploratory archival analysis of open source documents in the organization, providing a detailed understating of the signs and symptoms of burnout leading to cynicism and how this potentially is reflective of the observable phenomenon occurring with current employees. Based upon the archival research, the findings intend to address whether the symptoms of burnout can help in the explanation of the observed behaviours of organizational cynicism.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to utilize academic research and industry best practices in order to make educated and practical recommendations to APA senior management regarding three objectives: 1) outline the warning signs and threat of burnout through job-level and organization-level analysis at the APA, 2) provide an educated evidence based opinion of the potential presence of organizational cynicism based on objective 1, and 3) provide sound evidence-based practical recommendations that can become the foundation for a future engagement strategy at the APA.



## SCOPE

The scope of this research is limited to the examination of qualitative evidence to further understand the signs and potential consequences of organizational cynicism through the lens of burnout. Utilizing a valid and reliable theoretical framework for analysis, this study aims to make a contribution by providing a different perspective about the deeper organizational issues in order to provide more practical suggestions to move towards a culture of engagement. For this reason, the research is limited in scope and is not intended to determine all of the potential signs, symptoms, and consequences of burnout or organizational cynicism.

## ORGANIZATION FOR STUDY

The case study organization provides high skilled services to a specific region in Canada. With longstanding senior executives, a governing federally appointed Board of Directors, two bargaining agents and three long-term collective agreements, the APA faces many challenges which impact operational efficiency and employee relations. As a regulated monopoly for pilotage services, marine pilots who wish to work in Atlantic Canada are exclusively employed by the APA. As the sole pilotage service provider, the APA is required to employ personnel with a specific high level of expertise to fulfill their mandate to provide a safe pilotage service. Therefore, a high level of engagement is critical to operational safety and efficiency.

## RESEARCH OUTLINE

The subsequent chapters of this major research project outline the broad concepts of organizational cynicism and burnout as it relates to the evidence presented in relevant

academic research. By establishing a strong foundation of understanding on these concepts, I am able to explore the conceptual models of burnout. Utilizing the research of Maslach and her colleagues as an a priori guide, a quasi-archival methodology is applied to the case study of the APA. The findings obtained from the thematic analysis of the APA historical documents are discussed as they relate to the concepts of burnout and organizational cynicism. To conclude, this research provides several practical recommendations for mitigating the potential for burnout and diluting organizational cynicism within the APA.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM**

Historically, cynicism is rooted in teachings from the ancient Greeks who acknowledged the first two cynics as Antisthenes and Diogenes of Sinope (Dean et al., 1998). Cynics in this time were defined as those refusing social institutions, believing that social norms were in conflict with nature, and unessential for personal “independence and self-sufficiency” (Dean et al., 1998, p. 342). In essence, being a cynic was a chosen method of existence. Compared to today’s modern definition of cynicism, this notion has shifted to a targeted audience where an attitude of cynicism is correlated to an individual’s feeling toward a particular aspect of their life rather than a practicing lifestyle (Ozler & Atalay, 2011).

The preeminent research in this area suggests that there are five basic forms for conceptualizing cynicism. Dean et al. (1998) list 1) personality cynicism, 2) society/institution cynicism, 3) employee cynicism, 4) organizational change cynicism and 5) vocational or work cynicism. Of particular interest to this research is, vocational or work cynicism, hereafter noted as organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism is typically restricted to the employee’s attitudes toward their present organization and not the local market or industry as a whole (Dean et al, 1998). This distinction highlights the difference between being a cynic in the true sense of the word and an employee experiencing organizational cynicism.

When cynicism surfaces in an organization, it signals a breakdown in the employee-employer relationship. Typically, it is rooted in a lack of employee trust with

one or more organizational targets. According to Andersson (1996) and Andersson and Bateman (1997), employee cynicism has three potential targets “1) business organizations in general, 2) corporate executives, and 3) “other” workplace objects” (as cited in Dean et al., 1998, p. 344). These types of cynicism are often the result of perceptions that the organization is lacking in areas of values, principles of “honesty, fairness, and sincerity” (Abraham, 2000, p. 269). Organizational cynicism is shaped through direct employee experiences with their coworkers, organization leaders, and the company’s standard practices and procedures (Dean et al, 1998). This emotional internalization computes to feelings of hopelessness, disillusionment, frustration, anger, and pessimism, amongst others (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997).

The summation of these experiences leads to the creation of the psychological contract that frames the employee-employer relationship. Furthermore, it is the observable or perceived breach of an individual psychological contract that sets the stage for the development of cynical behaviours. Organizational cynicism is thus spread when the perceived appearance does not meet the reality of what employees are facing every day. Employees with a cynical perspective tend to view all management actions through the lens of deception. They feel that those in authority positions have a disingenuous ‘hidden agenda’ (Andersson, 1997, p. 346). Any organizational practices that breach the relational contract expectations reinforce an attitude of organizational cynicism. Employees then typically display an attitude of self-interest, resulting in poor performance, low morale, interpersonal conflict, absenteeism, and high job turnover (Andersson, 1996). These behavioural reactions are manifestations of their reactive feelings to situations where they believe they are (or have) been the object of inequity,

are (or have been) marginalized by the lack of access to power and resources, and they feel excluded from the community (Andresson, 1996).

The aforementioned dimension defined by Dean et al. (1998) of vocational or work cynicism appears to be parallel to the construct of burnout syndrome. Burnout syndrome is defined as “failure, exhaustion, loss of energy and power, or an individual’s feeling exhausted internally as a result of unfulfilled wishes” (Ozler & Atalay, 2011, p. 28). Abraham (2000) states that work cynicism becomes a coping mechanism for those facing burnout, consisting of symptoms of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of self-accomplishment. Researchers suggest work cynicism is also rooted in role conflict, where an employee’s personal values are not aligned with the organizational values (Abraham, 2000).

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM

Organizational cynicism is qualitatively defined as an expression of negative attitude. In a very basic sense, an attitude is a manifestation of an individual’s perception or evaluation of a particular subject, object or entity (Ozler & Atalay, 2011). It is bred under perceptions of a ‘generalized mistrust’ of organizational authority, creating a disparaging discourse of management initiatives, communications and directives, which ultimately undermines organizational authority (Mirvis & Kanter, 1989). Strong emotional reactions to the organization are manifested in employees who feel frustration, discomfort, disrespect, or anger towards their organization due to the displayed lack of justice (Ozler & Atalay, 2011).

Precursors to organizational cynicism are rooted in disparity between an employee's expectation and the subsequent experience with the organization. A study by Mirvis & Kanter (1989) described cynicism to be a strong predictor of the level of trust in management and in their coworkers. Overall it is a strong warning signal of how they view their companies. This study also showed that cynicism affects all levels in the organizational structure. However, what differentiates each level within the organization is how they display attitudes of cynicism and the manipulation of that within their power in the organization. For example, cynics in a management or leadership role can negatively impact organizational outcomes by withholding privileged or critical information (Mirvis & Kanter, 1989). In comparison, cynics in non-management positions tend to manipulate organizational rules, policies, and practices to their advantage.

Cynics in leadership and staff roles take pride in their ability to manipulate the system and "see through" the company's political dynamics (Mirvis & Kanter, 1989). Mirvis and Kanter (1998) define another type of organizational cynical member as "passive cynics" (p. 382), those employees who are stuck in their ways. These individuals are not actively displaying behavioural cynical attitudes, but rather are being unreceptive and uncooperative with new ideas or initiatives (Mirvis & Kanter, 1998, p. 382). Further, the study revealed that employees who are not in a position of authority would more easily take on cynical attitudes as a coping mechanism to protect themselves from those in command roles. Left unresolved, cynics display attitudes that contribute to the notion of dichotomized groups or the more popular 'us versus them' mantra directed towards the opposing group.

This notion of opposing group dynamics lends to the perceptions of ‘in and out’ group discourse and tints the lens through which employees view notions of leadership credibility, the organization and also the demands of their job. It also increases the likelihood of friction in the interpersonal relationships between the employee and the source of the stress, the organization. Emotional disengagement preserves feelings of distrust and suspicions of deceptive motivations by management (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Once these feelings of contempt towards the organization become habitual, the cynicism becomes in a sense a self-fulfilling phenomenon where all organizational initiatives are met with harsh criticisms (Abraham, 200, p. 270).

Researchers describe exhaustive forms of emotional disengagement as burnout. According to Falkoski (2012), burnout, like cynicism, is a “demotivator for employees reflective of the inverse relationship between emotional exhaustion and employee engagement” (p.50). The consequential outcomes of demotivation are rooted in feelings of depletion of physical and emotional resources (Maslach & Leiter, 1989). Most famously studied by Maslach (1989), employees reaching the point of burnout report “feeling overloaded at work, a lack of control over their own work, unrewarded by their work, a lack of community within the organization, unfair treatment, and conflicting personal values with company values” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p. 151-152).

## CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM

The research literature on the consequences of organizational cynicism is consistent. Most researchers suggest that the main areas of consequence for cynicism in the organization are: 1) reduced job satisfaction, 2) low organizational commitment, 3)

alienation, and 4) lack of organizational citizenship (Abraham, 2000, p. 272). Abraham (2000) proposed that organizational cynicism is inversely related to job satisfaction; specifically, that “personality, societal, employee, organizational change and work cynicisms” reduce job satisfaction (p. 274). Further, Abraham (2000) hypothesizes that organization cynicism diminishes organizational commitment (p.275). Organizational commitment is rooted in value congruence, in this instance, the alignment of personal employee values to that of the organizational values. This alignment creates a dynamic relationship where the employee is willing to ‘go the extra mile’ for the employer. Connected to this notion of commitment is organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which is adversely affected by organizational cynicism. Parallels between OCB and burnout can be drawn due to the adverse effect on employee attitudes and behaviours.

#### DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF BURNOUT

Burnout emerged as an important research concept in the mid-1970s. The concept had grass-roots beginnings in the health sciences field. Freudenberger (1975), a psychiatrist, was the first to define burnout as “failure, exhaustion, loss of energy and power, or an individual’s feeling exhausted internally as a result of unfulfilled wishes” (as cited in Ozler & Atalay, 2011, p. 28). Freudenberger’s early research on burnout was related to the health care field, based on his own experience with “emotional depletion and loss of motivation and commitment” in their own working environment (as cited in Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 400). In parallel to the research of Freudenberger, Maslach (1976) was studying the concept of emotions in the workplace in human service workers. (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 400) Maslach, a social psychologist, defined



'burnout' as a "common emotional fatigue (burnout) and a cynicism syndrome among the individuals who work face-to-face with people and do jobs that involve human process as compared to mechanical or technical process" (Maslach & Leiter 1981, p. 99). What Freudenberger and Maslach had uncovered was an area of research that would prove to be critical to understanding the complexities of how people experience their work. (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2008) This early research highlighted that burnout is a social problem where there is "extreme fatigue and the loss of idealism and passion for one's job" (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 398).

