

THE DISPOSITIONAL CAUSES  
OF JOB SATISFACTION:  
A CORE EVALUATIONS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Although the dispositional approach to job satisfaction has garnered considerable research attention in recent years, this perspective often has lacked theoretical concepts that explain how dispositions affect job satisfaction. Because job satisfaction is an affective experience formed through a process of evaluation, an especially promising theoretical approach is to focus on individuals' fundamental (metaphysical) value judgments or "core evaluations." We propose a dispositional model based on core evaluations individuals make about themselves, the world, and other people. We also show how this model helps integrate the dispositional perspective with more traditional models of job satisfaction.

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This chapter draws selected insights from eight different literatures (philosophy, clinical psychology research, clinical psychology practice, job satisfaction research, stress research, child development theory, personality theory, and social psychology) to formulate propositions regarding dispositional factors that will affect job satisfaction. We introduce the concept of "core evaluations" as an integrating principle for the various dispositions, and suggest various mechanisms by which these dispositions could affect satisfaction.

Historically, there have been three approaches to the study of job satisfaction. First, the situational or job characteristics approach argues that satisfaction with the job derives from the nature of the job and job conditions or the work environment. This model is based on the implicit assumption that all people possess the same needs and therefore will be satisfied by the same job attributes. Work characteristics models such as those of Herzberg (1966), Turner and Lawrence (1965), and Hackman and Oldham (1980) are representative of this model, although the latter two grant that there are individual differences in response to the same job characteristics (e.g., differences in growth need strength). There is consistent evidence that job attributes such as job scope (which encompasses the Hackman-Oldham attributes of autonomy and variety) are significantly related to job satisfaction, even when individual differences are not measured (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Lober, Noe, Moeller, & Fitzgerald, 1985; Stone, 1986). An offshoot of the situational model is the social information processing approach offered by Salancik and Pfeffer (1978), which argues that affective responses to the job are governed by social persuasion (e.g., from co-workers) rather than from characteristics of the job and the work itself. This version of the situational approach has been severely criticized by Stone (1992) and does not explain how the people who do the social processing got their attitudes in the first place. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that employee attitudes may be influenced by those of their co-workers (White & Mitchell, 1979).

Second, the dispositional approach to the study of job satisfaction argues that there are relatively stable characteristics of the person (i.e., traits) that affect job satisfaction independently of the attributes of the job or situation. Despite its recent popularity, this is not a new idea. Smith (1955) found that factory workers most susceptible to monotony (a correlate of dissatisfaction) were restless in their daily habits and leisure activities, and less satisfied with personal and home conditions. She suggested that "feelings of monotony are not merely a function of

the task performed, but are related to more general factors in the individual worker" (Smith, 1955, p. 329). Hoppock (1935), one of the earliest job satisfaction researchers, had suggested the same idea, as did Fisher and Hanna (1931). Weitz (1952) found that individuals with a tendency to complain about their life in general were more dissatisfied with their job in particular. Locke (1976) suggested the possible usefulness of looking at dispositional factors, but at that time few such studies had been carried out. Since then, however, Staw and Ross (1985) found that job satisfaction is stable over time and across job situations, and Staw, Bell, and Clausen (1986) found that people characterized by the trait of positive affectivity remained happy with their jobs across a span of many years, despite life and job changes. Other research has found that negative affectivity (a direct derivative of neuroticism) also significantly influences job satisfaction (Levin & Stokes, 1989; Watson & Slack, 1993).

Another type of study relevant to this approach is exemplified by Arvey, Bouchard, Segal, and Abraham (1989), who found strong similarities between the job satisfaction experienced by identical twins reared apart, despite the fact that members of each pair presumably had held different types of jobs (see also Arvey, Carter, & Buerkley, 1991). An alternative biologically based approach is activation theory, which suggests that individuals are characterized by particular levels of activation (i.e., neural activity in the reticular formation of the brain stem), and that dissatisfaction is experienced whenever activation differs markedly from an individual's characteristic level (Gardner, 1986; Gardner & Cummings, 1988; Scott, 1966).

The dispositional studies have received their share of criticism (Cropanzano & James, 1990; Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989; Gerhart, 1987; Gutek & Winter, 1992). Most of these criticisms have been based on methodological inadequacies of the studies (Judge, 1992). Nevertheless, considering the totality of evidence on dispositions, there is good reason to believe that people differ in the way in which they see themselves and the world which, in turn, affects their reactions to many different job (and non-job) situations.

