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# The Dispositional Approach to Job Satisfaction: Trait or State?

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The Dispositional Approach to Job  
Satisfaction: Trait or State?

A Thesis

Presented to the  
Department of Psychology  
and the Faculty of the Graduate College  
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Sharlyn K. Whigham

May, 1991

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## Abstract

Job satisfaction has been one of the most extensively researched areas of Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Although situational influences on job satisfaction have traditionally been the primary focus of research, Staw and Ross (1985) asserted that job satisfaction may be determined as much by personal dispositions as situational factors. Specifically, they proposed that an individual's predisposition toward optimism or pessimism is a critical determinant of job satisfaction. However, subsequent empirical investigations purporting to test the influence of the trait-like predisposition of optimism/pessimism have employed measures of positive and negative affective states. This study attempted to disentangle the influence of temporary negative and positive affective states from optimistic/pessimistic predispositional traits, on levels of job satisfaction. It was predicted that a stable optimistic/pessimistic predispositional trait would be a stronger predictor of subsequent job satisfaction than temporary positive and negative affective states. Subjects were 930 employees of a large government agency in the Midwest. The results of regression analyses provided evidence that positive affect was a better predictor of job satisfaction than optimism. Negative affect did not contribute to levels of job satisfaction.

The Dispositional Approach to Job  
Satisfaction: Trait or State?

Introduction

Job satisfaction has been one of the most extensively researched areas in Industrial/Organizational psychology. Over 15 years ago Locke (1976) estimated that more than 3,000 articles had already been written on the various aspects of job satisfaction. Locke defined job satisfaction as a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300).

Implicit in Locke's definition are the roles of both situational and dispositional factors in predicting job satisfaction. Most of the research to date has focused on the situational antecedents of job satisfaction such as pay, type of supervision and other characteristics of the organization (see Locke, 1976 for a review). The role of dispositions, or characteristics of individuals, in understanding and predicting job satisfaction has received very little empirical attention.

Weiss and Adler (1984) and Schmitt and Pulakos (1985) have criticized this exclusive focus on situational antecedents of job satisfaction. These researchers have encouraged greater attention to the dispositional approach to job satisfaction. According to Weiss and Adler (1984), the unpopularity of the dispositional approach is primarily due to a lack of research and serious theorizing, and an

almost exclusive focus on situational characteristics. As such, the role of dispositions in the workplace has been the focus of relatively few investigations.

#### Overview of Dispositional Approach to Job Satisfaction

The dispositional approach, according to Staw and Ross (1985), involves measuring personal characteristics which can help to explain individual attitudes and behavior. The dispositional approach to studying job satisfaction argues that an individual's disposition may be as important as the characteristics of the workplace in determining attitudes about the workplace.

Staw and Ross (1985) proposed that dispositions, as a general category, include both stable individual characteristics (predispositions) as well as temporary moods (affective states). These dispositions, write Staw, Bell, and Clausen (1986), cause employees to "process information about the job in a way that is consistent with that disposition, and then experience job satisfaction or dissatisfaction as a result" (p. 61). In testing this statement, Staw and Ross (1985) asserted that a stable predisposition played a larger role than temporary affective states.

Due to the need for further empirical examination of dispositional antecedents of job satisfaction and the plethora of studies on situational antecedents, this study explored the dispositional side of the equation.

Specifically, the present investigation examined the differential effects of temporary affective states (positive and negative) and more stable predispositions (optimism and pessimism), on levels of job satisfaction. Two main questions were addressed. First, more generally, do any mood dispositions, temporary or stable, influence levels of job satisfaction? Second, are stable predispositions such as optimism and pessimism relatively more or less predictive of job satisfaction compared to positive or negative affect?

Significant findings for either question would imply that dispositional antecedents of job satisfaction deserve greater and more careful attention by job satisfaction theorists and practitioners. Specifically, one could argue that these or other dispositional antecedents should be measured anytime job satisfaction is assessed. The answers to the questions posed in this study also have prescriptive implications in that any intervention designed to increase job satisfaction, such as job redesign, might be doomed to failure if careful consideration of employee dispositions is ignored.

#### Differentiation Between Predispositions and Affective States

Whereas one of the goals of this study was to disentangle the influence of affective states from predispositional traits, this paper will first define several important terms. Next, given that one of the major

questions guiding the study is the extent to which there is empirical evidence that any mood disposition, whether it be an affective state or predispositional mood trait, significantly influences levels of job satisfaction, a review of the related evidence will be presented. The final section offers two possible explanations for the relationship between dispositions and job satisfaction, followed by the resulting hypotheses.

#### Mood Dispositions: State Versus Trait

As mentioned earlier, Staw and Ross (1985) wrote that mood dispositions could take the form of either a stable predispositional trait, or a temporary affective state. They went on to suggest that the stable predisposition involved in job satisfaction levels is an optimistic/pessimistic trait. Similarly, Schmitt and Pulakos (1985) suggested that an optimistic or pessimistic schema or predisposition may be the explanation for the congruence between being satisfied with life and being satisfied with the workplace. However, other researchers have investigated temporary positive and negative affective states as partial determinants of job satisfaction (Levin & Stokes, 1989; Watson & Clark, 1984; Witt & Beorkrem, 1989).

The argument advanced here is that there are two primary distinctions between optimism/pessimism and positive/negative affect. First, it is proposed that optimism/pessimism represents a more stable construct,

resistant to situational influences as compared to positive and negative affect which appear to represent more temporary fluctuating states. Second, there is a non-reciprocal relationship between states and traits. While traits may give rise to states, states do not have much influence on one's traits. Relatedly, affect is a contaminated measure because both traits and situational antecedents can influence it. Conversely, traits such as optimism/pessimism are not by definition influenced by situational forces or temporary states.

Positive and negative affect defined. Positive and negative affect are two dimensions that have been studied in a variety of research areas. In describing negative affect, Watson and Clark (1984) assert that persons with high negative affectivity (NA) experience feelings of nervousness, tension, distress and worry. Additionally, persons high in NA also report emotions such as anger, scorn, revulsion, self-dissatisfaction, guilt and a sense of rejection.

Conversely, low NA is characterized by calmness and serenity. However, the authors also point out that a high NA level does not necessarily mean the person will experience a lack of joy, excitement or enthusiasm, which suggests a construct independent of positive affect. NA has also been called neuroticism, trait anxiety, and general



maladjustment by other investigators (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989).

In contrast, Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) describe the characteristics of positive affectivity (PA) as a person's level of energy, excitement, and enthusiasm. Persons high in PA exhibit higher energy, greater concentration, and more pleasure in their activities. Low PA results in sadness and lethargy. Positive affect is often measured by extraversion and well-being tests. Negative and positive affect are generally believed to be two independent dimensions because researchers often report low or nonsignificant correlations between NA and PA scales (e.g., Harding, 1982; Perry & Warr, 1980; Warr, Barter, & Brownbridge, 1983).

As pointed out, NA has often been called neuroticism, while PA has been associated with extraversion. Both neuroticism and extraversion are considered personality traits. Therefore, there seems to be some confusion by researchers as to whether NA and PA are temporary states or stable traits. One of the most influential affect researchers, Alice Isen (1984) suggests that affective states "occur quite frequently, often in response to seemingly small everyday occurrences" and "these states do not interrupt our thought and behavior; rather, they gently color and redirect ongoing thoughts and actions" (p. 186).

This is in contrast to the current approach by Watson

and his colleagues (Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989; Watson & Tellegen, 1985) who confusingly view positive and negative affect as both stable traits (i.e., persistent differences in general affective level) and temporary states (i.e., transient fluctuations in mood). As their defense, Watson and Clark (1984) suggest that NA trait and state scales are repeatedly correlated with each other.

The stability of affect. In contrast to Watson and Clark (1984), however, and consistent with the definition of state versus trait, is the question of stability over time or circumstances. Several investigations have found variations in reported levels of PA. Positive affect seems to fluctuate both depending on the day of the week (Stone, Hedges, Neale, & Satin, 1985), and the time of the day (Clark & Watson, 1986; Watts, Cox, & Robson, 1983). Similarly, the level of NA also varies depending on the day of the week (Clark & Watson, 1988). As Clark and Watson (1988) explain, "PA ebbs and flows with the daily tide of events, whereas NA crashes upon us in times of trouble only to disappear just as quickly when the storm is over" (p. 305). Moreover, in validating the Positive Affect/Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS, Watson et al., 1988) the authors report that when assessing affect at a specific moment or day, over a two month test-retest interval, positive and negative affect were sensitive to fluctuations in mood.

These studies contribute to the notion that positive and negative affect display state-like transient qualities.

Additional support for the trait/state distinction can be derived from a study that examined the relationship between job satisfaction and affect. Hollingsworth, Matthews, and Harnett (1988) measured two aspects of affect, stress and arousal, over a period of 5 working days in a white-collar setting. Subjects' work involved non-repetitive technical drawing and planning. Although the authors found a relationship between levels of satisfaction and affect, job satisfaction appeared to be a stable characteristic over the 5 day period while affect was not, suggesting that affect showed a state-like variability.

In summary, although Watson and his colleagues (Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989; Watson & Tellegen, 1985) refer to positive and negative affectivity as both states and traits, the evidence suggests that they are temporary states and may change as a result of the influence from any number of endogenous or exogenous factors.