As research in this field evolved, burnout has been further conceptualized as a psychological syndrome that is caused by individual chronic job stress (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach (2008) defined two distinct contributors for the continued experience of employee burnout. First is the "imbalance of demands over resources" (p. 208), highlighting that as job demands increase seemingly so too does the scarcity of resources. The constraint on resources leaves employees void of sufficient levels of financial, operational or personnel related resources to meet the demands of the job (Schaufeli, Leiter & Maslach, 2008). The deprivation of resources intensifies the feelings of exhaustion due to the imbalance in demands to resources. (Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach, 2008) Secondly, the social discourse of employees' whom view the organizations motivations as self-serving and therefore are skeptical of their actions (Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach, 2008). Maslach's (1996) longitudinal research evolved these two distinct contributions, offering that burnout is a mediating construct of cynicism and thus the symptoms of burnout are predictive of cynical behaviours towards the organization.

## MEASURING BURNOUT

Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed a measure to assess all three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. At the core of the assessment model is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The original MBI was designed for the study of professionals working in health care and human services, called MBI-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). The MBI-HSS was later adapted for study of burnout amongst educators, MBI-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). At the core of both surveys is a focus on professionals who work in occupations with a high level of interface with people (clients, customers, patients, students, etc.) and their experience with the three dimensions of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). A third, broader adaption to the model, the MBI-General Survey (MBI-GS), focuses on the assessment of burnout within “occupations that are not so clearly people-oriented” (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, p. 402). The MBI-GS conceptualizes the three dimensions of burnout within a more general concept with respect to the context of the job (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Despite the variation in design, the core measure is consistent with the MBI-HSS and MBI-ES designs (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

For the purposes of this report, the analysis explores the construct of burnout in relation to the research findings obtained from studies which have utilized the MBI survey (MBI, MBI-ES, and MBI-GS); however, due to the use of a quasi-archival methodology this study does not directly employ this assessment model. This case study

utilizes the conceptual principles of the research on the three dimensions of burnout as defined by Maslach's evolving research since 1981.

## EXPLORING A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF BURNOUT

Burnout syndrome is the manifestation of an employee's reaction to the impact of job stress and the work related behavior, which it conjures as a result (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Typically, these behaviours are warning signs of severe fatigue or exhaustion in physical or emotional capabilities, lack of focus on the task at hand, depersonalization, and low self-esteem (Ozler & Atalay, 2011).

Maslach (2003) characterized the signs of burnout as a series of symptoms: 1) Emotional Exhaustion, 2) Depersonalization, and 3) Lack of Personal Accomplishment. The following will describe each of the symptom dimensions in greater detail:

### 1) Emotional Exhaustion

In most studies emotional exhaustion is highly related to job stress and manifests as a reaction to the continual participation in emotionally demanding situations (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 99). Eventually the individual becomes void of emotional resources, showing signs of emotional fatigue – losing concentration and feeling symptoms of tension and anxiety (Ozler & Atalay, 2011). As a coping response mechanism, employees feeling this emotional fatigue find ways to withdraw from the source of the stress, which in this case is their job or organization (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). They can withdraw both emotionally and/or physically in order to create a gap between themselves and the work strain (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Once they have reached this point, the employee has likely developed feelings of negativity toward the source of the organization. The

negative lens shadows their perceptions of daily routine operational tasks and the future organizational initiatives implemented by management. This shift in cognition is what links emotional exhaustion to Maslach's second dimension of depersonalization.

## 2) Depersonalization

Depersonalization is an immediate response to emotional exhaustion, in that the individual lacks energy and feels a sense of indifference. This individual also displays feelings of pessimism or insensibility when reacting to others (Ozler & Atalay, 2011, p. 29). According to Maslach and Goldberg (1998), depersonalization affects the interpersonal dimension of burnout where expressing cynical attitudes is likely. It is the interrelated nature of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization that create Maslach's third dimension, lack of personal accomplishment.

## 3) Lack of personal accomplishment

Maslach and Goldberg (1998) describe that this notion of personal or professional efficacy is related to perceptions of self-evaluation and self-efficacy as produced by the individual's job. These feelings are directly impacted by the social support and presented opportunities for personal/professional development. This individual is experiencing feelings of demotivation and therefore has a tendency to give their self a negative evaluation (Ozler & Atalay, 2011, p. 30). According to a study completed by Lasalvia et al. (2009), the greatest predictor of reduced professional efficacy is the employee's lack of access to participation in organizational decision-making.

## ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF MASLACH BURNOUT MODEL

It is important to understand the alternative critical views of the causal relationships between the three dimensions of burnout. A study done by Taris, LeBlanc, Schaufeli and Schreurs (2005) looked at the causal relationships between the dimensions of burnout and the syndrome. They compared and contrasted three conceptual models for evaluating the causal relationships between Maslach's three dimensions. In addition to the original Maslach and Leiter model examined above, they reviewed the alternative model of Golembiewski et al., (1986) and the adapted version of Lee and Ashforth's (1993) model.

Maslach and Leiter's (1988) model of burnout conceptualizes the causal relationship of the three dimensions as building from emotional exhaustion. Further, stating that high levels of exhaustion lead to raised levels of depersonalization, which in turn causes lower levels of personal accomplishment (efficacy) (Taris, LeBlanc, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 1988). Golembiewski et al., (1986) envisioned an alternative model for analyzing the causal relationship where they hypothesized that the Maslach Burnout Inventory dimensions could be rated as either low or high, and when an individual is transitioning through the three dimensions on what they labelled the "flight path" (Taris, Pascale, Schaufeli, Wilmar & Schreurs, 2005, p. 240) they would encounter eight phases of burnout. The research theorized the causal relationship started with elevated levels of depersonalization, which then led to decreased feelings of personal accomplishment (efficacy). In turn, lower levels of personal or professional efficacy would then create high levels of emotional exhaustion (Taris, LeBlanc, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2005). The differentiating factor then is the initiation

point from which burnout stems. Lastly, Lee and Ashforth (1993) utilized an adapted model of Maslach and Leiter's (1988) conceptual framework. This model theorized that depersonalization did not have a sequential effect on lack of personal accomplishment (efficacy) but rather emotional exhaustion had a direct effect on professional efficacy levels. In this sense, their model suggests that personal accomplishment was not developed independently.

#### LINKING DIMENSIONS OF BURNOUT TO AREAS OF WORKLIFE

The three dimensions do not develop instantaneously, but instead develop over time. With this in mind, Maslach, and Leiter (2008) studied the notion of the “burnout-engagement continuum” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p.498). This model juxtaposes the “negative experience of burnout and the positive experience of engagement” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 498). The research further suggests that there are three interconnected sub-dimensions supporting the continuum: 1) exhaustion to energy, 2) cynicism to involvement, and 3) inefficacy to efficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, p. 498). The determinants of these three supporting spectrums of the burnout dimensions are rooted in Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter's (2001) six areas of work-life domain, which are the environmental factors that attribute where within the range of each sub-dimension the employee relates. They are: workload, control, reward, community, fairness and values. These six areas impact an individual's level of burnout caused by a mismatch between employees and the organization in one or more of these worklife areas. (Leiter & Maslach, 2000, Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001; Leiter & Maslach, 2004)

Table 1: Leiter & Maslach (2000) Areas of Worklife

| Areas of Worklife | Brief Description  |
|-------------------|--|
| Workload          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The burnout antecedent of workload occurs when an employee’s job demand far exceeding their personal limits.</li> <li>• Research has shown a direct connection of overload to emotional and physical exhaustion (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008).</li> </ul>  |
| Control           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of personal control over a work related outcome is another antecedent of burnout. According to Maslach and Leiter (2008), this occurs when an employee experience role conflict perpetuating ambiguous situations that enhance feelings of stress and in the longer term exhaustion.</li> <li>• A sense of control is achieved when an employee feels that they are empowered to actively participate in organizational decision-making (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 1998).</li> </ul>                                |
| Reward            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reward is rooted in the relationship between the employee and their organizational leaders. Those leaders that have the ability to grant rewards for a ‘job well-done’ influence the employee’s personal sense of efficacy.</li> <li>• A lack of genuine reward or recognition is one of most predictive indications of employee disengagement from work and feelings of inefficacy (Lasalvia et al., 2009; Maslach, Schaufeli, &amp; Leiter, 2001).</li> </ul>   |
| Community         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of community within the organization is of great importance to the employee’s level of burnout. A support system at work is influential in the employees’ feelings of alienation or belonging. (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008; Gaines &amp; Jermier, 1983)</li> <li>• Patterns of unpleasant interpersonal contact with supervisors and coworkers are related to high levels of burnout in the work environment (Leiter and Maslach, 1988).</li> </ul>   |
| Fairness          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of fairness is drawn from the extent to which the employee feels the decisions being made by organizational leadership are fair and equitable (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008).</li> <li>• The root of this sub-dimension is rooted in both equity theory and organizational justice theory. (Moliner et al., 2005)</li> </ul>  |
| Values            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value congruence is of critical importance to the burnout- engagement continuum. When personal and organizational values shift, the misalignment creates a gap in perceived goals and expectations (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008).</li> <li>• Person-organization value congruence was strongly associated with burnout and it mediated the relationship with satisfaction. Therefore, those experiencing burnout tended to withdraw and spent less time on work related tasks (Siegall &amp; McDonald, 2004).</li> </ul> |

Leiter and Maslach (2000) created an assessment tool for the six Areas of Worklife. The Areas of Worklife Scale (AWS) is intended to assess employees’ perceptions of their work environments (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). Similar to the MBI, the AWS is a proven reliable and valid measure intended to identify the key areas of strength and weakness

within a workplace as they relate to burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). Maslach and Leiter (2001) describe the six areas as the defining categories that moderate the relationship between employees' and their work. Overall, a mismatch between the employees and their work in any of these six areas reduces their level of "energy, involvement and sense of effectiveness" (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001, p. 498)

In summary, the three dimensions of burnout are interconnected and the six sub-dimensions of work life areas are influential in understanding the antecedents of the dimensions. From 2004 – 2008, Leiter, Maslach and their colleagues have studied the six areas of worklife under various conditions. The findings of which have produced evidence as to how each of the six areas of worklife act as early predictors (directly or indirectly) of the three dimensions of burnout. First, the employee experiences emotional exhaustion where they lack emotional resources and thus their coping mechanism is to withdraw. The emotional withdrawing from their peers or managers leads to the second symptom of depersonalization. Depersonalization is the display of negative emotions or cynical attitudes. It is evident in an attitude of indifference toward work, emotional detachment from colleagues and clients, cynical notions about the organization, and a tendency to strictly follow rules and regulations rather than adapt to the needs of those around you (McShane & Steen, 2009, p. 91). A high level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization typically influences the manifestation of the third symptom, i.e., a lack of personal accomplishment.

