Implicit Theories of Work and Job Fit: Implications for Job and Life Satisfaction

Jeni L. Burnette & Jeffrey M. Pollack

University of Richmond
Published online: 12 Jul 2013.
Implicit Theories of Work and Job Fit: Implications for Job and Life Satisfaction

Jeni L. Burnette and Jeffrey M. Pollack
University of Richmond

Extending the implicit theory perspective to the domain of work, we established the factor structure of a newly developed measure and then investigated how destiny theories (potential careers are or are not “meant to be”) interact with job fit to predict job and life satisfaction. Results revealed Destiny Theory $\times$ Job Fit interaction effects. Specifically, better job fit predicted higher life satisfaction for individuals with strong (relative to weak) destiny theories. We further examined the indirect effect of the Job Fit $\times$ Destiny Theory interaction with life satisfaction through increased job satisfaction. Results supported the proposed model.

“There is no more fatal blunder than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living.”
— Henry David Thoreau

Ancient Greeks used the word ponos, taken from the Latin root poena (sorrow), to define work. Over time, the meaning of work has evolved from early Greek references to sorrow, to Thoreau’s sentiments, to the contemporary view in which work and interpersonal lives are closely intertwined. With these historical shifts, people often search for value in their work and bring with them assumptions and expectations about finding the “right” job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). As individuals try to develop their careers, they search for jobs with good fit—ones that closely align with their personal values and skills—to increase overall satisfaction with work and life (e.g., Edwards, 2008; Edwards & Cable, 2009).

In the current article, we suggest that the satisfaction one derives from a job with good fit depends, in part, on individual differences in beliefs about the meaning of work. Specifically, we focus on implicit theories, which are schematic knowledge structures that have enabled researchers to better understand individuals’ affect, cognition, and behavior (e.g., Ross, 1989). An implicit theory perspective primarily concentrates on how beliefs about the malleable versus fixed nature of human attributes influence self-regulation, relationships, and person perception (e.g., Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; Dweck, 2006; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002). The theoretical idea that personal theories or beliefs are critical for understanding human behavior (e.g., goal achievement, conflict styles, stereotyping) has been prominent in psychology for many decades (Kammrath & Dweck, 2006; Knee, 1998; Molden & Dweck, 2006). Piaget, for example, noted that the development of these theories is as important as logical thinking in predicting behavior (Piaget, 1928/1964; Piaget & Garcia, 1991).

In the present research, we suggest that extending an implicit theory approach to the context of work can prove useful for understanding links between job fit and subsequent job and life satisfaction. Specifically, we suggest that (a) individuals differ in their beliefs about the meaning of work, and that these beliefs vary along two dimensions: destiny beliefs (the belief that a career is either meant for them or is not) and growth beliefs (the belief that successful careers are cultivated and developed), and (b) these beliefs, specifically destiny theories, moderate the job fit and work and life satisfaction relations.
THE IMPLICIT THEORY APPROACH

Dweck and Leggett (1988), in their implicit theory approach, distinguished between the belief that personal attributes (e.g., intelligence) are fixed or invariant, called an entity theory, and the belief that attributes can be improved or developed, called an incremental theory. The implicit theory approach, originating with an academic context, has been extended to understanding motivation and behavior in an array of domains including person perception (e.g., Dweck, Hong, & Chiu, 1993; Erdley & Dweck, 1993; Gervey, Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1999), leadership (e.g., Burnette, Pollack, & Hoyt, 2010; Tees, 1999), individual and group stereotyping (Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998; Rydell, Huenberg, Ray, & Mackie, 2007), health (Burnette, 2010), entrepreneurship (Pollack, Burnette, & Hoyt, 2012), personnel performance evaluations (Heslin, Latham, & Van de Walle, 2005), and negotiation (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2007). These domains all distinguish between an entity and incremental theory. However, what is more closely related to our current research is a new and rapidly expanding literature that demonstrates how implicit theories predict relationship outcomes (Franiuk et al., 2002; Knee, 1998; Ruvolo & Rotondo, 1998). In a relationship context, individuals vary in the degree to which they subscribe to destiny beliefs (romantic relationships are or are not meant to be) and growth beliefs (relationships benefit from the effortful resolution of challenges; Knee, 1998; Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003).