Optimism and pessimism defined. Optimism and pessimism are personality traits that reflect how people view the world. Optimists tend to view things in a positive light; they expect that good things will happen to them and that situations will work out for the best. Pessimists, on the other hand, anticipate negative outcomes; they believe that things will not go their way (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

A relationship between predispositions and affective states. Several investigations have found a correlation between NA and self-reported stress measures (see Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). Watson and Clark (1984) attribute this relation to the idea that people high in NA have a general negative view of their world and tend to complain frequently. Similarly, this seems to be reflective of persons shown to be predispositionally pessimistic. Pessimism is also characterized by a negative outlook, somatic complaining, and a general belief that situations will not turn out well (Scheier & Carver, 1985). However, Watson and his colleagues have failed to clearly distinguish between negative affectivity and pessimism. Based on a review of the literature they claim that there are three related bipolar areas: nervousness/calmness, dissatisfaction/satisfaction with oneself, and pessimism/optimism about the future. Using these dimensions, the terms NA and PA were established, presumably to include all three bipolar areas.

Relatedly, two recent studies were conducted by Levin and Stokes (1989) designed to investigate the role of NA as a dispositional influence on levels of job/task satisfaction. The authors hypothesized that compared to people with low NA, people high in NA would be relatively dissatisfied with a job or task. The first experiment was a lab study and used task design (enriched, unenriched) and

subjects' reported NA levels (high, low) in a factorial design. The enriched task used graduate student applications as stimulus materials and required the subjects to evaluate the files. The task was designed to focus attention on five core job characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980): challenge, identity, autonomy, significance, and feedback. The unenriched task sought to minimize attention to these dimensions by requiring the subjects to merely perform clerical tasks with an incomplete graduate application file. Subjects were then given a questionnaire based on the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980) to assess levels of job satisfaction. The subjects in this study were students who had scored in the upper or lower quartile of the Negative Affectivity Scale (NAS, Levin & Stokes, 1989). Results of the first study revealed that subjects high in NA described lower levels of job satisfaction than did subjects low in NA.

The second study was conducted in a field setting. The correlations between reported levels of NA and job satisfaction were assessed after variance attributable to job characteristics had been partialled out. Although NA was significantly predictive of job satisfaction, the percentage of variance accounted for was not large (4.5%).

A particularly interesting facet of the Levin and Stokes (1989) article is the Negative Affectivity Scale (NAS) which they designed. The questions contained in the scale are

reflective of items used in both traditional NA and PA scales (PANAS, Watson et al., 1988), and optimism/pessimism scales (Life Orientation Test (LOT), Scheier & Carver, 1985). Therefore, based upon this observation as well as previous research, it is critical that individual differences currently being attributed to NA and PA be differentiated from the predispositional traits of optimism and pessimism.

#### Evidence for Effects of Mood Dispositions on Job Satisfaction

The first question addressed in this study was whether dispositions in general influence levels of job satisfaction. Accordingly, empirical research will be examined which suggests a relationship between mood predispositions (optimism/pessimism) and affective mood states (PA and NA) on levels of job satisfaction.

#### Evidence for Mood Predispositions as Antecedents of Job Satisfaction

The stability of job satisfaction. The extent to which job satisfaction is stable across situations or time provides support for the impact of a stable predispositional antecedent. Several researchers have offered evidence supporting the stability of job satisfaction. In an early study, Schneider and Dachler (1978) found indications of the stability of job attitudes even in the presence of situational changes such as job reassignment and supervisor

rotations. Similarly, Staw and Ross (1985) found job satisfaction to be relatively stable over a 5 year period, even when individuals changed employers and/or occupations. Griffin (1988) also found that even when an organizational intervention (quality circles) increased job satisfaction in an industrial setting, reported satisfaction returned to the original levels after only 3 years.

Therefore, due to the support for the assertion that job satisfaction is relatively stable over time and across changing situations (Griffin, 1988; Schneider & Dachler, 1978; Staw & Ross, 1985) it is proposed that a relatively stable personality trait or predisposition impacts an individual's perception of job satisfaction, independent of situational demands.

Contrary to this, the use of traits or predispositions to understand and predict behavior has, in general, encountered some controversy in research. This began with Mischel's (1968) stance that personality traits do not account for much variance in behavior and are not consistent across situations. Despite this frequently accepted view, several investigators have found evidence supporting the notion that dispositional factors can predict behavior and can remain consistent across some situations (e.g., Aries, Gold, & Weigel, 1983; Bem & Allen, 1974; Monson, Hesley, & Chernick, 1982).

The effects of predispositions on job satisfaction.

Staw and Ross (1985) were among the first researchers to empirically examine the effects of predispositional factors on job satisfaction. Staw and Ross proposed that "there are stable individual characteristics that predispose people to respond positively or negatively to job contexts" and "that the predisposition to like or dislike jobs can be as important a determinant of job attitudes as the content of the job itself" (p. 471).

To test this assumption, Staw and Ross (1985) assessed prior attitudes in a longitudinal sample of 5000 men using a global job satisfaction question. These data were collected before testing for any changes in situational variables such as jobs, occupations, pay, and status. The regression analyses suggested that neither changes in pay nor job status predicted job satisfaction as well as prior attitudes. In other words, job satisfaction measured in 1966 was the strongest predictor ( $R = .276$ ,  $p < .01$ ) of 1971 job attitudes.

However, as Staw and Ross (1985) point out, using a one-item global satisfaction measure violates the argument for reliable, multi-method measurement of dispositions (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Additionally, their sample of men ranged in age from 45 to 59 which severely limits the generalizability of these results to women and younger men. Nevertheless, their findings point out the importance of



examining the relationship between dispositions and job attitudes.

In an attempt to replicate Staw and Ross (1985), Gerhart (1987) discovered contrary results. Using a younger sample (ages 14 to 21 in 1979 with follow-up in 1982) Gerhart measured global job satisfaction with the same one-item question used in Staw and Ross' (1985) study. Correcting for the effects of measurement error, regression analyses found that although previous job satisfaction predicted current job satisfaction, situational factors such as pay, status, and job complexity were stronger predictors. Gerhart criticizes Staw and Ross' (1985) study on numerous grounds, particularly the limited measures. He suggests that even if there is stability in the relative satisfaction of employees over time, the overall level of satisfaction will still be increased by job redesign efforts.

Lending support to the predispositional approach, Pulakos and Schmitt (1983) found that prior work expectations of successful work outcomes predicted subsequent job satisfaction. Using a sample of 341 recent high school graduates, the valences, instrumentalities, and need strengths (existence, relatedness, and growth) were measured. The authors suggested that a person's expectations (high instrumentality) concerning the degree to which a job will meet need strengths are positively correlated ( $r = .11$  to  $.28$ ) with subsequent job

satisfaction. Based on this research, Schmitt and Schneider (1983) assert that finding and hiring individuals with a predisposition for positive levels of job satisfaction would have obvious theoretical and practical implications.

In support of their earlier study, Schmitt and Pulakos (1985) proposed that certain individuals are predisposed toward satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The authors sought to show stability and generalization of people's satisfaction across different circumstances. The usual correlates of job satisfaction such as demographics, pay, tenure, and perceptions of task characteristics were statistically controlled. Schmitt and Pulakos found support for their hypothesis that life satisfaction predicts job satisfaction, and that there is "a unique general satisfaction component to the life and job satisfaction constructs" (p. 161). The authors explain that when an individual's general outlook is positive, experiences tend to be encoded in a positive manner. Therefore, the reported degree of satisfaction would be consistent with the individual's general schema.

In summary, although many researchers subscribe to Mischel's (1968) stance that personality traits do not account for much variance in behavior and are not consistent across situations, there is support for the assertion that job satisfaction is relatively stable over time and across changing situations (Griffin, 1988; Schneider & Dachler,

1978; Staw & Ross, 1985). Therefore it is proposed that a relatively stable personality trait or predisposition impacts an individual's perception of job satisfaction, independent of situational demands.

Related consequences of optimism/pessimism. Although the terms optimism and pessimism have become a part of our everyday vocabularies, their consequences have received very little empirical attention. What research exists has been primarily conducted in the health field. These studies tend to focus on issues such as whether an individual's outlook acts as a buffer against stress (Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986); whether it exhibits an influence on outcomes such as speed of recovery after illness (Scheier & Carver, in press); and whether it moderates levels of depression (Gaines & Carver, 1984).

Scheier and Carver (1985) tested the possibility that optimism may also regulate an individual's actions and perceptions. The authors reasoned that daily problems should be less disruptive and have less detrimental impact on optimists as opposed to pessimists. The purpose of their study was to investigate the effects of predispositional optimism/pessimism on symptom reporting. The authors devised a 12-item Life Orientation Test (LOT) that was administered to undergraduates during a stressful time in their lives: four weeks before the end of a semester and again on the last day of the semester. The physical symptom

checklist asked the subjects to indicate the degree to which they had been bothered by 39 common symptoms such as dizziness, blurred vision, muscle soreness, and fatigue. Results showed that individual differences in chronic optimism were negatively correlated with the development of physical symptoms. Those persons shown to be optimistic were less bothered by the development of physical symptoms than those who were less optimistic.

As a possible explanation for their results, Scheier and Carver (1985) suggested that optimism or hopefulness/confidence moderates one's responses to the discrepancies between present behavior and a goal or standard. When there is a hindrance to goal-attainment, the authors suggest that behavior is temporarily stopped in order to assess whether future efforts will be worthwhile. Optimists should be more likely than pessimists to determine that the obstacles can be overcome and, therefore, be more able to cope effectively with their problems than pessimists. As such, daily impediments should be less disruptive and have fewer negative consequences for the optimists than for the pessimists.