The third and perhaps most popular approach to job satisfaction has been to view it as the result of an interaction between the person and the situation (e.g., Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Holland, 1985; Katzell, 1964; Locke, 1969, 1976; Porter, 1962; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969; Vroom, 1964). There are at least two forms of the interactionist view. One model argues that satisfaction is the result of the relation between

job attributes and *situationally specific* wants or values. Thus, jobs that are perceived as providing the individual with important job values or rewards are viewed as satisfying whereas jobs that thwart desired values or rewards are seen as dissatisfying. The models of Locke (1976), Dawis and Lofquist (1984), Porter (1962), Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), and Vroom (1964) fall into this category, as does the individual difference part of the Hackman and Oldham theory which recognizes interindividual variations in the desire for enriched work (Kulik, Oldham, & Hackman, 1987). The O'Reilly-Chatman person-organization fit model (Chatman, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) also belongs in this category in that the individual values that they measure are organization-specific, that is, "How important is it for this characteristic to be part of the organization you work for" (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991, p. 496). The values measured in this model, however, are much more general and organization-based than those in Locke's (1976) model.

A second interactional model views satisfaction as a result of the fit between *dispositional traits* and the job environment. Holland's (1985) theory falls into this category, as does the more general theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). This second model is a combination of the situational and dispositional models, whereas the first interactionist model is not, since the person factors in that model are specific to the situation. As pointed out by Arvey, Carter, and Buerkley (1991), a problem with the second model is that it does not specify which of many possible dispositions are most important in affecting satisfaction. Still another type of model falling into this category recently was offered by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996). Their model, termed Affective Events Theory, analyzes how emotion-generating events interact with individuals' expectations. The emotional reactions emanating from the match between perceptions of the job and internalized standards form the affective events that lead to satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the job.

Of the three approaches reviewed earlier, the dispositional model, Smith's (1955) study aside, is the most recently evolved and thus has been the subject of the least amount of empirical research and theoretical development. Thus, our goals in this chapter are to: (1) suggest criteria for judging whether a given trait will play a central or peripheral role in job satisfaction; (2) identify dispositional factors that meet these criteria and thus can be expected to affect job satisfaction; (3) suggest some of the mechanisms by which this influence could occur; and (4)

show how the dispositional approach can be integrated with the situational and interactive approaches. In order to achieve these goals, a conceptual model is developed that is centered around the dispositional concept of "core evaluations" (to be described), and that also identifies individual thinking processes that are dispositional in nature.

## DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS

### Traits

We define traits broadly to refer to stable and consistent ways of thinking, feeling, or acting exhibited by individuals. No theory has been offered to date regarding which dispositional traits will be related to job satisfaction and why. We propose that three attributes of dispositional traits will determine the degree to which they affect job satisfaction. These are: evaluation-focus; fundamentality; and breadth or scope.

### Evaluation-focus

Traits can be ordered, to an extent, on the degree to which they involve evaluations versus descriptions. Compare, for example, self-esteem (a fundamental evaluation of the self) with assertiveness, which mainly describes how one acts. Because job satisfaction is itself an evaluation, we would predict that evaluative traits will affect job satisfaction to a greater degree than will descriptive traits. One proposed mechanism involved is emotional generalization, a phenomenon which is already documented by research on-the-job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship (Judge & Watanabe, 1993). In contrast, descriptive traits should lead to satisfaction, when they do, by a more indirect, contingent route. Assertiveness, for example, might lead to poor relations with some co-workers but might also lead to more successful pursuit of work activities. (We recognize that even descriptive traits like assertiveness, ambition, introversion, etc. can be evaluated by others as positive or negative, but we are referring here to traits that are themselves evaluations.) Thus,

**Proposition 1.** Traits that involve evaluations will have more influence on job satisfaction than those that involve descriptions.

### *Fundamentality*

Fundamental traits are those that are more basic than others and that underlie surface traits. Cattell (1965) distinguished between source traits and surface traits. Source traits (e.g., dominance) are underlying traits that are causes of surface traits (e.g., arrogance). Similarly, Rokeach (1972) uses the terms "central" versus "peripheral" to distinguish the two levels. One's own self-evaluation, for example, is more fundamental than the trait of aggressiveness because, at least according to some mental health professionals, aggression is a reflection of self-doubt and frustration (Friedman & Ulmer, 1984). Central traits have more connections to other traits, beliefs, and evaluations than peripheral ones. Obviously a detailed theory of personality is needed to identify fundamental traits—a task that is beyond the scope of this paper—but, nevertheless we will make some specific predictions. For now we will propose that:

**Proposition 2.** More fundamental or source traits will more strongly and consistently affect job satisfaction than less fundamental or surface traits.