Unlike achievement contexts, in which entity and incremental beliefs vary along the same continuum, destiny and growth beliefs about relationships represent conceptually distinct constructs. For example, in an achievement context (e.g., athletics) if an individual believes ability is fixed then that individual also does not believe it is changeable. However, in a relationship context, one might believe more or less strongly that there are a limited number of people with whom they would be compatible (destiny theory of relationships) and believe more or less strongly that relationships improve from the resolution of conflict (growth theory of relationships). Similarly, we suggest that individuals can believe more or less strongly that there are a limited number of careers that would be well-matched (destiny theory of work) and that careers develop by overcoming challenges and obstacles (growth theory of work). In the current work, we empirically test the hypothesis that destiny and growth beliefs form two independent constructs, rather than ends of the same continuum.

In addition, our primary goal is to examine how these theories interact with job fit to predict job and life satisfaction. In developing our specific hypotheses, we draw heavily from existing theory and research related to implicit theories of relationships. Differences in destiny and growth theories of relationships predict important relationship outcomes (e.g., forgiveness) with especially robust findings suggesting that individuals’ evaluations of partner fit interact with destiny, but not growth, beliefs (Burnette & Franiuk, 2010; Knee, 1998; Knee & Canavello, 2006; Knee, Nanayakkara, & Victor, 2001). Research primarily defines partner fit as the extent to which people believe that their current relationship partner is their ideal relationship partner. Discrepancy between one’s ideal partner and one’s actual partner is a stronger predictor of relationship satisfaction for individuals with strong, relative to weak, destiny beliefs (Knee et al., 2001). Experimental data confirm this pattern of findings as participants induced to hold a “soul mate theory” (i.e., strong destiny) report greater satisfaction to the degree they report better partner fit (Franiuk, Pomerantz, & Cohen, 2004). Similarly, strong soul mate theorists rely more heavily on the evaluations of partner fit in deciding whether to forgive their partner’s transgressions than weak soul mate theorists (Burnette & Franiuk, 2010). In summary, across studies, although partner fit is an important direct predictor of relationship outcomes, it is especially relevant for strong, compared to weak, destiny theorists.

However, across these studies, growth theories do not moderate the link between partner fit and relationship outcomes. Growth theorists believe that if individuals are willing to engage in the emotional work required to develop and cultivate the relationship, then most relationships can be successful. As examples, growth theories directly predict optimistic expectations about the potential of the relationship to flourish (Knee, 1998), fewer one-night stands, active coping, and longer lasting relationships (Knee, 1998). Growth theories, however, fail to directly predict forgiveness (e.g., Burnette & Franiuk, 2010; Finkel, Burnette, & Scissors, 2007). In sum, when problems arise, growth theorists find overcoming these challenges to be the essence of healthy long-lasting relationships. Despite these beliefs, it is not expected that growth theorists are universal optimists who are more satisfied in their relations or overeager to make amends.

As growth theories and destiny theories are independent constructs, it is possible that they interact with each other to predict relationship outcomes. However, when considering the role of partner fit in predicting outcomes, research has primarily focused on growth and destiny distinctions rather than trying to examine interaction effects (e.g., Burnette & Franiuk, 2010; Chen, Lin, Lin, & McDonough, 2012; Finkel et al., 2007). Thus, in the current work, we focus on direct effects of believing more or less strongly in destiny and growth theories and the interaction with job fit in predicting work and life satisfaction.
IMPLICIT THEORIES APPLIED TO WORK

In extending implicit theories to the context of work, we have two main goals. First, we suggest that just as individuals vary in their beliefs about whether relationship partners are meant to be, people have different theories about the nature of careers. For example, some people see their work as a necessity, others see their work as way to reach fulfillment, and others see it as a source of advancement (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). In the present research, we suggest that people can believe more or less strongly that their career is destined and little effort should be needed to progress in it, and they can also vary in their beliefs about the role that overcoming challenges has in developing a successful career. We examine a newly developed Implicit Theory of Work Scale that assesses differences in these beliefs. Specifically, we investigate if a one-factor or two-factor structure better fits the data. In the scale development phase of this research, we also explore how destiny and growth theories of work are related to other personality constructs. Specifically, we suggest that implicit theories of work are related to, but distinct from, implicit theories of intelligence and implicit theories of relationships. We also suggest that implicit theories of work are distinct from personality constructs with a focus on the Big Five personality dimensions. We present these findings in Study 1.