The outcome of the previous studies by Scheier and Carver (1985; in press), as well as other investigations showing the moderating effects of predispositions on stress and depression (Gaines & Carver, 1984; Scheier et al., 1986), may have important implications to other areas. If

optimists are less bothered by negative health situations, they may also be less bothered by negative job situations, and hence show greater job satisfaction.

There is some indirect support for this hypothesis from Seligman and Schulman's (1986) investigation into the effects of positive emotion on persistence. In a longitudinal study of 103 new life insurance agents, optimists remained in their jobs at twice the rate of pessimists, and sold more insurance than pessimists. It could also be argued that this lower turnover is attributable to increased job satisfaction felt by the optimistic sample.

The relationship between optimism/pessimism and coping. Optimism/pessimism has also been implicated in coping strategies. Congruent with the definition of optimism is the inclusion of positive beliefs. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) include in their definition of positive beliefs "those general and specific beliefs that serve as a basis of hope and that sustain coping efforts in the face of the most adverse conditions" (p. 159). Scheier et al. (1986) examined the impact of coping strategies of optimists and pessimists in a stressful situation. Their study was based on the suggestion by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) that positive beliefs can influence coping behaviors and reactions to stress. Scheier et al. hypothesized that as problem-solving coping is more likely to occur with persons

who expect to see a positive outcome, optimism would be predictive of dealing with stress in a problem-focused manner. The authors found support for this hypothesis, as well as a finding that "optimism may confer a coping advantage not only when something can be done to deal with the stressful event but also when the event is something that must be gotten used to" (p. 1260).

Following this reasoning that optimism acts as a coping strategy to reduce stress, and coping strategies influence levels of job satisfaction (e.g., Dorr & Vance, 1989; Ganster, Fusilier, & Mayes, 1986; Tombaugh & White, 1989), it is logical to ask if optimism independently affects levels of job satisfaction.

#### Evidence for Affective Mood States as Antecedents of Job Satisfaction

In an attempt to determine the role of individual affect in job satisfaction levels, Staw et al. (1986) examined both intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional characteristics using prior psychological assessment data from a collection of longitudinal studies. A factor analysis found 17 descriptions of affect that comprised a relatively stable positive and negative bipolar dimension. The authors found that persons scoring high on the positive affect dimension were more satisfied with their jobs than those scoring high on the negative affect dimension, and both significantly predicted job satisfaction. By virtue of longitudinal data,

Staw et al. (1986) also found that adult job satisfaction was significantly predicted by dispositions in early and late adolescence, an age prior to formal employment. They suggest that job experience therefore does not entirely explain job satisfaction.

Witt and Beorkrem (1988) also examined positive affective states in the workplace. These authors measured levels of positive affect in a military laboratory using the Positive Affect/Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS, Watson et al., 1988). Witt and Beorkrem found some evidence supporting the assertion that positive affect moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and other job attitudes.

When investigating the effects of positive affective states on task perceptions and task satisfaction, Kraiger, Billings and Isen (1989) manipulated positive affect using a short comedy film for half of their subjects. The subjects then performed a task, and rated their levels of task satisfaction and perceptions of the task characteristics. The subjects' predominant affective states were shown to influence the magnitude of their ratings. In this and other studies using such stimuli as picture slides, home appliances, task characteristics, and working environments, it was found that persons in a positive affective state evaluate stimuli more positively than persons in a neutral affective state (e.g., Isen & Shalcker, 1982; Isen, Shalcker,

Clark, & Karp, 1978; Kraiger et al., 1978). Similarly, persons shown to be high in positive affect may evaluate workplace stimuli more positively, and those with high negative affect may provide ratings in the opposite direction.

The relationship between affect and stress. Indirect support for the influence of positive and negative affect on levels of job satisfaction have also been found in studies examining stress. Stress typically occurs when the situation exceeds or threatens to exceed the person's ability to deal with it (Greenhaus, 1987; Selye, 1976).

Watson (1988) examined the relationship of positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) to stress and found that only the NA state was strongly related to perceived stress. However, the author suggests that NA and perceived stress may be "simply reflections of the same diffuse distress response" (p. 1028), which suggests that there may be some common underlying construct.

A similar study attempted to determine if negative affectivity is an underlying condition of job stress. Consistent with other researchers, Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, and Webster (1988) found a correlation between affect and self-reported degrees of job stress, as well as the stress measures themselves. The authors suggest that negative affectivity and perhaps positive affectivity are important constructs to measure when examining job stress.



Therefore, as affect has been found to moderate the impact of job stress, and job satisfaction is considered an outcome of job stress (see Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980), it is important to determine if affective states independently influence levels of job satisfaction.

#### Relative Predictive Power of Mood States Versus Mood Traits as Antecedents of Job Satisfaction

A literature search for any explicit comparisons of mood state versus mood trait influences on job satisfaction found no such study conducted to date. In the three studies that examined the effect of positive affect on job satisfaction, all found levels of job satisfaction significantly influenced by positive affect (Kraiger et al., 1989; Staw et al., 1986; Witt & Beorkrem, 1989). Similarly, the two studies which investigated negative affect showed evidence of a negative impact on job satisfaction (Levin & Stokes, 1989; Staw et al., 1986).

Correspondingly, the three investigations which examined the relationship between predispositions and job satisfaction found varying degrees of correlation (Gerhart, 1987; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1983; Staw & Ross, 1985).

Therefore, this begins to address the first major question of research put forth earlier: Does mood disposition, temporary or stable, influence levels of job satisfaction? Based on the empirical research reviewed, the answer would be "yes," but there is no clear evidence as to

whether these impacting mood dispositions are stable traits or temporary states. The second research question which remains to be addressed is whether optimistic/pessimistic predispositions exert relatively more or less predictive power over job satisfaction compared to positive or negative affect.

#### Implications of Predispositions and Affect as Antecedents of Job Satisfaction

The literature suggests that there is evidence for a dispositional approach to job satisfaction. As proposed, one of the major issues is whether this disposition is a trait or a state. Perhaps some of the confusion could be attributed to the relationships between the actual mood constructs.

#### A Causal Relationship as a Possible Explanation

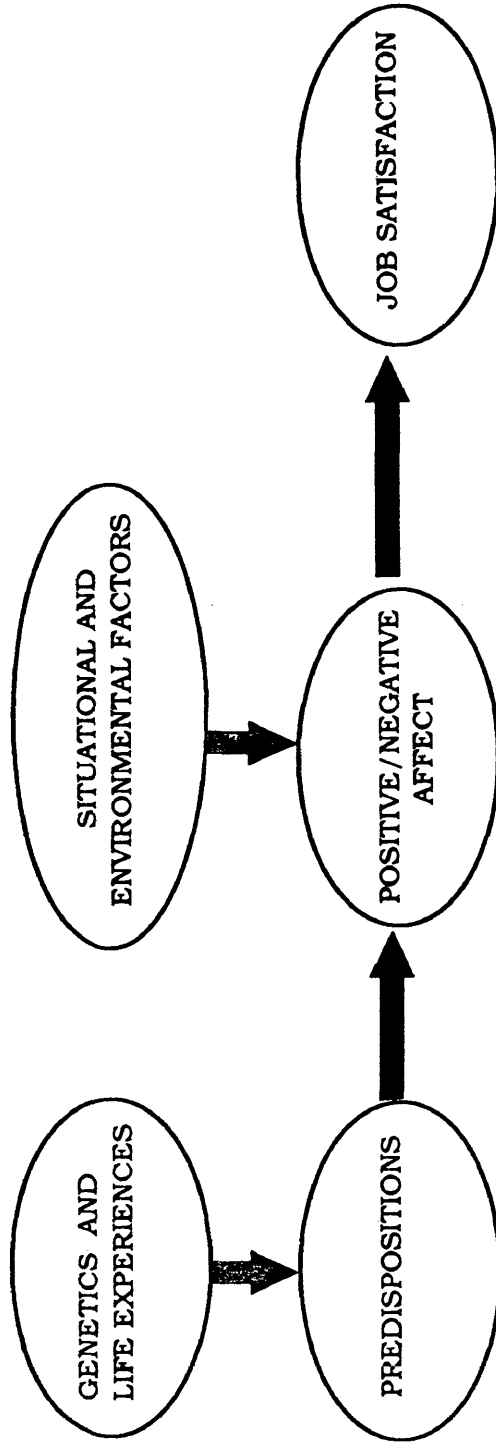
One possible explanation as to why both optimistic/pessimistic predispositions and positive/negative affective states may influence job satisfaction could involve a causal relationship. First, stable predispositions such as optimism and pessimism are influenced by genetic factors and life experiences. Second, temporary affect is primarily a consequence of situational factors (e.g., everyday occurrences, changes in weather). However, temporary affect may also be partly determined by a predisposition to be either optimistic or pessimistic. Therefore, while both affective states and predispositions

may be different constructs, there may be a causal relationship between the two. The proposed relationship among these constructs is depicted in Figure 1.