Due to the use of a quasi-archival methodology, this study does not directly employ AWS or MBI. Instead, I have chosen to further discuss the logical progression of interconnectivity between the three dimensions through the linkage between the six Areas



of Worklife conceptually, as supported by above literature review, to a business case study.

Table 2: Area of Worklife and the three dimensions of burnout

| Areas of Worklife | Dimension of Burnout   |
|-------------------|--|
| Workload          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workload is most directly related to the dimension of emotional exhaustion, however it is logical to infer that exhaustion “mediates the relationship of workload with the other two dimensions of burnout”- depersonalization (cynicism) and lack of personal accomplishment (efficacy) (Maslach, Schaufeli, &amp; Leiter, 2001; Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008).</li> </ul> |
| Control           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control is associated to all three dimensions of burnout, but most strongly connected to feelings of efficacy. (Lee &amp; Ashforth, 1996)</li> </ul>  |
| Reward            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of recognition from their superiors, colleagues, and other stakeholders has been shown to have an effect on both the level of exhaustion and the third dimension of efficacy (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008).</li> </ul>  |
| Community         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sense of community impacts all three dimensions but most strongly impacts depersonalization and levels of professional efficacy.</li> </ul>   |
| Fairness          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research has connected notions of unfair or imbalances exchanges to exhaustion and cynicism dimensions (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008)</li> </ul>  |
| Values            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research in the area of value congruence has been linked to all three dimensions of Maslach’s burnout theory (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2008).</li> </ul>   |

Table 2, outlines the connection between the six areas of worklife and the related three dimensions of burnout based upon the interpretation of the evidence as provided in the literature review. Further, this research analyzes the historical documents of the case study organization utilizing the qualitative concepts derived from these two studies as a generalized a priori guide for linking text to the six areas of worklife. The predominant unit categories identified are discussed within the context of the relevant area of worklife (a priori theme). Further, these categories are analyzed for logical links to the three overarching high-level dimensions of burnout. The following chapter outlines in greater detail the methodology for gathering evidence, analyzing and establishing these links.

## **CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The literature review in Chapter 2 was focused on understanding the past and present research on the causes and consequences of burnout as it relates to organizational cynicism. The intention of this study is to further explore, analyze, and examine if there are signs of organizational cynicism present based on the thorough analysis of archival organizational documentation.

### **QUASI-ARCHIVAL RESEARCH**

Quasi-archival research is a qualitative method of study, where the researcher seeks out documentation in which he/she can extract evidence of the occurrence of a particular phenomenon from historical records. The documents are sourced from publically available published information at the case study organization, thus, the quasi nature of the adaption of archival research. This adapted methodology is borrowed from a study done by O'Reilly and Reed (2010), who utilized public government documents to analyze the presence of an observed social phenomenon related to leadership and its impact on the policy discourse within the UK public service. Links can be drawn to the research methodology presented by O'Reilly and Reed (2010) and this current research. As the APA is a federal crown corporation, public government documents are used to explore the observed social phenomenon of organizational cynicism through the lens of burnout.

The strength of archival research is its ability to provide documented evidence for an observed behavior within the context of the specific organization. Conversely, one of the limitations of archival research is that not all information, for example day-to-day operational influences and social interactions, can be captured in a report, especially an open source document.

As the documentation is already occurring, it limits the analysis of the facts and opinions of those who initially wrote the documents. This introduces a potential for bias in two ways 1) the bias of those who authored the documents, and 2) the potential for bias in this research due to the collection and selection process of archival documents for analysis.

## DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis is a “systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). This method of qualitative research analysis is of particular interest to this study due to its compatibility with an archival research approach. The systematic process of document analysis allows for the in-depth examination of the text for further interpretation, with the overall goal being to “elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (Bowen, 2009, p. 29). This approach lends itself particularly well to business case studies, especially when looking at historical discourse to aid in understanding a socially occurring phenomenon like cynicism. The key strength of this approach is that the texts written in the historical documents have been done outside of the researcher’s influence (Bowen, 2009).

The selection of the organizational documentation to analyze should be methodical and each document evaluated against valid criterion. The documents chosen

for analysis are named as the qualitative coding units (Smith, 2000). The analysis of the documentation utilizes “excerpts, quotations, or entire passages – that are then organized into major themes, categories, and case examples through content analysis” (Bowen, 2003, p. 28). This organization of themes provides insight into historical occurrences that are insights about current behaviours. In a sense, it provides a timeline of significant organizational events, or changes, which may have helped shape the current level of cynicism. Also, this detailed analysis may prove helpful in the uncovering of other phenomena that can then lead to the development of future research questions (Bowen, 2009). It is these findings that can be used as tactical evidence for strategic recommendations to the case study organization.

#### CODING AND CATAGORIZATION

In order to qualify the themes, the researcher must develop a coded categorization of analysis to link the qualitative data. This type of coding is particularly useful with text-based data, such as the historical documentation I have obtained from the case study organization. The patterned excerpts, quotations, or entire passages taken from the documentation are named as the context unit (Smith, 2000). The context units are particularly important as they help to map the categories. I used an a priori approach to the development of categories as I wanted to map examine the findings from the perspective of the theoretical work of Maslach. One potential limitation of the a priori approach is that the documentation chosen for analysis may not map to the categories due to the narrow frame of reference (Smith, 2000).

To analyze the categories, I have compared code frequencies of use from the historical documentation as the basis for my approach to the analysis (Corbin and Strauss,

2008). In other words, counting the number of times statements pertaining to that code are found in each document being examined. This approach is the most common means of summarizing multiple documents.

The patterns derived from the data analysis are representative of the employees' perceptions of organizational experiences. The excerpts taken from the historical documentation have to be limited to maximum 5 line paragraphs as the repetitive occurrence of the theme can influence the frequency count (Smith, 2000). This descriptive comparison lends to the understanding of burnout and points to useful insights under the guiding principles of Maslach and Leiter's (2008) three dimensions of burnout. Within these three dimensions, the area of worklife sub-dimensions are used in the mapping of the qualitative coded data in an effort to chart the observable factors of the signs and symptoms of burnout to the notion of organizational cynicism as uncovered in my literature review.

This analysis lends to the development of ideas for future explanatory research, possibly directing us towards a hypothesis-formation on what has caused the deep-rooted organizational cynicism at the APA.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

### KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED

Ten public organizational documents have been used to form the basis of this exploratory case study analysis. Although this qualitative analysis is not equipped to confirm or deny the presence of burnout, the frequencies of mention of key themes related to Maslach's six areas of worklife give evidence to this assumption. There are varying degrees of frequency of the presence of each of the categories throughout each of the individual documents. However, when taken in summation, the frequencies provide an observable trend over the cross-section of materials.

The key themes (see Table 2) have been grouped and identified as 1) job characteristics and influences, 2) employee-organization congruence factors, and 3) professional efficacy influences. These three themes run in parallel to Maslach (1996) burnout dimensions of 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) lack of personal achievement (efficacy), respectively.

Table 3: Key Themes

| Maslach (1996) Burnout Dimension | Case Study Theme                   | Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001) a priori category   | Case Study Category  |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Emotional Exhaustion             | Job characteristics and influences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workload</li><li>• Control</li><li>• Values</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Constraints on resources (personnel, financial or operational)</li><li>• A high level of employee expertise</li><li>• Stress and strain in the employee working conditions</li><li>• The immense pressure from</li></ul> |

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  | external stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strict adherence to rules and regulation with an emphasis on a due diligence safety culture</li> </ul>  |
| Depersonalization                          | Employee-organization congruence factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision-making autonomy</li> <li>• Identified physical and social gaps</li> <li>• Control over time, complexity and variety of work</li> <li>• Negative statements of culture and morale and employee retention</li> </ul> |
| Lack of personal accomplishment (efficacy) | Professional efficacy influences         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reward</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Control</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-culture identification (community)</li> <li>• Career development and job enrichment</li> <li>• Public or private recognition</li> <li>• Employee communication and feedback platforms.</li> </ul>                       |

Job characteristics and influences is the title theme of the relevant categories found throughout the document analysis related to the a priori worklife factor of workload, values, and control. These included the frequent textual evidence on the subjects of constraints on resources (personnel, financial or operational, a high level of employee expertise required to do the complex job task, factors of stress and strain in the employee working conditions, the immense pressure from external stakeholders, the strict adherence to rules and regulation with an emphasis on a due diligence safety culture.

All of these factors highlight the complexity of the operation as well as the various competing demands, increasing workload. Work overload inhibits the employees' control over the outcome of their work to a certain extent. In the context of the three dimensions of burnout, these thematic factors are seemingly related to emotional exhaustion.

Employee-organization congruence factor, in this research is the culminating theme of the relevant categories found throughout the analysis related to the a priori worklife factors of values, control, fairness and community. As previously mentioned, Maslach's dimensions of burnout are incrementally experienced in such a way that the first dimension of emotional exhaustion influences the experience of depersonalization. Thus, it is logical that the six areas of worklife are mediating factors that impact and overlap the transition between dimensions.

The second theme of employee-organization congruence factors includes the frequent textual evidence on the subjects of decision-making autonomy, identified physical and social gaps, control over time, complexity and variety of work, and negative statements of culture and morale and employee retention. In the context of the three dimensions of burnout, these thematic factors are seemingly related to depersonalization.

Lastly, the third theme, professional efficacy influences, in this research is the culminating theme of the relevant categories found through the analysis related to the a priori worklife factor of values, control, community and reward. Notably, there are once again overlapping a priori factor from both the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization theme. Evidence of these factors includes sub-culture identification (community), career development and job enrichment, public or private recognition, and employee communication and feedback platforms. Within this theme, these factors are most relevant to the employee's sense of professional efficacy achieved from their job within this particular organization.