Second, we merge the job fit literature with an implicit theory perspective to examine if destiny beliefs, but not growth beliefs, interact with job fit to predict work and life satisfaction. In examining job fit, we draw on the concept of partner fit in studies on implicit theories of romantic relationships, focusing on how closely one’s current job matches his or her ideal job (Franiuk et al., 2002; Franiuk et al., 2004). We suggest that although our general assessment of job fit is similar to the existing constructs of perceived person–organization fit, person–environment fit, and ability–job fit, it is also distinct. For example, person–organization fit examines the degree of fit with regards to personal values such as ethics, goals, skills and attitudes (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996). Person–environment fit (Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, & Pinneau, 1980) is specific to perceptions of what is offered by the work environment. Ability–job fit (Abdel-Halim, 1981) assesses whether a job is too demanding. In contrast, our job fit conceptualization leaves open whether a current job matches an ideal job in terms of ability, ethics, attitudes, environment fit, or some other ideal. We chose this measure as it most closely aligns with the implicit theory of relationships literature and because we did not expect different outcomes based on the specific type of job fit (e.g., value or ability).

Although we expect job fit to directly predict work and life satisfaction (Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006; Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007; Shelton, McKenna, & Darles, 2002; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003), we also expect destiny beliefs to moderate this link. As Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson (2005) noted in their meta-analysis, there is a “need for future research on personal and situational characteristics that moderate fit-outcome relationships” (p. 322). Although recent work (e.g., Guan, Deng, Bond, Chen, & Chan, 2010; Resick et al., 2007) has begun to examine such relations, there is opportunity for extension. We suggest that destiny theories can offer such an extension. In addition, in merging the implicit theory perspective with the job fit literature, we extend existing research by offering an overall process model linking job fit, beliefs about work, and their interaction to life satisfaction via job satisfaction.

Specifically, we suggest job satisfaction as an important mediator. This hypothesis is based on (a) research and theory demonstrating strong links between personality factors that predict job satisfaction and those that predict life satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Tait, Padgett, & Baldwin, 1989) and (b) historical shifts in the nature of work. First, recent meta-analyses suggest that comparable patterns of relations emerge between the Big Five personality traits and job satisfaction and between the Big Five and life satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Judge et al., 2002). Furthermore, various types of job fit correlate with not only job satisfaction but also health-related outcomes (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression; Edwards & Van Harrison, 1993). Second, as the meaning of work has transformed throughout history, people today often depend on their jobs as a key source of their identity, self-esteem, and happiness (Ciulla, 2000). For many people, nothing occupies more of their time than work, with more than half of waking hours spent working (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007; Ilies et al., 2007). These shifts have made job satisfaction a critical component of general satisfaction with life. Thus, we expect job satisfaction to be the mediating mechanism for the interaction of job fit and destiny theories of work in predicting life satisfaction (see Figure 1 for overall theoretical process model).

![Figure 1](image-url)
HYPOTHESES OVERVIEW

To our knowledge, this research represents the first investigation into how implicit theories can be extended to the domain of work. Merging the job fit literature with an implicit theory of work perspective, we have two primary goals. The first phase (Study 1) involves the development of the Implicit Theory of Work Scale and includes exploring the factor structure and convergent and discriminant validity. We base the following hypotheses on the implicit theories of relationships literature (Knee, 1998). Within a relationship context, destiny and growth theories have been shown to form two distinct constructs. In addition, these theories have been postulated to be marginally related but distinct from other types of implicit theories of human attributes (e.g., intelligence). We propose similar findings within the context of work.

Study 1 Hypotheses

H1: Destiny and growth theories of work, although potentially related, will be two distinct factors.

H2: Destiny and growth theories of work will be correlated marginally, if at all, with implicit theories of intelligence.

H3: Destiny theories of work will be correlated positively with destiny theories of relationships but will be negligibly correlated with growth theories of relationships. In contrast, growth theories of work will be correlated positively with growth theories of relationships but will be negligibly correlated with destiny theories of relationships.

H4: Small to negligible correlations will emerge between destiny and growth beliefs of work and each of the Big Five personality dimensions.