#### Affect (Mood) Congruency as a Possible Explanation

A second explanation as to why affective states and predispositions may influence job satisfaction comes from the affect congruency literature. Numerous researchers have proposed that an affective state can serve as a retrieval cue for congruent affective material in memory, termed affect (mood) congruence effects (e.g., Isen, 1970 ; Isen et al., 1978). Affect congruence effects involve the similarity between an individual's affective state during encoding and retrieval and the affective tone of the material. For example, individuals who are induced into a positive affective state recall more positive information than negative information (e.g., Isen et al., 1978; Teasdale & Fogarty, 1979). This phenomenon has been shown to impact on such cognitive processes as judgment, evaluations and expectations (Isen, 1970 ; Isen et al., 1978).

Still, the research on affective states has sometimes produced inconsistent findings (see Blaney, 1986, for a review). Methodological problems and the subtlety of the effects have been blamed for the unreliability of the affect congruent phenomenon (Mayer & Bower, 1985). Similarly, some of the discrepancies in studies examining the role of



**Figure 1.** Model of a causal relationship between predispositions, affective states and job satisfaction.

dispositions on job satisfaction levels may also be due to methodological problems, including the actual measures used by researchers.

Most of the scales developed to measure stress and satisfaction have a highly negative underlying dimension which is strongly correlated to negative affect (Brief et al., 1988; Depue & Monroe, 1986). As mentioned above, numerous cognitive affect studies have suggested that there is a link between salient material and mood (see Bower, 1981 for a review). Therefore, if stress and satisfaction scales cue a negative mood, there may be a confounding influence due to the actual measures used. For example, consistent with affect congruent theory, if one is called to examine a situation, and it is determined to be negative or positive, this will in turn influence the current affective state. In other words, the mere act of focusing one's attention on a particular situational stimulus will result in a change in one's affective state, according to the affective tenor of the situational stimuli.

Thus, questions focusing on negative aspects of one's job might be expected to facilitate a negative affective state, whereas questions focusing on positive aspects might induce a positive affective state. In short, the measurement process itself could be viewed as an affect manipulation by making salient positive or negative material stored in memory.

Affect congruency and levels of satisfaction. In terms of the proposed congruency between situational aspects of the workplace and affective states, there is some evidence that satisfaction levels may be influenced by affect. Over 12 years ago Wyer and Carlson (1979) suggested that affect serves both an informational and directive function. The information function includes the assertion that people may use their momentary affective state to evaluate the quality of their lives. The directive function refers to the possibility that affect directs one's attention to information that may offer a cause for such feelings. To test the directive function hypothesis, Schwarz and Clore (1983) conducted a study to investigate the impact of affect-related factors on reported life satisfaction. The authors found evidence that subjects make evaluations of their life satisfaction based on their momentary affect.

Also supporting the notion of an affect congruent response, Kraiger et al. (1989) found that subjects' predominant affective states influenced their ratings of both task perceptions and task satisfaction. In this and other studies using such stimuli as picture slides, home appliances, task characteristics, and working environments, it was found that persons in a positive affective state evaluate stimuli more positively than persons in a neutral affective state (e.g., Isen & Shalcker, 1982; Isen et al., 1978; Kraiger et al., 1978). This congruent association

between affective state and the stimuli may help explain some of the correlations found between levels of affect and levels of satisfaction.

The affect congruent phenomenon may also help explain the results of the investigations into the influence of affect on global and specific job satisfaction. Perhaps individual's are made aware of certain negative aspects of a job simply by assessing their satisfaction associated with each aspect. To assess this, some researchers have asked facet-specific questions such as, "How satisfied are you with your supervisor?" The respondent may have been recently reprimanded, and by making that aspect salient, this in turn created a negative affect congruent with the level of satisfaction. However, when asking a respondent the global question, "In general, how satisfied are you with your job," the negative aspects may not have been made salient; therefore, there would not be a corresponding affect congruent response.

Similarly, optimists and pessimists have been shown to display a global disposition to their world, and this may induce an affect congruent response to a global question of satisfaction such as, "In general, how satisfied are you with your job these days?" In other words, a person would be expected to elicit a satisfied response congruent with his or her level of predispositional optimism.

As a result, research is needed to systematically

examine these global versus specific variables to determine if there are affect congruent effects occurring due to specific situations becoming salient.

#### Predictions

Based upon the preceding literature review, some general predictions are in order. In the past, job satisfaction was initially researched globally with the assumption that people liked their jobs within a range of very little to very much. Later investigators realized that global satisfaction questions could be masking a person's feelings about certain facets of a job. That is, a person may dislike his or her supervisor but be satisfied with the pay and, therefore, report an overall moderate level of global job satisfaction. Similarly, another individual may be highly dissatisfied with the physical environment of the workplace yet be highly satisfied with the challenges encountered through the job and, therefore, report a moderate level of global satisfaction (Muchinsky, 1987).

Based upon this reasoning, both global and specific types of questions were employed in the present study. In keeping with the affect congruency model, asking specific questions about a job such as, "Are your chances for promotion good? Are your responsibilities clearly defined?" or "Are the fringe benefits good?" should stimulate either a positive or negative affective response. The responses to the specific aspects of the job made salient through the



question and the individual's level of affectivity should be congruent.

Similarly, if an individual is shown to be an optimist, one would expect the response to a global question such as, "In general, how satisfied are you with your job?" to be congruent with his or her level of optimism. In other words, if the person was shown to be highly optimistic, a "very satisfied" response would be expected because those persons tend to look at global situations in a positive light. A pessimist would be expected to make a less satisfied response, due to his or her overall negative disposition towards the environment.

Additional support for the use of specific as well as global job satisfaction measures is found in Gerhart's (1987) investigation. His results suggested that facet specific satisfaction measures may be more responsive to changes in situational factors than global satisfaction measures.

### Hypotheses

Based upon the preceding literature review, the following hypotheses were made. First, more generally, optimistic/pessimistic predispositions and temporary positive and negative affective states should influence levels of reported job satisfaction (Hypothesis 1).

Second, in keeping with the affect congruency model, individuals who are asked specific questions about their job

should report a congruent positive or negative affective response. In other words, those individuals who report low levels of satisfaction with specific aspects of their job should also report a negative affective state at that moment. Conversely, individuals who respond positively to specific aspects of their job should report a positive momentary affect (Hypothesis 2).

Third, congruent with personality theory, if an individual is shown to be an optimist, one would expect the response to a general job satisfaction question to be congruent with the degree of predispositional optimism. Conversely, a pessimist would be expected to have a less satisfied response to a general job satisfaction question (Hypothesis 3).

Fourth, temporary affect and stable predispositions were compared to determine which has a stronger influence on levels of reported job satisfaction. As predispositions may demonstrate a causal relationship to affectivity, optimism/pessimism was therefore hypothesized to show a stronger relation to levels of job satisfaction, than positive and negative affect (Hypothesis 4).

## Method

### Pre-testing

Employees from a large government agency in the Midwest were chosen as subjects. As part of a pre-test, interviews with a small sample (N = 23) of incumbents were held over a two-day period. The incumbents were selected based on availability and scheduling by a contact employee at the organization. These employees were interviewed for approximately 1 hour using many of the questions from the facet-specific job satisfaction scale (Quinn & Staines, 1979), and they were also asked, "What are some of the additional concerns of the employees?" Such queries were used to help ensure that the questions in the final survey were in fact reflective of the important issues for the incumbents. Because this study was conducted in an applied setting, two incumbents at the organization who had endorsed the project were asked to evaluate the questions and were in full agreement with the proposed survey questions.

Organizational climate was briefly examined in the initial pre-testing interviews, using questions from the job satisfaction scale and an organizational climate scale (many questions overlapped). Organizational climate has been found to influence job satisfaction; however, due to the overlap of measures and the general belief that the two constructs are relatively equivalent (Downey, Hellriegel, Phelps, & Slocum, 1974; Downey, Hellriegel, & Slocum, 1975),

organizational climate per se was not directly measured in the present study.

As a pilot study and practice exercise, the following steps were used in a smaller applied setting. Approximately 50 employees of a dental firm were asked to complete the survey as part of a pilot test. Twenty-three responses were returned. Packets and instructions for the pilot survey were very similar to those used in the main survey. The pilot study was performed to detect any methodological or administrative problems of which the investigator might have been unaware. Results and feedback from the pilot study indicated that no major changes were necessary.

### Subjects

Approximately 1850 employees from a large government agency in the Midwest received a survey packet through inter-departmental mail. The survey was administered with the full cooperation of the organization, and all participation was explicitly voluntary. Respondents were told they could complete the survey either on or away from the job site. Instructions with the survey informed participants that they did not have to answer any question(s) that they did not wish to answer, and that all responses would be confidential, in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists" (American Psychological Association, 1981). There was a 50% return rate of 930 usable responses. The respondents were 61% (N =

565) male, 38% (N = 351) female, and 1% (N = 14) left the question blank. The ages of the respondents ranged from 19 to 67 years old (M = 42). The length of tenure ranged from less than 1 year to 38 years (M = 10). The race/origin of the respondents were 88% white, 4% black, and 5% other.

### Materials

A survey packet was given to each participant that included a cover letter/consent form, instructions for completing the surveys, a demographics questionnaire, the job satisfaction, predisposition, and affect surveys, and a computerized score sheet.

The cover letter explained that participation was voluntary and strictly confidential, and that results or feedback would be supplied upon completion (see Appendix A). Additionally, the cover letter served as a consent form as no signatures were requested due to confidentiality. The organization agreed to allow the researchers ownership of the raw data in order to protect confidentiality.