### *Scope*

Some traits are wider in scope—that is, more global—than others. Allport (1961) considered the issue of scope in his distinction between cardinal and secondary traits. Allport viewed cardinal traits as broader in scope than secondary traits, and thus more likely to relate to other traits, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, one's evaluation of oneself is wider in scope than one's evaluation of one's artistic ability, especially since the latter falls within the realm of the former. The wider in scope, which means the more objects and entities encompassed by the trait, the higher the chances that the evaluation will encompass the job realm and/or generalize to it. Similarly, since overall job satisfaction is a general concept, it will best correlate with other general concepts (Judge & Locke, 1993). Thus, we predict that:

**Proposition 3.** The wider in scope a dispositional trait, the stronger will be its effect on job satisfaction.

### Core Evaluations

The next step is to identify which specific, dispositional traits would best satisfy the requirements of being evaluation-focused, fundamental, and wide in scope. Here we were aided by clinical and social psychology. Appraisal theory, in its various forms (e.g., Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1991; Locke, 1969, 1976; Packer, 1985/1986), asserts that emotions are the form in which one experiences subconscious appraisals of objects, people, or events in relation to one's perceived values, needs, or commitments. Packer, a clinical psychologist, argues that appraisals occur at different levels and that appraisals of specific situations are affected by deeper and more fundamental—which she calls metaphysical—appraisals. She calls these fundamental or metaphysical appraisals "core evaluations" (Packer, 1985), and argues that they lie at the base of all other appraisals.

In discussing the relationship between core evaluations and psychological well-being, Packer (1985) defines core evaluations as follows:

Core evaluations are basic conclusions, bottom-line evaluations, that we all hold subconsciously. These evaluations pertain to three fundamental areas of everyone's life: self, reality, and other people. Some examples of core evaluations are, "I'm always on the outside looking in," "People are such that sooner or later they will hurt me," "Life is a power struggle and, being weak, I will always be defeated," "The real me is bad," and "Life does not hold the possibility of happiness for me." (p. 3).

The foregoing are examples of negative core evaluations. Examples of positive core evaluations are, "People are not born good or bad; each individual creates his own character and values, and that includes me," "Values are achievable and happiness is possible," and "Life is an adventure" (Packer, 1985, p. 3). Packer argues that core evaluations are all-encompassing, and that situationally specific appraisals depend on these core evaluations. Because they are fundamental, core evaluations are implicit in all lesser or more specific evaluations and influence the nature of those evaluations. To illustrate this, Packer uses the analogy of a tree. An individual's core evaluations comprise the trunk of the tree, while the branches and leaves of the tree are the situationally specific evaluations. Just as the nature of the tree determines the kinds of leaves and branches it will grow, the nature of

individuals' core evaluations affects all their other, lesser evaluations. It is clear from the above definition and examples that core evaluations are evaluative, fundamental, and all-encompassing.

Packer's (1985) concept of core evaluations, derived from clinical experience, has much in common with the ideas of a social psychologist, Milton Rokeach (1972), whose views were derived from the study of attitudes. Rokeach (1972) uses the term *belief* as his generic term to encompass factual cognitions as well as values and value judgments (evaluations, attitudes). He defines a *belief system* as, "the total universe of a person's beliefs about the physical world, the social world, and the self" (1972, p. 123). This tripartite division corresponds exactly to Packer's three categories of core evaluations. Rokeach (1972) further argues that belief systems that are relatively central, such as those mentioned earlier, are less easily changed than those that are peripheral, thus implying that central belief systems are more dispositional than situational. Rokeach (1972) argued that, "Beliefs directly concerning one's own existence and identity in the physical and social world are assumed to have more functional connections and consequences for other beliefs than those which less directly concern one's existence and identity" (p. 5). This is consistent with Packer's (1985) view that core evaluations, especially evaluations of the self, affect other evaluations.