## ANALYSIS OF KEY THEMES

### Theme 1: Job Characteristics and Influences

The key categories identified in each document pertaining to the dimension of emotional exhaustion are connected to influencing exhaustion factors of workload and values.

#### 1. Constraints on resources (personnel, financial or operational)

The APA is one of four national pilotage authorities sanctioned by the Government of Canada. Established in 1972, the APA is the only body that can make operational and governing administrative decisions for the Atlantic district. These decisions are made under the guiding principles of the *Pilotage Act*, in conjunction with the myriad of subsequent legislation and regulations impacting the service of pilotage. As a federal Crown Corporation, the APA reports to the Minister of Transport through the corporate governance structure of a federally appointed Board of Directors. The objective mandate of the Board of Directors is to ensure the APA follows its mandate to “establish, operate, maintain and administer in the interest of safety an efficient pilotage service” (*Pilotage Act, Section 18, p. 6-7*) within its jurisdictional authority.

As a Crown Corporation, the APA is owned by the Government of Canada and operates in the interest of the Canadian public. For this reason, the APA is defined by the *Financial Administration Act (Schedule III, Part I)*, and is required to be financially self-sufficient. Although the APA functions in the interest of the national public, it does not receive any level of government funding. This distinctive dichotomy encourages the APA to operate as a 24/7/365 lean single service (marine pilotage) entity. “The APA

strives to maintain internal services in the most efficient manner possible. [...] There is no overlap or duplication” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2012, p. 12). A lean organizational structure applies to all functional work groups of the authority, creating an operational environment that is inhibited by financial, personnel and operational constraints. The administrative organizational structure is such that there is minimal redundancy in job tasks or positional overlap (Appendix B – Organizational Chart). This streamlined organizational structure aids in the minimization of administrative costs associated with the service. Similarly, this lean approach applies to the operational front line employees consisting of dispatchers, pilot boat launch crew (launchmasters and deckhands), and pilots. These positions operate on a 24/7/365 rotational shift schedule that serves at the pleasure of the marine community requiring pilotage service.

“The number of pilots in each region is kept to a minimal level while still satisfying the requirements of the customers. It would be far too expensive to staff for peak periods, so the Authority relies on pilots working overtime to cover these peaks. This is far less costly for the customers, but requires significantly more attention of management and dispatchers, as well as communication with customers, to provide pilotage without service delays” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2012, p. 12-13).

In order to control the workload for the operational employees, a rotating shift schedule is utilized. Although varying amongst the three groups, each employee works on a duty schedule that provides periods of on and off duty time each week. During this duty time, the employee is required to be ready to perform their respective duties for a pilotage assignment. Additionally, pilot boat launch crew and pilots are also sanctioned by the

marine legislation governing hours of work and rest (Transport Safety Board of Canada, 1995). To accommodate for these regulations for pilots, a roster system is used to ensure a fair assignment of a duty pilot to a vessel. Within the 15-hour duty time, the pilot is required to complete assignments that are within their approved class of licence, which is limited by gross tonnage of the assignment vessel. The time between assignments is used for travel back ashore, and rest and recuperation before they are dispatched to their next assignment. As the assignment traffic is dictated by the commercial industry, the time between assignments can be limited, especially if the next pilot in the roster is not a fully licenced pilot that can take any tonnage of vessel.

## 2. High level of required employee expertise

As a regulated monopoly on pilotage service in Atlantic Canada, the APA employees must be highly skilled professionals. Specifically, the pilots assume the most inherent risk and liability in performing their daily job. As such, stringent guidelines are used when hiring Pilots; all of which must possess a high level of marine certification.

"To become a Captain takes a lot of hard work and many years. It takes 48 months at sea before you can write your first exam for 2nd Mate. Then it's 12 months more before your 1st Mate exams and another 12 months before Master exams. Of course, this doesn't include the 15-16 years previous that you need to even get on track to becoming a captain" (*Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2011, p. 8*).

In addition to the certification, marine pilots must possess expert knowledge of the local district, have superior ship-handling skills and extensive navigational command

experience in order to fulfil their job duties. Furthermore, they must be fit both physically and mentally to ensure the safety of themselves, and of the vessel and crew in which he/she has conduct. When a pilot boards a vessel, via climbing up the side of the vessel on a pilot ladder, the pilot's main role is to work with the vessel captain and his bridge team to ensure the safe conduct of the ship through a compulsory pilotage area. This occurs because typically the captain is not familiar with every port they are required to enter and to ensure environmental and public safety. Also, the expertise of a local pilot is legislatively required in compulsory pilotage areas.

The pilot has many external factors to consider when planning his/her safe passage into a berth (docking). Some of which are dependant on the ship's construction (type of vessel, size, condition, etc.), the demands of the sea states (tidal conditions), the current weather (winds, precipitation, fog, etc.), the traffic in the local harbour, the availability of tugs for assistance and the competency of the vessel's crew, to only name a few. Moreover, they are the first local person to join the vessel prior to it arriving in port, before any other government agency. As such, they act as a liaison of sort for the local area and act as an agent between the vessel, the local governing authorities, other local vessel traffic and radio traffic personnel during their passage.

“The highly skilled marine pilots employed by the APA make a vital contribution to the protection of the environment, to safeguarding the lives of mariners, and to preserving and promoting the economic wellbeing of ports in Atlantic Canada” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2012, p. 1).

The job is immensely complex, requiring effective coordination of the above-mentioned factors while providing expert ship handling and seamanship practices. Pilots

must always be expecting the unexpected as any of these external factors can change at any moment. They need to rely on their expertise and situational awareness to make assertive and smart decisions when choosing alternative passage plans due to changing weather, vessel mechanical deficiencies, harbour tug resource availability, crew competency failings or onboard emergencies. This combined with the constraints of time, resources and external pressures creates a high potential for feelings of stress or work overload. This makes it exceedingly more difficult to recruit suitable qualified mariners to a high-risk and physically and mentally demanding job.

"Imagine climbing a wet rope ladder on a windy, rainy day. Now set that against a moving pilot boat with the ladder hanging from a massive container ship. That's what pilots face every day as they board vessels. It's hard enough going up to the deck, but it's even worse coming down as the boats are rocking and rolling and you're looking over your shoulder to gauge just when – and where – to jump to land on the pilot boat. If you miss, you're in the ocean" (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2011, p. 9).

It takes 24 – 36 months to become a fully licenced pilot in a specific district due to the level of expertise required to perform the duties of the job. This is another obvious constraint on operations, as the APA has to plan two or more years in advance in hiring for retirements. If a pilot was to resign his/her duties or become injured, the APA is then constrained to the remaining district pilots picking up the increasing demands of the district traffic. As each Atlantic compulsory pilotage district is so unique, personnel resources cannot easily be transferred or shared amongst the districts. This resource

constraint weighs heavy on all functions of the organization as it increases the complexity and workload for all to mitigate the loss of a key player in the pilotage service. To mitigate the risk, the APA engages a unique succession-planning scheme that utilizes an eligibility list to line up qualified candidates. Due to the requirement for long term planning, the Authority must interview and identify competent and qualified mariners for future hiring. These candidates are placed on an eligibility list with a two-year expiry. The Authority hires directly from this list when a job opening is available. An eligibility list must be established for each district due the unique qualifications. The strengths of this process are the early identification of qualified candidates; however, the limitations include the candidates potentially refusing the job when offered due to the length of time since their interview, the potential diminishing of their proficiencies and their suitability to fit within the organization after a span of time. The aging workforce resulting in a diminishing pool of qualified resources is an additional constraining factor plaguing the APA.

Similarly, amongst the pilot boat launch crew there are highly skilled mariners who are of critical importance to the pilotage operation. The launchmaster (captain of the pilot boat) must have a Transport Canada regulated level of licence deemed appropriate to operate the pilot boat. Like the pilot, the launchmaster must have a high level of expertise in the local harbour and superior ship handling skills. They are responsible in getting the pilot to and from the assignment vessel. They must bring the pilot boat alongside a vessel and maintain speed, course and stability in order for the pilot, assisted by the deckhand, to safely grab the assignment vessel's pilot ladder. The launchmaster must understand the complexities of the sea state, weather conditions, implications of the

vessel's size and wake on the interaction with the pilot boat stability, the timing of the transfer, and consider the fitness and skills of the pilot boarding the vessel, all in the interest of safety. This complex combination requires both decisive and split second decision-making to ensure the safety of all involved. The rapid action requires a high level of cognitive and physical acuity. The demand creates a potential for a stressful work environment. This type of skill and leadership qualities are unique due to the high-risk nature of the job is another challenging personnel constraint in recruitment.

### 3. Stress or strain in working conditions

As described in the above secondary factor of a high level of expertise, the potential for stress and both physical and mental strain under these working conditions is high. The 2014 Employee Engagement Survey Summary Report identified that employees' ranked stress was a top-three barrier that affects employees across all functional positions. Their source of stress is a combination of the nature of their work tasks, the work environment they are required to function within, and the level of support they receive in performing these duties. An employee who is lacking in stress coping mechanisms is likely to succumb to the pressure of the workplace without extensive support in place from colleagues, management or other administrative resources.

Workload is typically considered from the perspective of overload; however, the impact of work 'underload' can be a significant strain on an employee and induce stress. (Shultz, Wang, & Olson, 2009) Long work periods of inactivity highlighted by sharp peaks of high intensity activity can test an employee's stress coping mechanisms. This is applicable to all operational employees – pilots, pilot boat crew, and dispatchers.

Collectively, their duties require a constant level of monitoring and attention in between bursts of highly intense activity. This is of particular concern to those working night shifts where there is typically less social interaction and physical cues of sleep that need to be combated continuously.

The administrative personnel face the stress and strain obstacles that are more heavily cognitive and emotionally-based than physical in comparison to the operationally based crew. They are faced with the stress of working within a lean organizational structure where each position is multifunctional due to the lack of overt redundancy in job tasks. This model can lead to long work hours and a ‘drowning’ feeling due to the seemingly insurmountable workload. Additionally, as a regulated monopoly, the administrative decision-making has grand consequential impacts on the operation of the pilotage service and this has a spillover effect on the commercial shipping industry and marine stakeholder community.

#### 4. External stakeholder pressure

The Atlantic Canadian coastline is vast and as such its commercial activity is growing. Maritime shipping plays an integral role in local, national and international commerce, and pilotage is a critical player in the success of the commercial vessels arriving safely in port to do business. The customers of the APA are thus either commercial shipping clients or non-commercial clients who require pilotage services in order to safely transverse through the local waterways in the interest of public and environmental safety. Both types of customer are required to pay for pilotage service through pilotage tariffs. As previously mentioned the APA is financially self-sufficient and as such generates all



of its revenue from pilotage tariffs.