Instructions were provided for the computerized score sheet, along with several examples. Completed surveys were collected via inter-departmental mail and then turned over to the researchers. The demographic questions assessed gender, education, date of birth, tenure, type of office element (e.g., engineering, construction), pay plan, grade level, and race (see Appendix B).

One of four different packets was randomly assigned to each respondent. Included in each packet was a facet-specific job satisfaction scale, a global job satisfaction question, two positive and negative affectivity scales, and two optimism/pessimism predisposition scales. In order to test the hypothesis that facet-specific questions may cue an affective response, the scales were partially counterbalanced. There were two types of conditions: either all of the job satisfaction questions came before or after the affect/predisposition questions, and within that condition the global question could have come before or after the specific questions (A = global, specific, emotional state; B = specific, global, emotional state; C = emotional state, global, specific; D = emotional state, specific, global).

Facet-specific job satisfaction scale. Facet-specific job satisfaction was measured using a scale developed by Quinn and Shepard (1974) that included such questions as "my fringe benefits are good" and "the people I work with are friendly" (see Appendix C). The scale was originally used in 1977 as the National Quality of Employment Survey and had a 33 item format. The authors reported a .92 Cronbach's Alpha for the complete scale with correlations ranging from .61 to .88 for the sub-scales. The statistics were based on a four point scale (see Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1981, for a complete review).

Global job satisfaction scale. Global job satisfaction was measured by a single item "all in all, how satisfied would you say that you are with your job?" (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; see Appendix D). This question has been widely used and is known to have good psychometric properties (see Cook et al., 1981, for a statistical review).

Positive and negative affect scales. The Positive Affect/Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) developed by Watson et al. (1988) was used to measure momentary affective states (see Appendix E). The authors report a Cronbach's Alpha internal reliability score of .89 for positive affect and .85 for negative affect, and a positive and negative affect intercorrelation of  $-.15$ . The low correlation between positive and negative affect reflects the notion that the two constructs are independent (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Test-retest reliabilities were reported to be .54 and .45 respectively for positive and negative affect, lending support for possibility of temporal variability, or for the unreliability of the instrument.

A four-item bipolar affect scale was also used to measure positive and negative affect (see Appendix F). These items were sad/happy, depressed/upbeat, displeased/pleased, and disappointed/delighted (see Scherer, 1989, for a review).

Optimism and pessimism scales. The Life Orientation Test (LOT) was devised by Scheier and Carver (1985) in order to assess levels of optimism and pessimism in individuals. The LOT consists of eight target items and four distracter items. The authors report Cronbach's Alpha at .76 and the test-retest reliability at .79 (N = 624, N = 142 respectively). The distracter items were removed from the present survey for purposes of economy (see Appendix G).

Additionally, levels of optimism and pessimism were assessed using a modification of the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS, Fibel & Hale, 1978; see Appendix H). The developers of the scale define generalized expectancy for success as "the expectancy held by an individual that in most situations he/she will be able to attain desired goals" (p. 924). This is consistent with the definition of optimism as well. The items chosen for the present study were based on a factor analysis identifying general efficacy, including such questions as "in the future I expect that I will discover that the good in life outweighs the bad; that I will succeed at most things I try". The authors state that the GESS has an acceptable test-retest reliability and a high internal consistency, but no statistics are reported.

#### Procedure

The packets were randomly assigned and distributed through inter-office mail to all 1,850 employees of the



organization. The investigator was present during the first day to answer questions and work out any difficulties. The respondents were asked on the cover letter/consent form to return the packet in a sealed envelope within 48 hours through inter-departmental mail. Completed surveys were routed to a drop-box located in a neutral, supervised area in the mail room. The investigator emptied the box of its contents twice daily. Several respondents telephoned the investigator with questions about one or more items on the survey, and several had questions concerning the confidentiality of their responses.

## Results

Two sets of analyses were performed to test the hypotheses. Both regression and correlational analyses were used to assess the predicted relationship between positive affect, negative affect, optimistic/pessimistic predispositions and job satisfaction postulated in Hypothesis 1.

The second and third set of predictions explored possible explanations for the relationships among the variables, comparing the affect congruency model to personality theory using correlational methods.

The relative contribution of temporary affect versus predispositions in predicting job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4) was assessed using regression analysis.

To reject a demographic explanation of the results, job satisfaction was regressed on age, gender, tenure, and education. The analysis revealed that these demographic variables did not significantly predict job satisfaction,  $F(4, 788) = 1.75, p >.01$ .

### Scale Formation

Job satisfaction. The intercorrelations among the six scales measuring facet-specific job satisfaction were highly significant, ranging from .87 to .96 (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations; Table 2 for correlations). Correlations between the facet-specific scales and the global job satisfaction question were also significant,

Table 1  
Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Mean	S.D.
Total job satisfaction	6.058	1.807
Facets of job satisfaction:		
Comfort	6.005	1.408
Challenge	6.008	1.505
Finance	5.910	1.563
Coworker	5.977	1.581
Resource	5.910	1.656
Promotion	5.552	1.651
Global job satisfaction	7.301	2.082
Total predisposition	7.267	1.304
Expectancy (GESS)	7.713	1.384
Optimism/pessimism (LOT)	6.820	1.506
Total positive affect	6.443	1.586
positive affect (PANAS)	6.452	1.619
bipolar affect	6.434	1.894
Total negative affect	2.671	1.537
negative affect (PANAS)	2.671	1.537

Note. N = 930. S.D. = standard deviation. All scores based on a 10-point Likert-type scale, 1 = low, 10 = high.

Table 2

Correlations Among the Specific Job Facets


---

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Comfort	--						
2. Challenge	.9377	--					
3. Finance	.9280	.9522	--				
4. Coworker	.9107	.9403	.9590	--			
5. Resources	.9120	.9290	.9485	.9602	--		
6. Promotion	.8750	.8988	.9094	.9128	.9305	--	
7. Global	.6722	.6951	.6563	.6452	.6441	.6363	--
Job Satisfaction							

---

Note. N = 930. All correlations significant,  $p < .01$ .

ranging from .64 to .70. In addition, factor analysis revealed that the facet-specific and the global scales loaded on a single significant factor. Therefore, the global job satisfaction scale and the facet-specific job satisfaction scales were summed and averaged to yield an overall measure of job satisfaction. The resulting scale produced a high level of internal reliability (Chronbach's Alpha) of .94.

Optimistic/pessimistic predispositions. Traditionally, optimism and pessimism have been viewed as a bipolar attribute. The present study clearly supports this position. Factor analysis showed items from both the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS, Fibel & Hale, 1978) and the Life Orientation Test (LOT, Scheier & Carver, 1985) loaded on a single factor, and correlated significantly ( $r = .63$ ,  $p < .01$ , see Table 3). Therefore, the items from both scales were summed and averaged to provide an overall index of subject's predispositions. This scale, which will subsequently be referred to as optimistic predisposition, revealed a high level of internal reliability (Chronbach's Alpha) of .90.

Affect. Because research by Watson and Tellegen (1985) indicated that positive and negative affect are independent constructs, the Positive Affect/Negative Affect Scale (PANAS, Watson et al., 1988) was factor analyzed to test the validity of this assumption. Factor analysis results

Table 3

Correlations Among Independent Variables

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Opt/Pess Predisposition (GESS)	--				
2. Opt/Pess Predisposition (LOT)	.6278	--			
3. Negative Affect (N-PANAS)	-.4742	-.4860	--		
4. Positive Affect (P-PANAS)	.5708	.5236	-.4476	--	
5. Positive Affect (Bipolar)	.4965	.5096	-.5549	.6279	--

Note. N = 930. All correlations significant,  $p < .01$ .

clearly supported a two-factor solution: positive affect and negative affect; however, the two scales showed a moderate negative correlation with each other ( $r = -.45$ ; see Table 2). Next, the four-item bipolar affect scale (Scherer, 1989) and the positive affect scale of the PANAS were independently and aggregately factor analyzed. Both analyses strongly suggested the presence of only one factor. The two positive affect scales were also positively correlated with each other,  $r = .63$ . Therefore, the PANAS positive affect scale and the bipolar affect scale were summed and averaged to provide an index of positive affect (Chronbach's alpha = .94). The negative affect scale from the PANAS measure served as an indicator of negative affect (Chronbach's alpha = .91)

Thus, scales were averaged to produce four indices or summary measures: positive affect, negative affect, optimistic predisposition and job satisfaction.

#### Test of Hypothesis 1

It was predicted that positive affect, negative affect, and optimistic predispositions would correlate with one another. Consistent with the prediction, the summary measures of positive affect, negative affect, optimistic predispositions, and job satisfaction were moderately to strongly correlated with one another (see Table 4).

Hypothesis 1 stated that optimistic predispositions and positive and negative affective states would predict levels

Table 4

Correlations Among Measures

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Total Job Satisfaction	--					
2. Total Predisposition	.4463	--				
3. Total Positive Affect	.5366	.6425	--			
4. Total Negative Affect	-.3534	-.5323	-.5599	--		
5. Global Job Satisfaction	.9412	.4030	.5079	-.3283	--	
6. Specific Job Satisfaction	.8622	.4447	.4814	-.3176	.6748	--

Note. N = 930. All correlations significant,  $p < .01$ .



of job satisfaction. Regression techniques were used to analyze the data, with optimistic predisposition, positive affect, and negative affect entered concurrently. When job satisfaction was regressed on optimistic predispositions, positive affect and negative affect, negative affect did not have any unique predictive power,  $t(920) = -1.06$ ,  $p > .01$ . Whereas optimistic predispositions,  $t(921) = 4.79$ ,  $p < .001$ , and positive affect,  $t(921) = 11.90$ ,  $p < .001$  made unique and significant contributions to predicting job satisfaction. Together, positive affect and optimistic predispositions had a significant influence,  $F(2, 921) = 202.68$ ,  $p < .001$ . Combined, optimistic predispositions and positive affect accounted for 30% of the variance in job satisfaction.