It can be asked whether there is a deeper level of explanation underlying the concept of core evaluations. We think not. Although it is true that brain function is the physical substrate of consciousness and that its "wiring" (and miswiring) affects how we experience events, it does not follow that consciousness can be reduced to physiology. The claim that conscious experience is the same thing as or an epiphenomenal consequence of brain activity has a long and disreputable history (Locke, 1995). Consciousness is a philosophical axiom (Peikoff, 1991), that is, an irreducible fact, self-evident to perception and a base of all further knowledge.

Now let us examine how core evaluations might affect job satisfaction. First, as suggested earlier, core evaluations can affect job satisfaction directly through a process of emotional generalization. Second, such evaluations may affect the process by which the job is appraised. Consider a person who believes himself to be fundamentally no good or worthless but who is given a merit pay raise and promotion. Such an individual may conclude that these rewards are really not deserved and that the person promoted was "not the real me." The degree of satisfaction that such a person would experience in response

to the raise and promotion should be considerably less than the satisfaction that would be experienced in the same circumstance by a person who considers himself to be fundamentally a good person. In fact, research by Korman (1968) has shown that task success and satisfaction are significantly related for people with high self-esteem but unrelated for those with low self-esteem.

Next let us consider core evaluations of reality (the world). The employee who considers the world to be an inherently dangerous, evil, or unpredictable place should experience considerably less pleasure at the prospect of a raise or promotion than the employee who believes that the world is a place to have joyous adventures. The employee who fears the world may experience heightened anxiety at the prospect of more responsibility, subconsciously anticipating that failure, demotion, and disgrace will soon follow (e.g., "Even if I succeed, it's too good to last").

Finally, consider the employee who considers other people to be treacherous and untrustworthy (core evaluations of others). Being given a raise and promotion may lead her to conclude that she is vulnerable because of jealous and scheming subordinates, or that peers and superiors cannot be trusted to cooperate with her and may even conspire to make her fail. In contrast, an employee who basically trusts other people would view the same rewards as evidence of fairness and goodwill and would experience pleasure as an emotional response. In each of the foregoing cases, the nature and degree of pleasure or satisfaction experienced would be greater for the employee with the more positive core evaluations than for the employee with the more negative core evaluations.

A third way that core evaluations could affect satisfaction is through the actions they lead people to take. For example, a person who feels worthless may not try hard on the job on the grounds that he is not worthy of succeeding. Or he may not take even reasonable risks on the grounds that reality is treacherous and nothing can be gained. Or he may withdraw from other people since to him they are not to be trusted, thus ensuring that he will not develop any positive relationships.

Our argument is not that job-specific appraisals will be irrelevant to job satisfaction but rather that such appraisals will be affected by one's core evaluations. To reiterate the point made earlier, we are asserting that appraisals occur at more than one level and that the more fundamental appraisals affect the less fundamental ones. It remains to identify and discuss the key types of core evaluations that could occur within each of our three basic categories: the self, the world, and other people.

### Core Evaluations of the Self

In this section we propose three core evaluations of the self: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, and neuroticism. Though interrelated, they are considered here individually because each has received research attention apart from the other two.

#### *Self-esteem*

The broadest and most fundamental self-evaluation is, of course, self-esteem. It refers to people's appraisals of themselves. It is their answer to the questions: Am I good? Am I worthy? Am I valuable? The conviction of one's own worth is widely considered to be a fundamental human need (Locke, McClellan, & Knight, 1996). At its core, self-esteem can be defined as the overall value that one places on oneself as a person (Harter, 1990). It refers to an individual's self-acceptance, self-liking, and self-respect. Most researchers assume that self-esteem is a relatively stable personality trait that is formed by the end of the adolescent years and not easily altered (Tharenou, 1979).

Self-esteem is the evaluative component of a broader representation of self, the self concept (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Wylie, 1974), which Rosenberg (1979) defines as "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings that have reference to himself as an object" (p. 7). Self-concept refers to all cognitions about the self, including perceptions that are not inherently positive or negative (Brockner, 1988). A person's belief that he is deficient in a certain skill (e.g., musical ability) may or may not be associated with low self-esteem; it will depend on whether or not that skill is central to the person's feeling of worth (Rosenberg, 1979).

Because evaluations about oneself are core evaluations, we propose that individuals' self-appraisals influence their interpretations of everything else, including their jobs. Korman (1970) found a significant relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction. Callahan and Kidd (1986) found that high self-esteem women tend to be more job-satisfied than low self-esteem women. In her review of the literature on employee self-esteem, Tharenou (1979) reported that job satisfaction has been found in most studies to be positively correlated with self-esteem among both blue- and white-collar workers. Tharenou concluded that low self-esteem individuals are more likely than those with high or moderate self-esteem to exhibit anxiety, depression, and

neurotic behaviors, perform less effectively under stress and failure, exhibit poorer social skills and less sociability, be more persuadable and conforming, lack initiative and assertiveness, and have lower aspirations and expectations of success.