“The entire cost of the pilotage operation in Atlantic Canada is paid for by the users of the service. This is truly a user pay service, and one in which the user has a great deal of input into the service being delivered” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2012, p. 13).

The tariffs are approved by the Canadian federal government and must reflect the operational costs the Authority has in each district. Therefore, the structure of the tariff each year must take into consideration a multitude of complex factors. In a general sense, the APA must utilize a cost sensitive strategy for valuating tariffs. The largest external stakeholder in the cost of tariffs is the commercial ship owners and for this reason they prefer a high ratio of pilotage resources to ensure a safe and efficient delivery of their vessel; however, they want it at a low-service price.

“Demand for the services of the Authority is determined by the shipping industry, over which the Authority has little or no control.” Further, “the consultative relationship that has been established with stakeholders allows the Authority to keep current with the needs, issues, and concerns of its customers” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2012, p. 8).

This conflicting dynamic between meeting customers’ needs and ensuring operational efficiencies has been a source of continuous negotiation and debate which challenges the APA’s organizational values and mandate of providing a safe pilotage service.

5. Strict adherence to rules and regulation with an emphasis on a due diligence safety culture

The *Pilotage Act* and other federal regulation dictate that marine pilotage is a mandatory service. This, in conjunction with an already highly regulated maritime shipping industry, creates a work environment in which the APA faces immense legislative pressure to work within the confines of both maritime and federal regulations. Despite the pressures faced from external stakeholders, as previously mentioned, the APA is mandated to work independently of these pressures in order to preserve a safe and efficient service guided by the regulating controls in place.

“If a private sector enterprise were delivering the service, there could be commercial pressure to engage in practices that may not be in the public interest. The APA must act in a fair and reasonable manner, but is in a better position to withstand such commercial pressure and act in the public interest” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2012, p. 14).

The strict adherence to rules and regulations is firmly rooted in promoting a due diligent safety culture. The APA must report its safety record to the Minister of Transport on an annual basis (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014).

“The Authority’s mandate is to operate an efficient pilotage service in the interest of safety. There may be many interpretations of safety, but to the Authority it relates to safety of the ocean, harbour, and river environments within its mandated areas; the safety of coastal communities that may be adversely affected by marine disasters or loss of commercial activity; the safety of mariners, both those

employed by the Authority and those aboard vessels calling in Atlantic ports; and the safeguarding of the business environment that relies on the shipping industry” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority Corporate Plan Summary, 2012, p. 14).

This strict due diligence is to protect the interest of the APA personnel. Of growing concern amongst maritime professionals is the severity of the repercussions for not employing due diligence practices to mitigate the risk of a marine incident. The increasing liability of mariners, ship owners and organizational executives is a real risk due to the increasing trend toward criminalization (Chalos & Parker, 2011). For this reason, the APA must employ a high level of due diligence in their operations, which increases the workload at all steps in the service process.

These categories are qualitative descriptions of the working environment and the workload APA employees are experiencing daily. In combination, these categorical factors lend evidence of the potential for employees to experience burnout due to the demands and pressures of the workload and the associated strain on the employees. Specifically, there is evidence of role conflict, as employees have to navigate the competing demands of the job. The challenge to do so is layered with the constraints on resources facing the organization, not due to lack of social support from the organization but rather due to the independent nature of many of the roles within the organization and the unpredictability of the operation. From this perspective, the lack of ability to control the variability in the work can create stress and strain in the work environment as well. These are all contributing factors that can influence the employee’s level of emotional exhaustion.

## Theme 2: Employee-Organization Congruence Factors

The key categories identified in the historical document pertaining to the dimension of depersonalization are not only connected to the spillover effects of emotional exhaustion but also influenced by factors relating to control, fairness, values and community. Based on the knowledge gained in the literature review and throughout the thematic analysis process, the following categories are observed as a result of the job characteristics and influences theme. As Maslach (2001) describes, a high frequency of emotional exhaustion factors impacts the level of depersonalization factors, which in turn influence the feelings of misalignment between employee and organizational values.

### 1. Decision-making autonomy

From the vast research on the importance of decision-making authority on job satisfaction, it is valuable to highlight the frequency of mentions of context related to autonomous management. Research done by Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001) states that burnout is higher among employees who possess an external locus of control rather than an internal locus of control. Autonomous decision-making can affect each of these two types of employees differently when it comes to coping mechanisms for stress. As evident in the archival documents, stress is occurring as a result of the employees' feelings of a lack of control and influence within the organization. "The higher level of responsibility ranked [as the] third [barrier] according to respondents and speaks to the level of autonomy across all positions within the APA" (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014, p. 8). For example, pilots have the professional capacity to make high-risk decisions in executing their daily job in the interest of safety. However, it appears that the

same discretion is not given when it comes to some company policy. From an APA management perspective, there are many influential factors contributing to the company policy creation – restrictive rules and regulations, an emphasis on due diligence safety culture and three collective agreements to name a few. These constraints make it more complex for a collaborative decision-making process in all instances.

According to the internal 2014 APA Employee Engagement Survey, employees are communicating feelings of a lack of control due to the governing policies and practices. Much of the time these policies and practices have been in place for a many years and have continued to be put into practice due to the lack of obvious problems to evoke revamping.

Building on the extensive external stakeholder consultative process, the APA has increased the frequency of collaborative decision-making forums through formal employee group meetings and also through an increase in informal discussions between management and employees to gain a better sense of how they, as the experts in their field, see the way forward. Popular research suggests that this active participation in decision-making has been shown to mitigate burnout symptoms by increasing employees' feelings of control. Employees who are also invited to participate in decision-making processes feel a greater sense of fairness in organizational processes.

## 2. Identified Physical and Social Gaps

The Authority's physical geographical area of jurisdiction is vast, spanning all waters in and around the Atlantic provinces. As defined by the *Pilotage Act*, the APA area of operation has been designated to 17 compulsory pilotage areas, which requires

employees to be based in the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island (see Appendix C- Compulsory Pilotage Map).

With the head office stationed in Halifax, NS, this employee sprawl creates an evitable challenge for managing and maintaining employee engagement. Additionally, pilots are typically dispatched to their duty assignments out of their homes creating an independent working situation. The employee pilot groups within the region utilize a shared local pilot office for completing paperwork and hosting district pilot group meetings. This prevents the challenge of silo style decision-making. For this reason, each district pilot group appoints a district pilot chair that interfaces to the office as a representative of the pilot group. This is logistically advantageous as this Chair, on behalf of the district group, can travel to meetings with stakeholders or management to participate in collaborative decision-making. However, this can present another challenge relative to in-group dynamics where either groupthink may be present, or the opinions of the minority are not being represented at these meetings. If an employee is of the social minority opinion, in combination with being at a vast geographical distance from head office, there is a real threat of employee disengagement due to feelings of lack of fairness, alienation or marginalization.

Perceptions of a lack of fairness intensify feelings of organizational cynicism due to the emotional exhaustion created from the high level of frustration or conflicting values. These feelings of unfairness can contribute to a widening of the social gap within a group and further dividing individuals into smaller minority subcultures. This is destructive to a community as feelings of frustration and hostility become chronic due issues going unresolved. This in turn decreases the likelihood of the in-group social

support and that can lead to cynical behaviours towards colleagues and the organization (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Additionally, the geographical gaps perpetuate the social gaps, as due to the 24/7/365 operational schedule, it is impossible for the APA to host a social event in which all employees could attend. The APA operational service commitment limits the amount of employees who can take time off and as such limits the accessibility of programs and initiatives to the employee group in its entirety. This presents an obvious challenge for building a community work-life, where employee identifies with the organization in a stronger way than they would with their job or local peer group. However, due to the nature of the pilotage service being an integral component in the economic wellbeing of the port, the APA employees have great connections to the local stakeholders within their district.

### 3. Control over time, complexity and variety of work

As previously mentioned, the level and frequency of pilotage service APA provides is dependent on the external port traffic. This is one of the major reasons why the APA is so heavily involved in a stakeholder consultation process. In addition to strengthening operational partnerships, the consultation helps in the strategic planning process for the Authority. Due to our financial self-sufficiency, the Authority's only revenue stream is pilotage tariffs, therefore all operational, administrative and other costs are budgeted based on the projected tariff revenue for the year. The key to the strategic planning and budgeting process is working with external stakeholders to get a sense of their anticipated arrivals, departures and moves within the various ports within the APA

jurisdiction. Despite this extensive consultation process, there is still a high level of variability possible due to external factors affecting ship traffic to our port. These factors of weather, mechanical failures, crew or passenger delays or project related delays amongst others all impact the timing of the volume of assignments on any given day.

"You have to be prepared for anything. When you leave home in the morning you have no idea what you're going to be piloting by the afternoon. It's certainly an adventure. I've piloted everything from a Hydrofoil doing 55 knots, a submerged submarine, a destroyer, cargo ships and tall ships. Everyday there's something new" (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2011, p. 7).

This variability can put stress on all departments within the APA due to the immense connectivity between employee functions supporting the pilotage service. This unpredictability creates sharp spikes in work intensity, which the employee cannot predict or plan. This, in conjunction with the pressure to be continually connected and available, puts employees at a great risk of exhaustion and in turn can cause them to become cynical towards the particular stress factor; in this case their job or the organization. This was evident in the 2014 Employee Engagement Survey report:

"It is evident by our spanning age demographic that there is a generation gap in our employee base. The movement toward a more stable work-life balance is something that the younger generations are placing increasing value on. Less and less do we see employees who are not actively using their vacation time and there is less desire for working overtime as in the past. This cultural shift is not something that is unique to our organization, but rather a generational culture shift



spanning all employment types in the marine industry, specifically where time on and time off is a key driver in employee satisfaction” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014, p. 16).

In order to dilute feelings of stress and cynicism employees are now more than ever putting a stronger emphasis on a more structured work – life balance. APA employees value their time off and it is important for their physical and mental health that they are able to obtain it. However, due to the lean nature of our operation, employees are not always able to easily detach from the environment. For example, the operational management team is on call 24/7 due to the need to answer questions or solve operational issues, even on holidays or during scheduled vacations. For the pilots, there is a similar expectation level that they should assist in maintaining operations even in their off time. They are in no way obliged to do so when requested; however their dedication to their job and local community to keep traffic moving compels them to pitch-in. Depending on the employees’ individual level of emotional exhaustion and work value congruence with that of the expectations of the organizations, this continual work pattern can impact employee morale.