The second phase (Study 2) investigated relations among job fit, implicit theories, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Specifically, although we expect job fit to directly predict work and life satisfaction, in line with implicit theories of relationships research, we do not expect direct effects of destiny beliefs (see Finkel et al., 2007; Knee & Canevello, 2006). Rather, we suggest that strong (vs. weak) destiny theorists’ diagnostic tendencies tend to amplify the significance of job fit for satisfaction outcomes. That is, if a job is not a good fit, work and life satisfaction should be especially low for strong, relative to weak, destiny theorists. In contrast, if a job is a good fit, work and life satisfaction should be especially high for strong, relative to weak, destiny theorists. In addition, we explore if the Job Fit × Destiny Theory interaction predicts life satisfaction through job satisfaction (see Figure 1).

In contrast to varying along the destiny dimension, variations in growth theories are not associated with the tendency to rely on partner fit in evaluating current satisfaction (Knee & Canevello, 2006). Rather, a growth theorist puts emphasis on relationship development (or in this case career development) by overcoming challenges. Therefore, we do not expect growth theories to interact with job fit in predicting work and life satisfaction. Although we do not expect interactions, we explore direct and moderating effects as well as an overall process model for growth theorists. For example, it seems possible that growth theories of work could directly predict greater work and life satisfaction. Believing that one’s career is a matter of effort may result in a similar pattern of findings to having an incremental theory of human attributes. Incremental theories are directly linked to a host of adaptive outcomes, including more positive expectations about future success (see Burnette, O’Boyle, VanEpps, Pollack, & Finkel, 2013, for review). In addition, growth theories of relationships directly predict more positive relationship expectations (Knee, 1998). On the other hand, holding a growth theory has not typically resulted in overly optimistic perceptions or automatically led to enhanced satisfaction. Based on the mixed findings related to growth theories of relationships, we explore growth theory effects but only postulate the following, destiny-focused, specific predictions in Study 2.

Study 2 Hypotheses

H5: The relation between job fit and life satisfaction will be stronger among individuals with strong, relative to weak, destiny theories.

H6: The relation between job fit and job satisfaction will be stronger among individuals with strong, relative to weak, destiny theories.

H7: Destiny theories will moderate the indirect effect of job fit on life satisfaction through job satisfaction (see Figure 1).

In summary, we developed a measure of destiny and growth beliefs of work and examined the factor structure as well as convergent and discriminant validity. Then, we investigated central hypotheses related to links among job fit, implicit theories, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

STUDY 1: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IMPLICIT THEORIES OF WORK SCALE

Participants and Procedure

We first examined the factor structure and validity of our Implicit Theory of Work Scale. We administered our Implicit Theory of Work Scale along with our personality measures to a sample of working adults. We recruited participants (N = 333; women = 111) through Mechanical Turk (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). The average age was 32.11 (SD = 10.75); 30% were White, 41% were Asian, 4% were African American, 18% were Indian, and...
Measures

Implicit theory of work. Participants completed five items assessing destiny beliefs and five items assessing growth beliefs (see Table 1 for items) on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Similar to other implicit theory assessments (e.g., intelligence; Dweck, 2000), our assessment is called a measure of an “implicit” theory although it is not an implicit measure. In addition, we derived our assessment directly from Knee’s implicit theory of relationships measure (Knee, 1998), rather than from implicit theory assessments within achievement contexts. As such, the measure is not unidimensional but rather measures two orthogonal constructs. Thus, items were averaged to compute separate destiny (α = .87) and growth factors (α = .87).

Implicit theory of intelligence. Participants completed an eight-item implicit theory of intelligence (Dweck, 2000) assessment on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher numbers represent more incremental theories (α = .82). An example item is “You have a certain amount of intelligence, and you can’t really do much to change it.”

Implicit theories of relationships. Participants completed a shortened eight-item implicit theory of relationship assessment (Knee, 1998) on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Four items assessed a destiny theory of relationships (α = .72). An example item is “A successful relationship is mostly a matter of finding a compatible partner.” Four items assessed a growth theory of relationships (α = .75). An example item is “A successful relationship evolves through hard work and resolution of incompatibilities.”