The self-evaluations people make affect their occupational choices, and this may further affect job satisfaction. High self-esteem individuals, more frequently than not, choose occupations consistent with their abilities, personalities, and self-perceived traits, but this is not true of people with low self-esteem (Tharenou, 1979). Brockner (1988) suggested that low self-esteem individuals' vocational choice decisions are more plastic—more prone to influence by others. Therefore individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs because their jobs do not suit them.

Brockner's (1988) plasticity hypothesis also suggests that the work behaviors and attitudes of low self-esteem individuals are more susceptible to peer group influence than are those of their high self-esteem counterparts, thus implying that even positive moods will not be stable. The social information processing approach to job satisfaction (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) argues that affective responses to the job are governed by a nondispositional factor, such as, social persuasion (e.g., from co-workers). It may be, however, that high self-esteem limits the extent to which the social context influences one's job attitudes.

Individuals' self-evaluations also may affect what they seek for pleasure on the job as well as the way in which various job experiences and conditions affect them. Locke (1976) predicted that high self-esteem persons as compared to low self-esteem persons will: be more likely to value challenging tasks, find greater satisfaction in achievement, be more likely to want promotions for reasons of justice and the desire for more responsibility and less likely to want them for status, be less likely to value prestige, approval, and verbal recognition as sources of self-assurance, be less emotionally affected by criticism, experience fewer conflicts and feelings of anxiety on the job, and be less defensive and employ fewer defense mechanisms.

A question relevant to the self-esteem-job satisfaction relationship is that of causality. Callahan and Kidd (1986) noted that although self-esteem and job satisfaction are statistically related, this does not allow a definitive causal interpretation. Does high self-esteem lead to more job satisfaction or does job satisfaction enhance self-esteem, or are they mutually interactive? Or could it be that both are related to a third variable? Brockner (1988) suggested that negative affectivity may be the

variable that causes individuals to rate their self-esteem and job (dis)satisfaction similarly. As we shall see, self-esteem may be a cause of both positive/negative affectivity and job satisfaction. Thus, we predict that:

**Proposition 4.** (a) Self-esteem will positively influence job satisfaction; and (b) self-esteem will be the most strongly related of any dispositional factor to job satisfaction.

#### *Generalized Self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy is defined as one's judgments of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). It is similar in meaning to—but wider in scope than—effort-performance expectancy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Efficacy judgments may vary on three dimensions (Bandura, 1986): level or magnitude (how well one can perform a task), strength (how confident one is of one's judgments of how well one can perform a task), and generality (the range of activities included in one's estimates of magnitude and strength). We are concerned here only with the last dimension because it is the most trait-like (i.e., least situational). Generalized self-efficacy is so closely related to self-esteem that some consider it to be a component of self-esteem (e.g., Coopersmith, 1967; Tharenou, 1979). Generalized self-efficacy is likely to be related to self-esteem because it encompasses individuals' judgments of their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise general control over many or key events in their lives and deal successfully with life's challenges. On the other hand, task-specific self-efficacy is not necessarily related to self-esteem, because the mastered tasks may not be fundamental to life success or work valued by the individual. Only for important performance domains should an individual's self-efficacy and self-esteem be significantly associated. Thus, while it is reasonable to expect that generalized self-efficacy and self-esteem are related, both are distinct from task-specific efficacy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Thus, one might conceptualize generalized self-efficacy as the competency as opposed to the worth aspect of self-esteem.

Generalized self-efficacy is not necessarily the equivalent of a mathematical sum of the number of important life or task domains one has experienced multiplied by the magnitude and strength of their

corresponding self-efficacy ratings. It could also consist of a subconsciously generalized conclusion drawn from a small number of early life experiences in the form of a core evaluation. This does not necessarily make it immune to change in light of subsequent experiences but does suggest its generalized and fundamental character.