#### 4. Negative statements about culture, morale and employee retention

Historical discourse perpetuates cultural patterns in employee behaviours. This discourse is built over many years of a perceived mismatch between the employee and his or her job environment or organization. “There is a perception of an “invisible barrier” between management and employees, which is perceived to create obstacles as it relates to career advancement” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014, p. 10). According to Maslach

and Leiter (1997), the greater the mismatch between the employee and the job, the greater the likelihood of burnout. These mismatches occur when there are perceived breaches in the psychological contract between the employee and the organization. These breaches put employees into a situation where they are caught between conflicting values of their own and that of their responsibilities of the organization (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The discrepancy in values creates a conflict and validates the original historical discourse. This self-fulfilling prophecy makes it an increasing challenge for organizational leaders to make a positive impact on employee culture.

“A common theme throughout the survey is the low level of morale across the organization. A change in morale is not something that happened overnight and as such the current state of morale and culture has been built based on a long-standing history” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014, p. 14).

This is evidence that the high frequency of the aforementioned emotional exhaustion factors are contributing to the self-fulfilling nature of the feelings of low morale. A sprawling geographical jurisdiction creates pockets of employee cliques, where anyone new to that district is privy to the historical events and the impacts on their employee group. As employees seek to establish community relationships in order to feel part of the in-group, they tend to accept the discourse as historical truth. This creates a mental schematic lens through which employees view future organizational initiatives and events. When an employee is also plagued with emotional exhaustion symptoms, they in turn are more likely to have negative or even cynical feelings towards the organization.

### Theme 3: Professional Efficacy Influences

Maslach and Leiter's (1988) model of burnout conceptualizes the causal relationship of the three dimensions as building from emotional exhaustion. The sequence begins with high levels of exhaustion lead to raised levels of depersonalization, which in turn cause lower levels of personal accomplishment (efficacy) (Taris, LeBlanc, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 1988). However, some researchers have suggested that personal accomplishment as obtained through professional efficacy and are developed independent of the high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

The key categories identified in the historical document pertaining to this dimension are connected to the spillover effects of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but also independently influenced by external personal value factors as well as related to control, fairness, community and reward.

#### 1. Subculture Identification (Community)

Employee identification with a sub-culture over that of the organizational culture influences feelings of professional efficacy. It is evident that the APA workforce understands the importance of the type of work they are performing in order to keep the service going. “[A] high percentage of employees (87.6%) believes their role is “important for the efficient functioning of this company” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014, p. 11). However, there is an apparent disconnect with this notion and the confirmation of the value received from the organization for the work they do. This

mismatch creates a natural connection for the employee to their job and those colleagues who support that job, but a disconnect in their ability to identify with the organization.

## 2. Career development and job enrichment

The threat of new entrants or substitutes as competition for pilotage service is currently non-existent as the APA is a regulated monopoly in the Atlantic Provinces. This is unlikely to change in the near future due to the importance of the service provided under the current legislation. Therefore, if an employee wants to work in their particular function in pilotage then the APA must employ them. This is reflective of the APA's low turnover record amongst all functions of employment within the organization. The threat of flight is more likely for administrative employees whose skills transfer to parallel positions in other organizations, such as accounting or human resources positions. For operational personnel, such as pilots, pilot boat launch crew and dispatchers, their skills can certainly be employed in other marine organizations but not in a parallel capacity. The only threat of transfer would be to move to another pilotage authority elsewhere. Specifically, pilots are at a great moment in their career, where they have reached the highest level they can in their technical field. "People look up to a pilot in the marine industry. It's the pinnacle of a marine career" (Thompson, 2014, para. 5).

Within the APA, there is no room for upward career growth once they have achieved their full Class 'A' Unlimited pilotage licence. For this reason, it is increasingly important for the APA to ensure career development and job enrichment programs are utilized to continue to engage employees to maintain proficiencies, increase skill sets, and advance with the evolving marine industry.

“Outside those responsibilities are the “extra-curricular” activities such as the participation in port studies; infrastructure enhancements; environmental initiatives, etc. The Authority’s expertise is called upon regularly by the local maritime community and we should all be honoured by that” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014b, p. 2).

Professional efficacy is constrained for all levels within the organization due to the added complexity of the binding collective agreements, which limit APA management abilities to enrich job duties. Enrichment of duties can, at times, be perceived as an increase in job scope and for that reason have to be carefully navigated not to upset the established status quo agreements. A way to work around this is through stakeholder consultation as mentioned above, as it engages pilots or other employees in a unique project and gives them a sense of expert power. These sense of power, combined with helping the greater community, leads to a greater enrichment in their job.

### 3. Public and Private recognition

The document analysis also looked at historical open source documentation between 2009 and 2015. The frequency of public recognition appears to be more prevalent in the later years of this time period; however the 2014 Employee Engagement Survey Report highlighted employees’ feelings a lack of recognition overall. The appropriate frequency of recognition, whether private or public, is challenging to grasp as it walks a fine line between authentic and inauthentic praise.

For the APA, there appears to be a mismatch between the frequencies of recognition and what the employees need for self-fulfilment. “The priority areas for

improvements result in the low percentage (53.2%) of employees who feel that they are receiving meaningful?? praise and recognition for a job well done” (Atlantic Pilotage Authority, 2014, p. 7). In order to feel a sense of professional efficacy, research suggests employees require a combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards to feel motivated and satisfied in their job role. Aside from the efficacy that extrinsic monetary rewards promote in an employee, they also need the intrinsic rewards associated with feelings of being praised and valued for their effort at work (Khan, Zarif, & Khan, 2011). This is especially relevant to the APA as the employees’ perception is that they are making less money than their external mariner counterparts. Utilizing reward and recognition programs can be compelling to the motivation of employees with a high level of expertise.

“Many mariners at the Master level are gobbled up by the oil and gas industry, lured by the big salaries on the rigs. Griffiths says money isn’t the draw for marine pilots. “[It’s the] pride of knowing they put a ship alongside in a safe and efficient manner,” he explains” (Thompson, 2014, para. 5).

In a challenging work situation such as the complex operations of the pilotage service, the overwhelming demands that contribute to feelings of exhaustion and depersonalization are likely to erode an employee’s sense of professional efficacy. Thus, recognition becomes increasingly important to validate the employee’s positive contributions to the operation in order to encourage their future motivations to be aligned with that of the goals of the organization. Intrinsic incentives are tied to an individual’s motivation to complete the tasks assigned to them at the best of their ability, especially

when an organizational leader privately or publicly acknowledges the employee for their work. From this perspective, professional efficacy is established based on supervisory recognition and can lead to higher employee morale and increased performance levels (Khan, Zarif, & Khan, 2011).

#### 4. Employee Evaluation and Feedback platforms

Aligned with non-monetary recognition and job enrichment is the critical internal component of organizational leaders providing consistent levels of feedback and evaluation. The use of employee evaluation is twofold 1) it provides employees with a sense of the role they play in the bigger picture of the organization, and 2) sets expectations for the employee on how to align themselves with the strategic goals of the organization. The APA is employing several methods of employee evaluation and also there are feedback mechanisms in place for employees to open constructive dialogue with organizational leaders. Such initiatives include regular meetings with district pilot chairs and other employee groups. Also, it included the first ever formal employee engagement survey since the APA's inception in 1972. The collaborative and active use of employee communication forums engage an employee's sense of control and fairness by clarifying expectations and giving employees an opportunity to reduce some of their potential role conflicts.

#### Conclusion of Findings

Overall, the preceding review of APA documents demonstrates there is qualitative evidence of each of the three dimensions of burnout. Most notably is the high frequency of limiting job characteristics and influences that can have a direct impact on employee physical and emotional exhaustion levels. Building on this notion of emotional

exhaustion is the archival evidence of disconnection of the employee base from that of the organization. The text analysis provided clear and concise examples of the value incongruence or gaps between employees and management. As such the text describes scenarios in which attitudes of organizational cynicism are likely present. Interestingly, APA employees appear to have a strong sense of professional efficacy. They understand the value they bring to the organization through their role and draw a strong sense of community from their subculture employee groups. The evident problem is the lack of professional efficacy gained from the reward and recognition provided by organizational leaders. Additionally, there is qualitative evidence of a lack of organizational identification and this could be due to the “invisible barrier” or the “us versus them” mentality mentioned between employees and management.

Considering the vast literature supporting the casual relationship between the six areas of worklife for predicting the manifestation of Maslach’s three dimensions of burnout, it is logical to infer that from a qualitative perspective the case study organization is at risk of employee burnout. Also, as this research infers that organizational cynicism is a bi-product of the burnout dimensions, it is fair to say that signs of cynicism can be found within these findings as well.



## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR THE ATLANTIC PILOTAGE AUTHORITY

The result of this qualitative study examining burnout, within the conditions of this particular case study, yielded important findings that have implications for future best practice and policy development within the APA. Mainly, in order to diminish observable attitudes of organizational cynicism, the APA should address the warning signs of burnout.

In order to counter burnout predictors, the APA should focus on establishing a work environment that promotes energy, involvement, and efficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). In order to move toward these three ideals, the APA needs to set realistic expectations for employees and also develop initiatives that implement theoretical drivers of engagement – organizational commitment, job satisfaction or job involvement by addressing aspects of the six areas of worklife (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). To realistically do so requires a mutual and a collaborative effort between the employees and the organization to ideally create a “sustainable workload, feelings of choice and control, appropriate recognition and reward, a supportive work community, fairness and justice, and meaningful and valued work” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 417). Due to the service orientation of the APA operation, it would not be a viable option to mitigate all of the stress factors associated with the burnout category of workload entirely. The nature of the business is such that it is a high-risk, service-oriented environment that has to employ a strategic low-cost and efficient (or lean) means of operating. However, by engaging in support initiatives, the employee community can thrive despite constrained resources. Additionally, by enhancing the feeling of employee choice and control over

their work outcomes, APA management could mitigate negative feelings of fairness and justice. The employees' sense of genuine involvement in the decision-making process enriches their levels of engagement both in their job and in the APA. Finally, by providing a genuine and an appropriate level of recognition and reward, employees may experience a greater feeling of appreciation and value for their effort.

Taking the aforementioned constructs into consideration is the first foundational step towards the development of a strategic plan. The unique combination of the 'right' strategic plan can be successful under two parameters, 1) the leadership and employees are receptive to the initiatives and 2) they understand that not all initiatives will be the right fit for the organization at first. Finding the appropriate combination of these initiatives in time can equate to the reduction of the risk level of burnout and observable organizational cynicism.