Two models were contrasted to determine the relative predictive power of positive and negative affect to job satisfaction. The first model contrasted the strength of negative affect independently with that of negative and positive affect combined, on levels of job satisfaction. Negative affect singly accounted for 12% of the variance in job satisfaction,  $F(1, 922) = 131.59$ ,  $p < .001$ . Positive affect and negative affect combined accounted for 29% of the variance in job satisfaction,  $F(2, 921) = 190.29$ ,  $p < .001$ .

In the contrasting model, positive affect was also examined independently and was found to account for the same amount of variance (29%) as the model which included both positive and negative affect, while displaying a more

powerful  $F$  value,  $F(1, 922) = 373.57, p < .001$ . Therefore, based on a comparison of the two models, it was concluded that negative affect did not contribute any unique predictive power to levels of job satisfaction.

### Test of Hypotheses 2 and 3

A comparison of the order in which the job satisfaction scales were presented was performed to test for the affect congruency phenomenon and the trait/state distinction (Hypotheses 2 and 3). Primary interest was focused on determining whether facet-specific and global job satisfaction questions provided critical cues to an individual's emotional state. This was tested by varying the order of measures presented and assessing the subsequent effects on each other. Hypothesis 2 is a test of the affect congruency model (state effects), which predicts that individuals who are asked specific questions about their job should report a congruent positive or negative affective response. Thus, the items on the facet-specific job satisfaction scale should act as a cue to elicit a high positive affect or a low negative affect score. Hypothesis 3 is a test of personality theory (trait effects). This hypothesis predicts that a person's level of dispositional optimism should be congruent with the level of reported general job satisfaction. Optimism is a general outlook which should serve as a congruent cue to general satisfaction levels.

Throughout this section the group of scales that measured optimistic predispositions, positive affect and negative affect will be referred to collectively as state/trait emotion measures. The presentation of the set of trait/state emotion measures were counterbalanced with the set of job satisfaction measures during presentation to control for nuisance order effects.

A MANOVA was performed to determine if the order of presenting the trait measures versus the state measures had any effect on the set of three job satisfaction measures. The arrangement for questionnaire group A was the global job satisfaction question, the facet-specific job satisfaction measure, followed by the trait/state emotion measures. Questionnaire group B utilized the facet-specific job satisfaction measure, the global job satisfaction question, followed by the trait/state emotion scales. Questionnaire group C was comprised of the trait/state emotion scales, the global job satisfaction question, followed by the facet-specific job satisfaction scale. The arrangement for questionnaire group D was the trait/state emotion scales, the facet-specific scales, followed by the global job satisfaction question.

Questionnaire analyses indicated that order had no significant effect on total job satisfaction,  $F(3, 921) = 1.96$ ,  $p > .01$ , or global job satisfaction,  $F(3, 921) = 1.20$ ,  $p > .01$ . However, results showed a significant overall

effect for questionnaire order on the facet-specific job satisfaction measure,  $F(3, 921) = 3.19, p < .023$ . Tukey multiple comparisons were used to determine which questionnaire group had an effect on facet-specific job satisfaction. The Tukey revealed a mean difference between questionnaire groups B ( $M = 6.12$ ) and C ( $M = 5.72$ ; see Table 5). Specifically, respondents reported higher job satisfaction on the facet-specific measure when they responded to it prior to the global job satisfaction question and the emotion questionnaires (in that order), compared to when they answered it after the emotion questionnaires. Thus, questionnaire group B and C differed not only in the order in which they received facet-specific versus global job satisfaction questions, but they also varied according to whether these measures were present before or after the emotion measures.

While there is a difference between groups B and C, there is a confounding effect given that there are no differences between groups B ( $M = 6.12$ ) and D ( $M = 5.82$ ). Group B was given the facet-specific, global job satisfaction and the state/trait emotion measures, in that order. Group D was presented with the emotion measures before the facet-specific and global job satisfaction measures. In other words, group B, presented with facet-specific satisfaction first, should have been different from both groups C and D, presented with the

Table 4  
Analysis of Order Effects

Variable	Packet Order			
	A	B	C	D
<b>Facet-Specific Job Satisfaction</b>				
<u>M</u>	5.876	6.123	5.716	5.819
<u>SD</u>	1.620	1.423	1.464	1.582
<b>General Job Satisfaction</b>				
<u>M</u>	6.788	6.881	6.523	6.579
<u>SD</u>	2.369	2.141	2.534	2.416
<b>Total Job Satisfaction</b>				
<u>M</u>	6.077	6.270	5.902	5.968
<u>SD</u>	1.856	1.668	1.778	1.923
<b>Optimistic Predisposition</b>				
<u>M</u>	7.438	7.325	7.205	7.086
<u>SD</u>	1.319	1.275	1.282	1.324
<b>Negative Affect</b>				
<u>M</u>	2.491	2.674	2.691	2.841
<u>SD</u>	1.516	1.505	1.530	1.589
<b>Positive Affect</b>				
<u>M</u>	6.699	6.398	6.250	6.424
<u>SD</u>	1.729	1.443	1.479	1.662

Note. M = mean. S.D. = standard deviation. A = global, facet-specific, emotion measures:

N = 234; B = facet-specific, global, emotion measures: N = 244; C = emotion measures, global, facet-specific: N = 236; D = emotion measures, facet-specific, global: N = 216.

Scores based on a 10-point scale, 1 = low, 10 = high.

trait/state emotion scales first. The fact that group B had the highest mean score for the first measure presented (facet-specific job satisfaction) might have been support for an affect congruence effect.

Although the trait/state emotion measures were counterbalanced with the set of job satisfaction measures as a control effort, there were some significant differences between questionnaire order for the trait/state emotion scales. Again, MANOVA revealed questionnaire order had no significant effect on negative affect. However, the results did show a significant overall effect for groups on the optimistic predisposition and positive affect measures,  $F(3, 921)$ ,  $p < .021$ . The Tukey multiple comparison test revealed a mean difference between groups A ( $M = 7.438$ ) and D ( $M = 7.086$ ) for the optimistic predisposition scale. Likewise, group A ( $M = 6.699$ ) and C ( $M = 6.250$ ) showed significantly different means for the positive affect scale.

Specifically, individuals reported higher levels of optimism when the optimism scale was presented last than when it was presented first. Likewise, individuals reported higher levels of positive affect when this questionnaire was presented last than when it was presented first.

To summarize the results for questionnaire order, group B which completed the facet-specific measure first exhibited the highest mean score for that measure. However, groups that completed the emotion measures first displayed the

lowest mean scores for optimistic predispositions (D) and positive affect (C). Therefore, affect congruency could be working, but in a more complicated fashion. Regardless, future research should not ignore the fact that measuring any construct may impact on subsequent constructs.

A regression analysis was also performed to test for the possibility of an interaction effect between the trait/state emotion measures and the questionnaire order on levels of total job satisfaction. When accounting for the effect of state/trait emotions and order of questionnaire presentation, the interaction of questionnaire order and emotion measures did not account for additional unique variance in job satisfaction,  $R^2$  change = .009,  $F(12, 911) = 35.07$ ,  $F$  change = 1.41,  $p > .01$ .

Hypotheses 2 and 3 also suggested that positive and negative affect should correlate higher with facet-specific job satisfaction, while optimistic predispositions should correlate higher with global job satisfaction. This was only partially borne out, as positive affect was more highly correlated with both global and facet-specific job satisfaction (see Table 4). This finding also lends some support to the affect congruency model, that one's affective state may cue a particular response congruent with one's particular schema.

#### Test of Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted that optimistic predispositions

would show a greater influence on job satisfaction than positive and negative affect, in support of a causal model. Contrary to this, positive affect ( $B = .41$ ,  $t(920) = 10.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was a stronger predictor than optimism ( $B = .16$ ,  $t(920) = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) which was greater than negative affect ( $B = -.04$ ,  $t(920) = -1.06$ ,  $p > .01$ ).

An explicit comparison of the relative predictive power of positive affect and optimism revealed that the unique variance in job satisfaction accounted for by positive affect when optimism was controlled was 10%,  $R$  square change = .107,  $t(921) = 11.90$ ,  $p < .001$ . Conversely, when positive affect was entered first, the additional unique variance in job satisfaction accounted for by optimism was 2%,  $R$  square change = .017,  $t(921) = 4.79$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Given that the positive affect summary index was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction, further analyses were conducted to determine which particular affect scales accounted for the most variance in job satisfaction. The bipolar affect scale (Scherer, 1989) accounted for significantly more variance in job satisfaction,  $R$  square = .29,  $t(919) = 13.16$ ,  $p < .001$ , than the positive PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) measure,  $R$  square change = .009,  $t(919) = 3.46$ ,  $p < .001$ . This was surprising given that the PANAS scale is one of the most widely used measures of affect in job satisfaction research in recent years.