Big Five personality dimensions. We assessed the Big Five personality traits using the 10-item personality inventory (Gosling, 2003). Respondents rated on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale the extent to which pairs of traits apply to themselves. The assessment has shown adequate test–retest reliability, validity, and convergence with other types of ratings. A recent analysis of brief inventories for assessing the Big Five suggests that the use of such brief assessments is valid (Mullins-Sweatt, Jamerson, Samuel, Olson, & Widiger, 2006). Because there are only two items for each component of personality, we did not calculate reliabilities (see Table 2 for all other reliabilities, means, and standard deviations of measures).

Results

To examine H1, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis with maximum likelihood factoring and promax rotation (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). Results supported a two-factor solution with five items for destiny and five items for growth (see Table 1). Next, we examined H2 to H4. Table 2 presents correlations between implicit theories of work, incremental theories of intelligence, implicit theories of relationships, and the Big Five Personality dimensions (i.e., Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness).

Consistent with H2, a negative-trending correlation was observed between an incremental theory of intelligence and a destiny theory of work, r(328) = −.10, p = .07, and a moderate positive correlation, r(328) = .12, p < .05, was observed between an incremental theory of intelligence and a growth theory of work. In support of H3, destiny theories of relationships correlated positively with destiny theories of work, r(328) = .42, p < .001. In addition, in line with H3, growth theories of relationships correlated positively with growth theories of work, r(328) = .56, p < .001, and negligibly with destiny theories of work, r(328) = −.004, p = .95. However, in contrast to
IMPLICIT THEORIES OF WORK AND JOB FIT

H3, destiny theories of relationships also correlated positively and strongly with growth theories of work, \( r(328) = .39, p < .001 \). In support of H4, small correlations emerged with the Big Five dimensions of personality and destiny theories (r = .01 to -.26). However, somewhat stronger-than-expected correlations emerged between growth theories of work and the Big Five dimensions of personality (r = .08–.42; see Table 2). Overall, in line with the implicit theories of relationships literature (Knee, 1998), findings support the hypothesis that destiny and growth theories of work represent two distinct constructs (see Table 1). In addition, destiny and growth theories of work correlated with other types of implicit theories in expected ways, although a positive and stronger correlation between destiny theories of relationships and the Big Five dimensions of personality (r = .08–.42; see Table 2).

Overall, in line with the implicit theories of relationships literature (Knee, 1998), findings support the hypothesis that destiny and growth theories of work represent two distinct constructs (see Table 1). In addition, destiny and growth theories of work correlated with other types of implicit theories in expected ways, although a positive and stronger correlation between destiny theories of relationships and the Big Five dimensions of personality (r = .08–.42; see Table 2). Overall, Study 1 established a reliable and valid measure of implicit theories of work, one that captures independent destiny and growth beliefs about the nature of work. Using this newly developed scale, in Study 2, we first offer a confirmatory factor analysis of the two-factor structure before testing our key hypotheses examining relations among implicit theories of work, job fit, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

STUDY 2

Participants and Procedure

We recruited participants (\( N = 254 \); women = 101) through the StudyResponse Project (Stanton & Weiss, 2002), which is a not-for-profit academic service that matches researchers needing samples with individuals open to participating. Researchers across disciplines have successfully used the StudyResponse Project for recruitment (e.g., McMillan, Hwang, & Lee, 2003; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Participants were of varying ages (\( M = 40.13, SD = 10.95, \) range = 50) and approximately three fourths were White (76% White, 2% Asian, 2% Black or African American, 2% Native American, and 18% other). There was a range of occupations; industries in which participants worked included education (38%), service (25%), retail (10%), financial (8%), restaurant (10%), and other (9%). On average, the participants worked 40 hours per week (\( M = 39.00, SD = 13.53 \)). Participants had been in their current job on average approximately 7 years (\( M = 6.90, SD = 7.40 \)). And, participants had varying education levels: high school diploma or associates degree (36%), undergraduate college degree or currently attending college (33%), master’s (18%), Ph.D. (2%), and other (11%).

Measures

Implicit theory of work. Participants completed the same five items assessing destiny beliefs and five items assessing growth beliefs (see Table 1) as in Study 1 on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items were averaged to compute separate destiny (\( \alpha = .80 \)) and growth factors (\( \alpha = .79 \)).

Job fit. Participants completed a five-item measure of general job fit adapted from Franiuk and colleagues (2002) measure of partner fit on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An example item is “My current job is close to my ideal.” Higher numbers represent better job fit (\( \alpha = .87 \)).
Life satisfaction. The life satisfaction measure consisted of the five items from Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin (1961) rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Participants responded to items such as, “In most ways my life is close to my ideal” and “So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.” The life satisfaction measure exhibited good reliability (α = .92).