The following are some of the key considerations for future engagement initiatives at the APA:

1. Setting clearly defined parameters and expectations

To improve the employee-organization value congruence, it is crucial for employees to understand the bigger picture of the organization and how their role fits into it. The clear communication of expectations and the consistent practice of these values by those in leadership roles is key. Some of the expectations that should be conveyed are:

- There is no such thing as a ‘one-size fits all’ solution. The APA is a very unique organization and strategic engagement solutions must be innovative in order to fulfill the wide spectrum of needs of the APA employee population.
- Burnout symptoms and subsequent behaviours cannot be resolved overnight. Rooted in gradual historic discourse, burnout symptoms and in turn cynical organizational attitudes have slowly become apparent. As such, there need to be a gradual process towards mitigation of these observable behaviours once a strategic plan is in action.
- Finally, and possibly the most important to recognize, is that employees and organizational leaders alike must buy into embracing a trusting relationship with a forward thinking goal of letting go of the past and looking to the future.

## 2. Consistent and concise communication is key

Internal communication is one of the most important strategic initiatives towards reducing feelings of burnout and increasing engagement. This helps the employees to understand the vision for the organization and the incremental strategic steps that organizational leaders plan to take in order to achieve these goals. Employees that understand the bigger picture of the organization is more likely to understand how their job duties contribute to that goal. By understanding the values of the organization, the employees may be able to find a shared sense of purpose in their work and embrace them equally. By embracing these values in their everyday work they become an asset to the organization and also as ambassadors for the organization to external stakeholders.

Also, by providing consistent communication with an appropriate level of

transparency, it provides a mechanism for combating historical and ongoing informal discourse created through the rumour mill and speculation amongst those groups who are at a vast geographical distance from the management team in head office.

Overall, rich communication initiatives, through employee email notifications, internal website postings, town hall meetings and an increased district visit schedule by management creates a platform for better connection of employee-organization values. In time, this could increase feelings of organizational commitment.

### 3. Promotion of fairness and equity

It is important for organizational leaders to continually ensure that all employees, regardless of job function, have equal access to employee communication forums and also organizational recognition programs.

The continuation of annual and semi-annual formal meetings between management and functional employee groups is a good means of promoting and exhibiting a fair and equitable workplace. These meetings provide a communication platform for employees to discuss the successes and issues of their specific working group. It also provides management with an opportunity to connect with this group of employees, who may be residents of another district, to convey organizational goals and receive feedback on areas that require further investigation. Some of these issues may currently be contributing to employee burnout and by addressing and resolving them management can mitigate organizational some stressors or pain points. The continuity provided by scheduled formal meetings with collaborative action items that are resolved and communicated back to the employee group is critical the reestablishment of trust in the organization.

From a management perspective, we need to be mindful of ensuring recognition of all levels of employees in a public forum. As our core business is marine pilotage, often the pilots receive the most public praise in the media. Ensuring to recognize the supporting cast of employees promotes feelings of professional efficacy, fairness and genuine sense of community both to the employees and the public.

#### 4. Increasing participation in decision making

One of the key findings from this research is that a sense of control in one's job duties and subsequent outcomes is of critical importance to reducing stress and strain, and cynical attitudes, and thus increasing professional efficacy. The nature of the operation of the APA is such that it is rooted in legislation and restrictive regulations in the interest of safety. For this reason, many safe operating procedures or other various company policies limit the potential for collaborative decision making and are more conducive to smaller, specialty decision-making committees. However, there are many other facets of the employees' daily interactions with their working environment in which they can have opportunities to make their own choices and the freedom to influence the outcome of their actions. An employees' intrinsic motivation and provide high levels of reward provide a sense of power to overcome obstacles faced within the work environment. The ability to remove obstacles on their own accord reduces employees' frustration levels and can provide relief to exhaustion pain points.

APA management should encourage active participation in decision-making, whether it is through formal or informal channels. This is beneficial for management as it enables a higher level of employee accountability as a result of being involved in the strategic planning. This can be done through increased consultation with the impacted employee

groups when making a change to a safe operating procedure, or by inviting employees to the head office to discuss how the APA should react to a particular upcoming industry change that may impact the operation.

#### 5. Increasing feedback about performance and goal setting

The increase in decision-making would be a positive step towards a collaborative and communicative working environment. Moreover, it is critical that communication is a two-way street. Employee feedback mechanisms need to be open to enable a conversation between employees and management. This increases the level of engagement for those employees who are at a greater geographical distance and, in time, can help to bond subculture employee groups to that of an organizational identity.

To support this notion, APA management should facilitate a structured career development and goal setting or coaching program that goes beyond the basic annual performance review. The performance evaluation process should be an incremental process where employees both evaluate their own performance over the past year and set goals for the next operational year. The employees would evaluate themselves in particular performance areas relevant to their job. They would then submit this to their direct manager for review and comment. The manager in turn would provide their evaluation and a private meeting would occur to discuss the desired outcomes. Based on this conversation the employees would have a better understanding of their strengths, areas requiring improvement and potentially an idea for stretch goals for the next operational year. A manager will provide the stretch goals that the employee is capable of achieving based on the foundation of skills and expertise they currently possess, but also challenges them to apply those skills in a new way. The employees would then set their

professional goals for the next year, and discuss these with their manager. Collaboratively, they would agree on the goals, set deadlines for achieving those goals and also agree upon meeting dates through the year to check up on the progress of the goals. This continual revisiting of performance and goals throughout the year provides a better picture for the manager on employees' performance and also reaffirms expectations for both the employees and the manager. This process helps to enrich employees' job satisfaction. It can also bring to the light challenges and potential warning signs of burnout.

#### 6. Job enrichment initiatives

Active participation in decision-making initiatives can serve as the foundation for job enrichment initiatives. With many APA employees being at the top of their game, it is increasingly important to encourage a continuous learning environment. Engaging our employees in special projects with external stakeholders will enrich their professional efficacy and sense of job satisfaction. Utilizing their expertise in the industry, APA employees can provide an alternative perspective to key customer projects. It is through these projects that the APA connects to the local communities that we work in. The more we promote and explain how our service is integral to the economic functioning of the local port and businesses, the greater our public support becomes.

#### Embracing a better work-life balance

Increasing feedback for performance-based goal setting provides employees with a clear objective to work towards daily. To ensure employees can meet these objectives, management needs to provide adequate resources to meet that demand. One of which is

setting boundaries and encouraging work-life balance. By setting boundaries for work versus rest time it allows for employees to properly recoup from the stress and strain of their job. However, as is evident from this research, the constraining resources do not allow for an overabundance of human resource redundancy and, as such, employees are still being subjected to overtime and a varying work schedule. Yet, a strategic recommendation to mitigate the feelings of burnout is the efficient use of a leave management system. If utilized properly, it can aid in the sharing of information for scheduled leave time amongst employee groups so employees do not have to have leave time declined or be called back last minute from vacation to assist with fulfilling operational requirements unless it is an emergency. Finding efficiencies in scheduling, approving and communicating leave will help the APA support better work-life balance.

#### 7. Collaborative efforts to find efficiencies - work smarter, not harder

Aligned with job enrichment initiatives and seeking a better work-life balance is the notion of working smarter, not harder. In order to flush out the inefficiencies in the operations, the APA management needs to engage the employees in a joint initiative to break down inefficient systems and rebuild them into appropriately scaled high performance work systems. A joint effort can lead to “creative, empowered work forces, greater efficacy and [a] higher quality [of work]” (Beach & Kaboolian, 2005 p. 5). The notion of empowering employees to improve their workplace is vitally important due to the complexity of the operation and the level of expertise they must have to fulfil their duties. A joint task force could promote a high level of involvement that could build



relationships, debunk notions of a hidden agenda and potentially result in a more positive belief in the social support management is providing.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

There are limitations to utilizing this methodological approach. First, the findings rely completely on the researcher to interpret and link the data to themes and theoretical models. Secondly, as the historical documents have been written by someone other than the researcher, it is fair to assume that the documentation are not necessarily accurate or complete accounts of the events that have previously occurred (Bowen, 2009).

It is important to underscore that the practical applications prescribed for the APA are unique and might therefore not be applicable to other organizational settings. This study provides suggestions on interpretation of findings based on one viewpoint on the literature. The qualitative research methodology has potential to be transferable to another organizational case study however the interpretation is more likely to only be applicable to future consistent research for the APA.

As an aside, it is important to note that this approach would be more complex, challenging and time consuming with a larger data set (Corbin and Strauss 2008, p.17). The study is exploratory in nature and the contribution comes from the insights provided and the direction for possible next steps.

## FUTURE ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND CONSIDERATIONS

Future academic research and considerations could be given to the development of an adapted model for qualitative thematic analysis utilizing archival documents in conjunction with any one of the multiple theoretical frameworks on this subject matter.

As an expansion on the current research, it would be interesting to complete a similar method of study taking into consideration a larger historical time range to see how deep-rooted the symptoms of organizational cynicism go and if the changing industry has impacted the level of burnout in employees over the years. Additionally, as it was not within the scope of this research to quantitatively confirm the presence and extent of burnout and organizational cynicism, future research could investigate this idea. In order to do so, I recommend hosting focus groups with employees to unpack the findings of the 2014 Employee Engagement Survey Report. This validation measure would help to understand the extent to which the recommendations from this archival research will help in creating a more engaged workforce.