In addition to having a direct effect on satisfaction through emotional generalization, generalized self-efficacy can affect satisfaction through its effect on appraisal and its association with practical success on the job. Individuals with high self-efficacy seem better able to deal with work- and career-related difficulties (Stumpf, Brief, & Hartman, 1987). A substantial body of research indicates that self-efficacy is related to task effort and performance, persistence, resilience in the face of failure, effective problem solving, and self-control (Bandura, 1986; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). All of these are associated with increased likelihood of actually attaining valued outcomes and thus satisfaction. Thus, high generalized self-efficacy (that is, a strong belief in one's own capabilities) can lead to a general self-fulfilling prophecy—in short, a Pygmalion effect (Eden, 1990) without the other party. Practical success, in turn, would reinforce the initial assessment of self-efficacy. All this is not to deny Bandura's (1986) important point that task and situationally specific self-efficacy assessments will predict specific outcomes better than generalized traits, even though the latter are wider in scope. The proper level of measurement to use depends on one's purpose. Here we are concerned with global rather than task-specific relationships. Thus,

**Proposition 5.** General self-efficacy will positively influence job satisfaction.

#### *Neuroticism*

Neuroticism is one of the "Big Five" personality traits (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1990) and is generally considered to be the converse of self-esteem. People with low self-esteem are reported to worry, to feel self-doubt and depression, and to be nervous and sleepless. These are exactly the symptoms of those high on the neuroticism scale. Some past research has shown that neuroticism is negatively correlated with job satisfaction (Furnham & Zacherl, 1986). Because the negative affectivity concept is a direct descendant of neuroticism (Watson & Tellegen, 1985), research on the link between negative affectivity and

job satisfaction (Levin & Stokes, 1989; Watson & Slack, 1993) also indirectly supports the neuroticism-job satisfaction link. Later, we review this literature and specifically discuss our choice of neuroticism over negative affectivity. For now we predict that:

**Proposition 6.** Neuroticism will negatively influence job satisfaction.

It is likely that a general self-esteem factor will also include the items measuring general self-efficacy, thus producing one large factor with three, strongly interrelated components. This large factor would represent the essence of the core evaluation of the self. Another, related dispositional concept, locus of control, might also be included in this factor. We will discuss this concept shortly.

#### Core Evaluations of Reality (The World)

We propose three types of core evaluations of the world, with the first one, benevolence versus malevolence, being the most fundamental. The second one, just versus unjust world, is included because it meets our three criteria and because actual, job-related research had already been done on it. The third, exciting versus dangerous, was derived from research studies of stress-resistant individuals.

#### *Benevolence versus Malevolence*

The most fundamental metaphysical appraisal one can make of the external world, according to Rand (1964), involves benevolence versus malevolence (described in Peikoff, 1991, p. 342). The benevolent universe premise or core evaluation asserts that man "can achieve his values in reality; he can, and other things being equal, he will... Failures, though possible, are an exception to the rule. The rule is success. The state of consciousness to be fought for and expected is happiness." In short, it is an individual's general belief that the world is a good and safe place—a place where values can be achieved and happiness is possible. The opposite of this viewpoint is what Rand calls the "malevolent universe" premise (others have called it the "tragic sense of life"). This premise states that man cannot achieve his values; that successes, though possible, are an exception; that the rule of human life is failure and misery. Persons who believe that the world is evil or dangerous will have difficulty

enjoying even the most positive aspects of their jobs because they will be plagued with anxiety over potential threats.

The benevolent world view should enhance feelings of job satisfaction, whereas a malevolent universe premise should undermine it; achieving one's job values in the latter case would be viewed as an aberration that would soon be corrected. The belief that things will go wrong on the job, of course, could become a self-fulfilling prophecy if the individual becomes passive on the grounds that no amount of thought and effort will do any good.

#### *Just versus Unjust World*

A second world view, which recent research has viewed as an individual difference (Trevino, 1992), is the belief in a just world. People who believe that the world is basically unjust are likely to become hostile or resentful in response to disappointments (Packer, 1985, 1985/1986) and thus less able to enjoy the values they do attain. They also may sabotage their ability to attain job-related values. Ball, Trevino, and Sims (1994) found that individuals with a weak belief in a just world (e.g., a stronger belief in an unjust world) perceived the organizational punishments that they received to be less constructive, more negative, harsh, and arbitrary compared to those with the opposite core evaluation. Such appraisals clearly would be expected to undermine job satisfaction.