Analyses were also conducted to determine the relative



predictive power of the various measures used to index optimism/pessimism. The GESS (Fibell & Hale, 1978) scale accounted for significantly more unique variance in job satisfaction,  $R^2 = .13$ ,  $t(919) = 9.45$ ,  $p < .001$ , than the LOT (Scheier & Carver, 1985) measure,  $R^2 \text{ change} = .077$ ,  $t(919) = 3.63$ ,  $p < .001$ .

To summarize, the four item bipolar scale (Scherer, 1989) was the positive affect measure which accounted for the most variance in job satisfaction and the GESS (Fibell & Hale, 1978) was the optimism/pessimism scale that accounted for the most variance in job satisfaction.

## Discussion

### Hypothesis 1: Do Affective States and Predispositions Predict Job Satisfaction?

Perhaps the most interesting finding in this investigation was the lack of significant influence that negative affect had on job satisfaction. The majority of workplace disposition research has focused exclusively on the role of negative affect as an antecedent (Brief et al., 1988; Clark & Watson, 1984, 1988; Levin & Stokes, 1989; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). As such, it was intriguing to note that when optimistic predispositions and positive affect were included in the regression equation, negative affect no longer accounted for any unique variance.

Negative affect's statistically non-significant role is an important addition to the job satisfaction research and presents some interesting implications. It suggests that efforts to decrease negative situations in the workplace may not be as effective as implementing strategies to increase positive affect. In other words, job satisfaction may not be primarily influenced by an employer's efforts to reduce the negative situations which may irritate, distress and upset the employee (i.e., verbs included in the negative PANAS). Instead, job satisfaction may be influenced more by efforts to excite, interest and inspire the employee (verbs included in the positive PANAS). The attenuation of the negative and the accentuation of the positive are two

different approaches, with this research supporting the latter.

This finding is consistent with Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory, which suggests that job related factors can be divided into two categories: motivators and hygiene factors. Hygiene factors are those elements that result from the job but do not involve the job itself, such as pay and benefits. Motivators are the elements of a job that concern the actual tasks and duties, such as the interest that the job holds for the employee. Herzberg believes that hygiene factors are a necessary but not sufficient determinant of job satisfaction. That is, if a hygiene factor, such as low pay, is not at an adequate level the employee will be dissatisfied. However, if all hygiene factors are adequate, the level of job satisfaction will only be neutral. It would require the additional presence of motivators to increase job satisfaction. This theory is consistent with the present study's suggestion that it is important to emphasize the positive aspects of a job as well as to decrease the negative aspects when influencing levels of job satisfaction.

Another implication from this study is the suggestion that predispositions also need to be included in the long list of antecedents to job satisfaction. An optimistic predisposition, as defined, is a trait resistant to efforts to change. Conversely, positive affect is a state which can

be manipulated by events. Based on these results, both factors may be significant contributors to levels of perceived job satisfaction. The fact that optimistic predispositions may influence job satisfaction at all is a valuable contribution to workplace research. The intimation that one's general outlook may, in part, determine one's vocational outcome suggests that vocational guidance, selection and placement processes could perhaps be enhanced by these findings.

Hypothesis 2-3: Does Type of Question Influence Type of Response?

It was predicted that there may be a cueing effect due to the different measures used. Given the results of the order effect analyses, affect congruency may have occurred but in a rather complicated fashion. It is possible that emotional states can act as a cue, such that people subsequently attempt to behave in a manner consistent with their previous responses.

Similarly, in examining the correlations between optimistic predispositions, the affect measures and the job satisfaction measures, we discovered no determinate support for either the affect congruency model or for personality theory. Positive affect was more highly correlated with both global and specific satisfaction measures, in partial support of the affect congruency model.

However, this was not an experiment designed to

explicitly test the affect congruency theory. This would have involved more direct manipulations and differentiation between groups. Therefore, in this study, it may be inappropriate to conclude support for affect congruent results.

Nevertheless, self-report measures may cue a particular schema. The question then becomes: Does an affective state influence which type of information is available to draw upon (schema effects), or does focusing attention on the details of a situation create a mood which then aligns itself with levels of felt satisfaction (affect congruency)?

In an effort to address these questions, social psychology literature points out that affect has been induced in a variety of ways, including finding money (Levin & Isen, 1975), listening to pleasant music (Fried & Berkowitz, 1979), having subjects read mood induction statements (e.g., Teasdale & Fogarty, 1979), and even hypnosis (Bower, 1981). Because of the wide variety of mood induction techniques, there arises the possibility that responding to statements such as "the pay here is good" may also be a form of mood induction. This mood manipulation may then influence a subject's responses to situations or questions.

The answers to these questions cannot be adequately assessed given the scope of the present study. Future research could systematically manipulate affect levels so

that they could be compared with satisfaction levels. The implications of future studies should guide researchers in their efforts to collect disposition and satisfaction information in such a way that the two are not confounded together.

Hypothesis 4: Affect vs Predispositions: The Chicken or the Egg?

Hypothesis 4 suggested that optimistic predispositions may demonstrate a causal relationship to affectivity. Based on the regression statistics, there was no support found for the hypothesis that positive and negative affect completely moderate the effects of optimism on levels of satisfaction. The factor analyses and results of the regression analyses suggest that positive affect, negative affect and optimistic predispositions are somewhat independent constructs; although each display moderate correlations with the other two (see Table 3). Previous evidence (Diener & Emmons, 1985; Isen, 1984; Watson & Tellegen, 1985) supports this position and suggests that positive and negative affect are independent constructs involving different consequences, rather than opposite states on a bipolar dimension. In the present study it may in fact be that the constructs are independent but the measures used are not.

Hypothesis 4 also predicted that optimistic predispositions would play a greater part in determining job satisfaction levels than would positive and negative affect.

Contrary to this hypothesis, positive affect was the strongest influence, with optimism second. This is in contrast to Staw and Ross' (1985) assertion that stable predispositions, rather than temporary affect, determine levels of job satisfaction.

The implications would therefore lead to not necessarily selecting individuals with a predisposition toward optimism, but instead to focus on the situations which tend to influence temporary positive affective states. Future research then might focus on the particular aspects or circumstances at work that tend to enhance or influence positive affective states.

#### The Measures

Results here also suggest that the Bipolar Affect Scale (Scherer, 1989) was a more powerful predictor compared to the typically used PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) scale. Given the inherent difficulty of separating and measuring the various constructs involved with job satisfaction, more care needs to be taken in selecting affect measures. Similarly, the expectancy (GESS, Fibel & Hale, 1978) scale was a better predictor than the LOT (Scheier & Carver, 1985) counterpart. While there is no standard optimism/pessimism scale, careful selection of this measure is also warranted.

One possibility for the greater predictive power of the Bipolar Affect Scale (Scherer, 1989) over the commonly used PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) scale could be in the scales'

potency of the words used to describe negative affect. The PANAS measure uses very dynamic adjectives such as "excited", "hostile" and "scared". The bipolar measure uses more moderate adjectives such as "sad" and "happy", "displeased" and "pleased". It could be argued that the scores on the PANAS would regress toward more neutral ratings on these extreme adjectives. This is consistent with research suggesting that the negative affect items of the scale correlate significantly with neuroticism and anxiety, while the positive affect items significantly correlate with measures of extraversion (e.g., Warr et al., 1983; Watson & Clark, 1984). Therefore, an affect scale with less extreme adjectives may be more sensitive to actual moods than the PANAS, and may be a better measure of positive or negative affect.

#### Limitations

The most obvious limitation of this study is its reliance on self-report measures. A multiple-method approach including behavioral or situational data may have provided more objective results. However, due to the large sample size and anonymity concerns, behavioral and situational data were not included in the study's design. Future research is needed to assess the effects of both traditionally investigated situational variables in conjunction with variables such as positive affect and optimistic predispositions.



Another limitation of the present study is its reliance on a single measure of negative affect. It would be preferable to have multiple measures of this construct so that reliability estimates could be established. In cases where only one measure of a variable is available, the indicator and the variable are assumed to be equivalent. This assumption means that a measure must be perfectly reliable and valid (Maruyama & McGarvey, 1980). Obviously, this type of an assumption may be problematic and is a weakness in the present study. However, there is still the implication that positive affect and optimism are at least as, if not more, important determinants of job satisfaction than negative affect, and should not be excluded from future studies.

A third limitation is that the trait-state distinction could not be adequately tested here based on the design and sample limitations of the study. By definition, a trait is stable across time and situations. A one-time assessment of a characteristic is inadequate to determine its stability, regardless of the measure's statistical reliability. In order to truly test for the presence of a trait's influence in levels of job satisfaction, an explicit variation of situations would be required along with repeated administrations of the same characteristic measure. That is, if the characteristic (e.g. level of optimism) remained stable even with a variation of situational factors, there

would be evidence of a stable trait or predisposition. If the characteristic varied over time, it would by definition be termed a state. Therefore, the trait-state dispositional approach to job satisfaction could be experimentally tested by utilizing the same characteristic measure, and assessing job satisfaction in a multi-wave design while explicitly varying the work situation. This type of experimental control was not possible in the present study due to the anonymity concerns of the respondents and the constraints of the organization.

The generalizability of these findings must also be cautioned. It could be argued that the nature of the organization may have influenced the results. Although the sample size was large and the demographics of the respondents accurately represent those in the organization, the inherent characteristics of this group may be highly specific. There may be differences between government agencies and civilian organizations, or between non-profit and profit organizations.

In addition, some respondents in the survey expressed extreme concern over confidentiality factors. There were also indications of frustration that the results of the survey would be meaningless to the organization and that "Things never will change around here." Although it is unclear the extent to which these concerns influenced the responses, it is nevertheless a factor in the

generalizability of this study to other organizations or settings.