The detailed recommendations and suggested plan for future research continuation are intended to be presented to the APA senior management team as a starting point for uncovering the why and how of the development of organizational cynicism as it relates to burnout. This research in conjunction with related future research will help to find the root of the problem with the positive intention of utilizing the knowledge to move towards a more engaged and healthy workforce.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research on organizational cynicism at the Atlantic Pilotage Authority has brought to light warning signs for the potential for employee burnout. The acknowledgement of such evidence, and consideration of the strategic and practical recommendations to APA management, could be this is the first step towards a more engaged and healthy workforce into the future

## APPENDICES

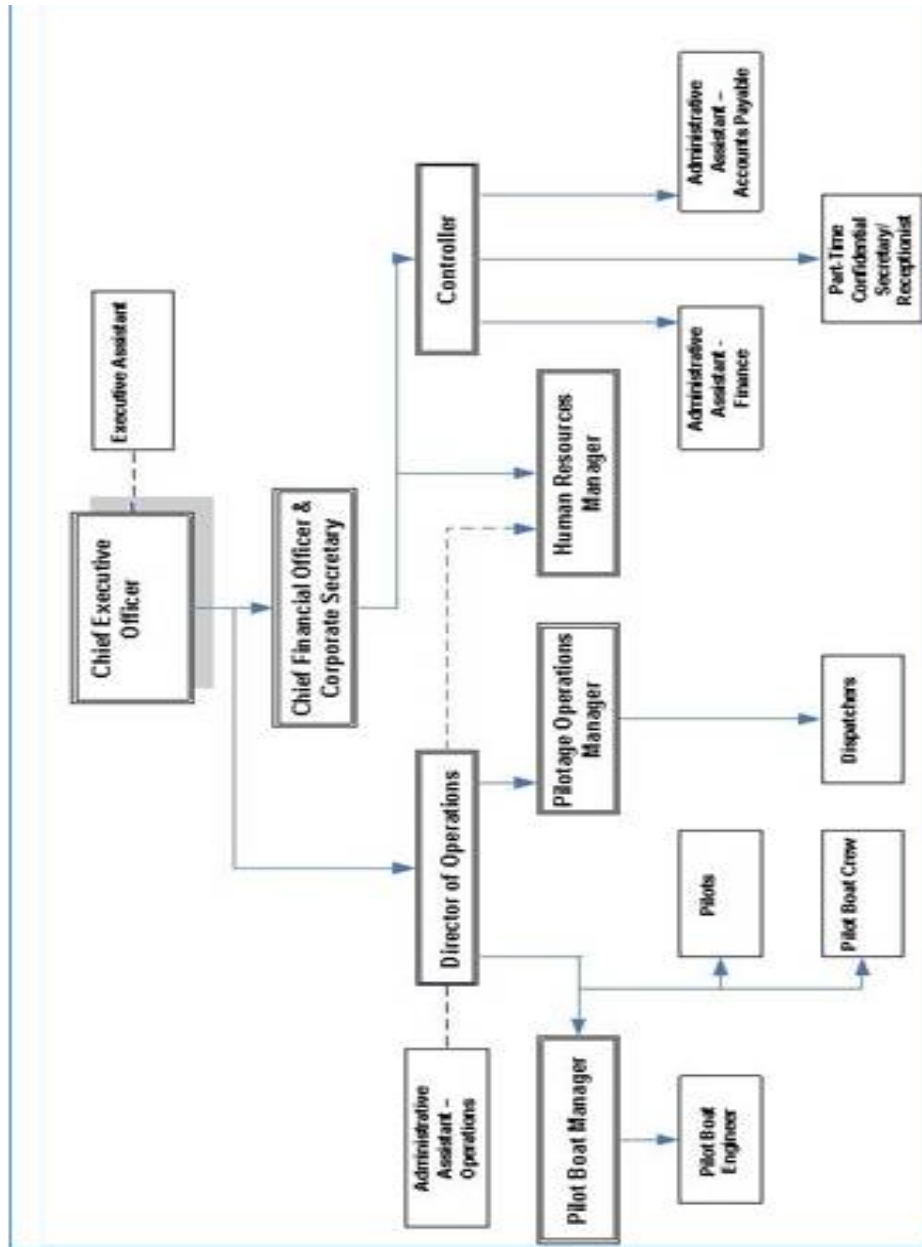
### APPENDIX A-1 – LIST OF ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

| <b>Archival Document Selected</b>  |
|--|
| 2014 Atlantic Pilotage Authority Employee Engagement Survey Summary Report |
| 2012-2016 Atlantic Pilotage Authority Corporate Plan Summary               |
| Atlantic Pilotage Authority Annual Report 2014                             |
| Atlantic Pilotage Authority Annual Report 2011                             |
| Atlantic Pilotage Authority Annual Report 2009                             |
| “The Dispatch” Newsletter 2014   |
| “The Dispatch” Newsletter 2011   |
| “Bringing the Tankers Through” by John Cheeseman for The Charter           |
| “Saltwater Cowboys” by Kathi Thompson for Halifax Magazine                 |
| “Safe in the harbor” by Suzanne Rent for Port of Halifax Magazine          |

APPENDIX A-2 – ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT SUMMARY

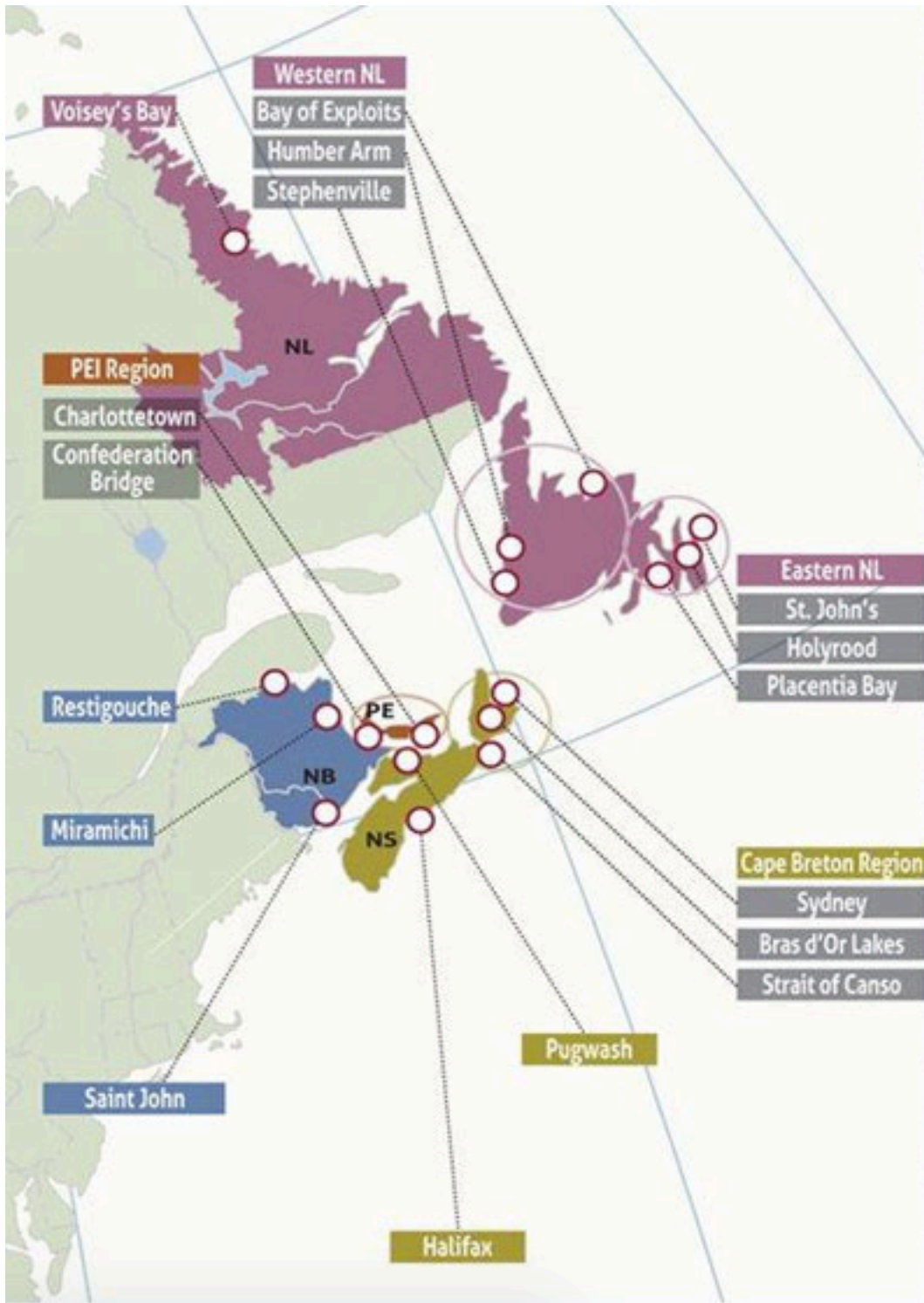
| Maslach Burnout Dimensions<br>(Theoretical Framework) | Emotional Exhaustion                | Depersonalization                             | Lack of Personal<br>Accomplishment   |    |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Themes  | Job Characteristics and Influencers | Employee-Organizational<br>Congruence Factors | Professional Efficacy<br>Influencers |    |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Maslach Burnout Sub-dimensions<br>(A priori category) |                                     |   |                                      |    |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   | Workload                            | Control                                       |                                      |    |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   |                                     | Fairness                                      |                                      |    |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   |                                     | Community                                     |                                      |    |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|   |                                     |   | Reward                               |    |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Context Unit (Codes)                                  | 1                                   | 2   | 3                                    | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| Qualitative Coding Unit                               | 1                                   | 2   | 3                                    | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 2014 Employee Engagement Survey Report                | 2                                   |   |                                      | 3  | 1  | 2  | 2 | 3 |   | 1  | 4  | 1  |    | 3  | 1  |
| 2012-2016 Corporate Plan Summary                      | 4                                   | 9   | 3                                    | 1  | 9  | 3  |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Annual Report 2014                                    | 7                                   | 6   | 2                                    |    | 3  | 4  |   | 1 |   |    |    |    | 3  |    |    |
| Annual Report 2011                                    | 4                                   | 3   | 2                                    | 4  | 2  | 2  |   | 1 | 1 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Annual Report 2009                                    |                                     | 6   |                                      |    | 2  | 2  |   | 1 |   |    |    |    | 2  |    |    |
| "The Dispatch" Newsletter (2014)                      | 1                                   | 1   | 1                                    | 1  |    | 2  |   |   |   |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |
| "The Dispatch" Newsletter (2011)                      | 1                                   | 5   | 1                                    |    |    | 1  |   |   |   |    | 1  | 1  | 1  | 2  |    |
| "Bringing the Tankers Through" The Charter            | 1                                   | 1   | 4                                    | 5  |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| "Saltwater Cowboys" Halifax Magazine                  |                                     | 1   | 2                                    | 4  |    |    |   |   | 1 | 1  |    | 1  | 3  |    |    |
| "Safe in the harbour" Port of Halifax Magazi          | 2                                   | 1   | 9                                    |    | 1  | 2  |   |   |   |    |    |    | 2  | 2  |    |
| Frequency Grand Total                                 | 22                                  | 33  | 24                                   | 18 | 18 | 18 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 2  | 6  | 3  | 11 | 10 | 2  |

APPENDIX B – ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Source: An unofficial mockup of the APA Organizational Chart

## APPENDIX C – COMPULSORY PILOTAGE AREA



Source: <https://www.atlanticpilotage.com/eng/compulsory-areas/index.htm>

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