Job satisfaction. We used an adapted six-item global job satisfaction measure (Quinn & Shepard, 1974; Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991). In this measure, the following five items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with different response sets such as 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes), or 1 (completely unsatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied): “Knowing what you know now, if you had to decide all over again whether to take the job you have now, what would you decide?” “If a good friend asked if they should apply for a job like yours with your employer, what would you recommend?” “In general, how does your job measure up to the sort of job you wanted when you took it?” “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current job?” “The sixth item, “How do you feel about your job overall?” is rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted). Similar to Rice and colleagues (1991), we created one composite mean scale.1 The job satisfaction measure exhibited good reliability (α = .93).

Results
We first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm that destiny and growth beliefs represent two independent constructs. The two-factor structure, χ²(34) = 114.98, p < .001; root mean square error of approximation = .10, comparative fit index = .90, standardized root mean square residual = .08, had better fit than the one-factor structure, χ²(35) = 393.59, p < .001; root mean square error of approximation = .20; comparative fit index = .54; standardized root mean square residual = .17. A chi-square difference test, χ² difference (1) = 278.61, p < .001, supported the conclusion that the two-factor model is preferred (see Table 1).

To directly test our proposed overall process model as depicted in Figure 1, we used regression-based path analyses along with computational tools for estimating and probing interactions and conditional indirect effects (Hayes & Matthes, 2009; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). The models we examine, in path diagram form, are found in Figure 2 (Models 1, 2, and 3). Model 1 tests whether destiny theories moderate the relationship between job fit and life satisfaction (H5). Of primary interest in this model is an estimate and test of the significance of path c in Model 2 tests whether destiny theories moderate the effect of job fit on job satisfaction (the estimate and test of path a3; H6). Model 3 tests the conditional indirect effect of job fit and destiny theories, through job satisfaction, on life satisfaction (H7; Preacher et al., 2007). Model 3, in essence, tests mediated moderation, in which a moderated effect is carried through a mediator, quantified as the product of a and b (Morgan-Lopez & MacKinnon, 2006).

First, does the relationship between job fit and life satisfaction depend on destiny theories? The answer is yes. The results of an ordinary least squares regression in which life satisfaction is estimated from job fit, destiny theories, and their product can be found in Table 3 (Model 1). We illustrate this interaction in Figure 3 (Panel A) which plots the conditional effect or “simple slope” of job fit at various values of destiny theories by using the estimated coefficients from Table 3. We also probed this interaction by using the Johnson–Neyman technique (Bauer & Curran, 2005; Hayes & Matthes, 2009), which shows the “regions of significance” for the conditional effect of destiny theories, meaning the values within the range of the moderator in which the association between job fit and life satisfaction is statistically different from zero. Figure 3 (Panel B) plots the conditional effect (the

---

1Past research has created both sum and mean composite scores. We used a mean score here. We also examined the data using a mean score of standardized items due to the different rating scales. All analyses, using sum, mean, and the standardized mean, replicate and conclusions do not change.
solid line) of job fit on life satisfaction across the distribution of destiny theories as well as the upper and lower bounds of a 95% confidence interval (the dashed lines) for the conditional effect. The points at which the confidence interval is wholly above or below 0 define the regions of significance. As can be seen, when destiny theories are greater than 1.74, the effect of job fit is statistically positive and different from zero, whereas when destiny theories are less than 1.74, the effect of job fit becomes nonsignificant. These findings support H5 postulating that destiny theories moderate the job fit and life satisfaction relation (see Table 3 and Figure 3A/B).

H6 predicts a similar contingent effect of job fit on job satisfaction, with destiny theories serving as the moderator. The results can be found in Table 3 (Model 2), which shows that the relationship between job fit and job satisfaction is moderated by destiny theories. We illustrate this effect in Figure 4. The pattern of findings is similar to the one reported with life satisfaction as the outcome. Specifically, among individuals with stronger, relative to weaker destiny theories, the relation between job fit and job satisfaction is stronger. For the interaction of job fit and destiny theories on the outcome of life satisfaction (previously reported), we show the results of a formal probe of the interaction by using the Johnson–Neyman technique (Figure 3, Panel B). However, in contrast to the results of the analysis for life satisfaction, for job satisfaction there are no regions of significance—for all values of the focal predictor, the effect is positive. Hence, we provide no Panel B here.