#### Summary

This investigation has presented the importance of positive affect and optimistic predispositions to a field that has focused almost exclusively on situational variables and negative affect. Additionally, results here suggest that there may be order effects operating when respondents are presented with multiple self-report emotion measures. This study also calls into question the validity of the commonly used PANAS measure.

Regardless of the limitations to the study, research which examines the qualities that an individual brings to the workplace as well as the emotional consequences of particular aspects of a job, contributes to our growing understanding of human behavior at the workplace.

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## Appendix A

### Cover Letter

The following is a joint research project between this organization and the University of Nebraska at Omaha Industrial/Organizational Psychology program. The primary investigator is Sharlyn Whigham and the supervisor of the project is Dr. Lisa Scherer. With the support and assistance of this organization, we are conducting a survey to assess employee's attitudes towards various aspects of their lives, on and off the job.

This survey is designed to provide confidentiality. Under no circumstances will names of those who do or do not respond to this survey be supplied. Only statistical averages will be compiled, with the results of the information presented in such a way as to provide no link to individual respondents.

The results of this survey will be used to provide meaningful feedback to the organization regarding their employee's attitudes towards such things as pay, promotions, benefits, and management.

We encourage your cooperation with this research project by promptly completing this questionnaire. We request that this survey be returned in the envelope marked "survey" within 48 hours of receipt (please ensure that the envelope is sealed when you return it). Your responses to any or all of the questions in this survey are voluntary.

A summary of the results of the survey will be made available to the organization as soon as computations are available. Should you have any questions regarding this survey, please feel free to contact Sharlyn Whigham or Dr. Lisa Scherer at the Department of Psychology at 554-4811 between the hours of 9:00 to 4:00. You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this survey having read and understood the information presented. You may keep this copy of the consent form. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sharlyn Whigham  
Graduate student of Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Dr. Lisa Scherer  
Assistant Professor of Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

## Appendix B

Instructions

This survey is designed to measure your attitudes about various aspects of your life, on and off the job. Included will be questions regarding some specific aspects of your job, as well as your feelings and outlook towards life. Please use a #2 lead pencil when completing this survey. A computerized scoring sheet is attached on the following page. When you have completed the packet, please put all of the materials in the survey envelope; markout "Distribution: All Employees" and send to the address on the envelope "CEMRO-IM-SMR". It is requested that these packets be completed and returned within 48 hours of receipt. If you have any questions regarding the completion of this survey, please call Sharlyn Whigham or Dr. Lisa Scherer at 554-4811.

## SIDE 1

Please complete the left hand side of the sheet marked "side 1" according to the following directions:

1. DO NOT fill in your name, leave those circles blank.
2. Fill in your sex in the area marked "sex".
3. Fill in the circle for the highest year of education that you have completed in the area marked "grade or educ".
4. Fill in the circles for your birthdate in the area marked "birthdate".
5. Fill in the number of years you have worked for the organization in the columns A and B under the heading marked



"identification number" (e.g.: 03 = three years).

6. Fill in the office element you are working for in columns C and D under the heading marked "identification number" (e.g.: 19 = resource management office).

01=construction division, field office

02=contracting division, district HQ

03=contracting division

04=engineering division, design branch

05=engineering division, drafting branch

06=engineering division, environmental branch

07=engineering division, geotechnical branch

08=engineering division, hydrologic branch

09=engineering division, military branch

10=engineering division, special projects branch

11=engineering division, other than above

12=information management office

13=operations division, field office

14=operations division, district HQ

15=rocky mountain area

16=personnel office

17=planning division

18=real estate division

19=resource management office

20=other

7. Fill in your "pay plan" in column E:

1=GS

2=GM

3=WB

4=WS, WL, OR WG

5=Other

8. Fill in your "grade level" in columns F & G (e.g.:07)

9. Fill in your "race/national origin" in column H (e.g.:  
3=Hispanic).

1=Asian American Pacific Islander

2=American Indian

3=Hispanic

4=White

5=Black

6=Other

10. Please answer all questions on the computerized scoring sheet beginning with side 1 in the corresponding circles.

For example, if the question was "how satisfied are you with the Omaha area?" you could mark "pretty much satisfied" with a 7 in the circles for question 1.

11. This survey has four packets (A, B, C, and D); in the upper right hand corner of each packet you will see the packet letter (A, B, C, or D) (e.g.: p. 1B); you will receive only one of the four packets. Please mark in the first column under the heading "Name" (in the upper left hand corner of your computerized answer sheet) the letter of your packet.

## Appendix C

Facet-Specific Job Satisfaction Scale

The following questions deal with various aspects of your job. On a scale from 1 to 10, please rate how true each statement is for you at the present time.

VERY FALSE	NEUTRAL	VERY TRUE
1    2    3    4	5    6    7	8    9    10

---

1. I have enough time to get the job done (C)
2. The hours are good (C)
3. Travel to and from work is convenient (C)
4. The physical surroundings are pleasant (C)
5. I can forget about my personal problems (C)
6. I am free from the conflicting demands that other people make of me (C)
7. I am not asked to do excessive amounts of work (C)
8. The work is interesting (CH)
9. I have an opportunity to develop my own special abilities (CH)
10. I can see the results of my work (CH)
11. I am given the chance to do the things I do best (CH)
12. I am given the freedom to decide how to do my own work (CH)
13. The problems I am expected to solve are hard enough (CH)

14. The pay is good (F)
15. The job security is good (F)
16. My fringe benefits are good (F)
17. The people I work with are friendly (R)
18. I am given a lot of chances to make friends (R)
19. The people I work with take a personal interest in me  
(R)
20. I have enough information to get the job done (RA)
21. I receive enough help and equipment to get the job done  
(RA)
22. I have enough authority to do my job (RA)
23. My supervisor is competent in doing his or her job (RA)
24. My responsibilities are clearly defined (RA)
25. The people I work with are competent in doing their jobs  
(RA)
26. My supervisor is very concerned about the welfare of  
those under him or her (RA)
27. My supervisor is successful in getting people to work  
together (RA)
28. My supervisor is helpful to me in getting my job done  
(RA)
29. The people I work with are helpful to me in getting my  
job done (RA)
30. My supervisor is friendly (RA)
31. Promotions are handled fairly (P)
32. The chances for promotion are good (P)

33. My employer is concerned about giving everyone a chance to get ahead (P)

Note. Subscales are as follows: C = Comfort, CH = Challenge, F = Financial Rewards, R = Relations with Co-workers, RA = Resource Adequacy, P = Promotions.  
(Quinn & Staines, 1979)

## Appendix D

Global Job Satisfaction Scale

All in all, on a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied would you say that you are with your job? Would you say that you are:

DISSATISFIED				NEUTRAL			SATISFIED		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

(Quinn & Shepard, 1974)

## Appendix E

Bipolar Positive/Negative Affect Scale

The following questions deal with how you are feeling right now. Please mark your answer sheet with the number which corresponds to your present feelings. For example, if you are feeling extremely happy, you would mark a "10" on your answer sheet.

- |                 |                      |           |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1. SAD          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | HAPPY     |
| 2. DEPRESSED    | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | UPBEAT    |
| 3. DISPLEASED   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | PLEASED   |
| 4. DISAPPOINTED | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | DELIGHTED |

(Scherer, 1989)

## Appendix F

Positive Affect/Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment.

NOT AT ALL			NEUTRAL				EXTREMELY		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I feel interested

I feel irritable

I feel distressed

I feel alert

I feel excited

I feel ashamed

I feel upset

I feel inspired

I feel strong

I feel nervous

I feel guilty

I feel determined

I feel scared

I feel attentive

I feel hostile



I feel jittery

I feel enthusiastic

I feel active

I feel proud

I feel afraid

(Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988)

## Appendix G

Life Orientation Test (LOT): Optimism/Pessimism Scale

The following questions refer to your outlook towards things. Please rate on a scale from 1 to 10 how much you agree with the statements.

STRONGLY DISAGREE				NEUTRAL		STRONGLY AGREE			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best
2. If something can go wrong for me, it will \*
3. I always look on the bright side of things
4. I'm always optimistic about my future
5. I hardly ever expect things to go my way \*
6. Things never work out the way I want them to \*
7. I'm a believer in the idea that "every cloud has a silver lining"
8. I rarely count on good things happening to me \*

Note. \* = these items are reversed prior to scoring  
(Scheier & Carver, 1985)

## Appendix H

Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale: Optimism/Pessimism

For the following questions, please indicate on a scale from 1 to 10 the degree to which you believe the following statements best applies to you.

VERY FALSE			NEUTRAL				VERY TRUE		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1. In the future I expect that I will be unable to accomplish my goals. \*
2. In the future I expect that I will not be very good at learning new skills. \*
3. In the future I expect that I will carry through my responsibilities successfully.
4. In the future I expect that I will discover that the good in life outweighs the bad.
5. In the future I expect that I will get the promotions I deserve.
6. In the future I expect that I will succeed in the projects I undertake.
7. In the future I expect that I will discover that my life is not getting much better. \*
8. In the future I expect that I will be listened to when I speak.

9. In the future I expect that I will succeed at most things I try.
10. In the future I expect that I will be successful in my endeavors in the long run.

Note. \* = these items are reversed prior to scoring  
(GESS, Fibel & Hale, 1978)