H7 proposes that the effect of job fit on life satisfaction is carried, in part, indirectly through job satisfaction, with this process being moderated by destiny theories. In path analysis, an indirect effect is the product of the effect of a causal agent (here, job fit) on an intervening variable or “mediator” (job satisfaction in this case) and the effect of the mediator on the outcome (life satisfaction in this study) holding the proposed cause constant (e.g., Baron...
& Kenny, 1986; Hayes & Matthes, 2009; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). If one of these paths is moderated, then so too is the indirect effect (Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005; Preacher et al., 2007). The prior analysis, just showed, establishes that the path from job fit to job satisfaction is indeed moderated by destiny theories. In the conceptual model in Figure 1, estimated using the path analyses diagrammed in Figure 2, we estimated the conditional indirect effect of job fit on life satisfaction as \((a_1 + a_3 \text{ destiny theory})b\), where \(b\) is the partial effect of job satisfaction on life satisfaction from regression model summarized in Table 3, Model 3 (for a derivation, see Edwards & Lambert, 2007, pp. 8 and 10, or Preacher et al., 2007, pp. 196–197). Notice that holding job fit and destiny theories constant, those who reported greater job satisfaction also reported higher life satisfaction \((b = .62, p < .001)\).

Combining the conditional effect of job fit on job satisfaction with the effect of job satisfaction on life satisfaction, results in the conditional indirect effect of job fit on life satisfaction through job satisfaction: \((0.28 + 0.06 \times \text{destiny theories}; 0.62)\). We show the conditional indirect effect (as well as the conditional direct effect) graphically as the solid line (dashed line) in Figure 5. Note, the conditional indirect effect function slopes slightly upward, meaning that the conditional indirect effect increases as individuals more strongly endorse a destiny theory of work. Results estimate the conditional indirect effect at \(.0369 (95\% \text{ lower limit confidence interval } .0069; 95\% \text{ upper limit confidence interval } .0732)\).

For exploratory purposes, we repeated all of these models using growth theories of work, rather than destiny theories, as the moderating variable. As can be seen in Table 4, none of the interactions between growth theories and job fit were statistically significant. Results are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4
OLS Regression Coefficients (Standard Errors) for Models Testing the Conditional Indirect Effects of Job Fit and Growth Theories, Through Job Satisfaction, on Life Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictor</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.41)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Fit</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Theories of Work</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit × Growth Theory</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model R²</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction ΔR²</td>
<td>0.0003</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Job satisfaction is crucial to efficient organizational functioning (e.g., decreased absenteeism, turnover, and withdrawal; increased commitment and performance; e.g., Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Williams & Anderson, 1991) and job and life satisfaction are critical components of overall health (e.g., Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005). Our findings hint at potentially new ways in which organizations and/or managers can enable employees to become more satisfied with both work and life and thus, potentially, more productive and healthy individuals (e.g., Boyd, 1997; Price & Hooyberg, 1992). Specifically, the implicit theory approach holds promise as a framework for understanding how job fit and satisfaction outcomes vary based on individuals’ differing beliefs about the meaning of work. This initial line of inquiry could foster future research examining interventions aimed at work and life satisfaction improvements. For example, as companies continue to invest in work–life initiative programs, the current research suggests that a good place to start may be improving perceptions of job fit, especially for individuals who hold strong destiny beliefs of work.

**Limitations and Future Research**

We note the following limitations and future directions for research. First, this research focused on naturally occurring implicit theories of work, and thus lacked experimental methods that allow for causal conclusions. Experimental studies in other implicit theory domains hint at the likely benefits of priming or changing implicit theories to encourage more adaptive motivation, greater goal achievement and perhaps greater satisfaction (e.g., Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Burnette & Finkel, 2012; Burnette et al., 2013).

Second, another limitation is that although we had diverse samples of working adults, participants were primarily from the United States. There could be cultural differences in adherence to implicit theories of work or the processes identified herein could function differently based on cultural meanings of work. In addition, there are potential career-related differences in endorsement of beliefs. For example, prestige, occupation, salary, and industry all might contribute to beliefs about the nature of work. Future research should explore differences in endorsement of, and development of, implicit theories of work.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The present research aimed to examine the (a) newly developed Implicit Theory of Work Scale, (b) moderating role of destiny theories in the job fit and job and life satisfaction relations, and (c) indirect effect of the interaction of job fit and destiny theories on life satisfaction through job satisfaction (see Figure 1 for conceptual model). Results from Study 1 suggest that destiny and growth beliefs of work are independent constructs and are correlated in expected ways with other implicit theory and personality measures. Results from Study 2 confirmed the two-factor structure finding for destiny and growth theories of work. In addition, results from Study 2 suggested that the relation between job fit and job and life satisfaction is moderated by destiny theories. Specifically, these relations are greater for strong, relative to weak, destiny theorists. Results also confirmed the mediating role of job satisfaction in the link between the interaction of job fit and destiny beliefs with life satisfaction. Furthermore, as expected, growth theories did not interact with job fit. Taken together, these results complement and extend the implicit theories of relationships (e.g., Franiuk et al., 2004; Knee & Cavello, 2006) and job fit literatures (Thoresen, Kaplan, & Barsky, 2003). Our work also extends existing research regarding general beliefs about the nature of work. Whereas extant research (e.g., Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) focuses on work as a job versus a career, or work as a calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009), an implicit theory perspective argues that individuals’ meaning systems about work can be understood as beliefs in destiny and growth and that these beliefs predict different work and life-related attitudes, especially when considering job fit.

Job satisfaction is crucial to efficient organizational functioning (e.g., decreased absenteeism, turnover, and 

**TABLE 5**

Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities and Intercorrelations Study 2 (n = 250 – 251)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Destiny Theories of Work</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Growth Theories of Work</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Job Fit</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>.71***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
work from multiple perspectives including cultural, job-related, and personality-oriented theories. In addition, future analyses should consider these work-related variables as covariates in overall process models to test the predictive validity of implicit theories of work above and beyond such constructs.

Third, and on a related note, although we demonstrated that our implicit theory of work measure was marginally correlated with implicit theories in other contexts in expected ways, we did not provide evidence of predictive validity. Thus, future research could confirm that implicit theories of work are indeed domain specific and that using such domain specific assessments provides a better understanding of relevant work-related outcomes. In addition, although destiny theories were not strongly correlated with the Big Five personality dimensions, growth theories of work were more strongly related to Openness and Conscientiousness than expected. Future research could also examine and confirm some of the basic assumptions regarding the nature of implicit theories to see if these assumptions hold when applied to a work context. For example, across a range of studies, achievement contexts, and diverse populations, findings reveal that (a) people can and do hold different theories in different domains (e.g., intelligence vs. work) and (b) theories are generally uncorrelated with the Big Five trait dimensions, self-esteem, education, and cognitive complexity (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Niiya, Crocker, & Bartmess, 2004; Plaks & Stecher, 2007; Tabernero & Wood, 1999).

We demonstrated, at least initially, that implicit theories of work are unique from implicit theories of intelligence and relationships and that they are primarily distinct from the Big Five. However, more research is needed that explores how implicit theories of work relate to not only facets of personality but also to education, cognitive complexity, and the nature of the job (e.g., salary, prestige).

Fourth, more research is needed on the mechanisms linking growth theories to organizational outcomes. Although the bivariate correlations between growth theories and satisfaction outcomes were significant, these relations were somewhat tenuous and did not hold in the overall regression model (see Tables 4 and 5). Future research could examine when and how growth theories relate to satisfaction and other important outcomes. For example, growth theorists are less likely to have one night stands in relationships (Knee, 1998). Does this translate to fewer transfers between jobs and careers? Alternatively, perhaps growth theories encourage movement from one job to the next as workers try to develop the optimal career by gaining varied experiences. Future work, using the newly developed Implicit Theory of Work Scale, could continue to examine both destiny and growth theory relations with work-related outcomes.

Conclusions

As individuals continue to spend more time working and derive self-verification from their work, managers and workers may benefit from recognizing the importance of job fit and implicit theories. However, before workplace adaptations are put into practice, more systematic empirical research is needed. We hope this initial extension of implicit theories to the context of work and its integration with the job fit literature fosters such explorations.

REFERENCES