#### *Exciting versus Dangerous World*

This can be considered a narrower version of the benevolence-malevolence dimension. While this core evaluation is less fundamental than the previous two, it nevertheless could influence job appraisals. A manager faced with threats to profitability by various competitors should react quite differently if she sees the situation as an opportunity to test her knowledge and skills (viz., as exciting) than if she views the same situation as a potential threat to her job and career (viz., as dangerous). Certainly task-specific self-efficacy would play an important role in this type of situation (Bandura, 1986), but the deeper, core evaluations could play an additional role. Maddi and Kobassa (1984) have found that certain "hardy" individuals view changes as exciting rather than threatening, which should lead to a more positive evaluation of job situations than in the case of non-hardy people. Thus,



**Proposition 7.** Core evaluations of the world will positively influence job satisfaction, such that individuals who believe in a benevolent, just, and exciting world will report higher satisfaction than those who believe in a malevolent, unjust, and dangerous world.

#### Core Evaluations of Others

##### *Trust versus Cynicism*

Erikson (1950) has asserted that one of the earliest conclusions a child reaches concerns the degree to which other people can be trusted. Trust means much more than parental nurture. It would also include such issues as whether adults can be trusted to be rational, for example, explain things, give valid reasons for their actions, give valid explanations of the meaning of events, provide accurate knowledge of what is needed to succeed in the world, make the world predictable, offer valid moral principles to live by, and explain how to deal with other people. Individuals who learn to trust others at an early age will probably carry this expectancy into their adult lives, including their work. Numerous authors (e.g., Bennis & Nanus, 1985) have stressed the importance of trust in organizations.

The opposite of trust is cynicism. The dictionary defines cynical as contemptuously distrustful of human nature and motives. Cynicism is viewed by some as the motive behind Theory X management. It is easy to suggest how cynicism could undermine job satisfaction. Suppose an employee were rewarded with a new assignment that involved increased autonomy and responsibility and a promised pay raise after six months. The company might explain the pay lag as due to financial difficulties and the desire to see if the employee can handle the job. A trustful employee might embrace the new assignment as a fine opportunity to increase his skills and further his career, whereas a cynical employee might attribute it to the desire of the company to exploit his talents without just compensation and thus divorce himself from any responsibility for ensuring that he succeeds. Supporting the link between trust and job satisfaction is research by Kanier and Mirvis (1989), who found that cynical workers (i.e., those who had high levels of distrust in their management and co-workers) reported significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than workers who were not cynical. It should be noted that just as self-efficacy can be task-specific as well as general (a core

evaluation), so trust can be company-specific (and even boss-specific) as well as general. We believe that core evaluations as well as situationally specific judgments can affect reactions to the job. Thus,

**Proposition 8.** Core evaluations of others will positively influence job satisfaction such that those who trust others will be more satisfied than those who are cynical about others.

#### Other Dispositional Traits

Three additional dispositional traits need to be mentioned here because of their prominent place in the literature: locus of control, affective disposition, and optimism.

##### *Locus of Control*

Much confusion has arisen over the relationship between Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy concept and Rotter's (1966) concept of locus of control. As noted by Bandura (1986) and Gist (1987), the two are related but distinct concepts. First, self-efficacy as Bandura defines it is a task-specific disposition, whereas locus of control is a dispositional trait. This difference is not critical here, however, because we are treating generalized self-efficacy as a disposition. Second, self-efficacy pertains to one's belief in one's capacity to perform, that is to mobilize skills, energy, and self-control of thoughts and emotions so as to bring about specific attainments (e.g., driving a truck through heavy traffic, developing a new product meeting certain specifications, increasing sales by 20%). In contrast, locus of control is focused more on control over the outcomes to which performance leads (e.g., rewards). The two types of assessments are not highly correlated, which is not surprising given that one is task-specific and the other dispositional (Bandura, 1986). However, general self-efficacy may be more related to locus of control than task-specific efficacy since they are at the same level of generality. As in the case of generalized efficacy, locus of control beliefs may be made subconsciously at an early age and become generalized as core evaluations that then affect satisfaction directly. Later experiences, of course, can modify earlier conclusions.

In addition to its direct effect through emotional generalization, locus of control could have indirect effects just as in the case of self-efficacy. In fact, when answering locus of control items, subjects may implicitly

rate both their perceived self-efficacy and their perceived control over outcomes. If so, locus of control may be, in practice, an alternative (though less exact) measure of generalized self-efficacy. In such a case, locus would show the same positive association with job satisfaction as efficacy. Spector (1982) provided a number of reasons why locus of control should be linked to job satisfaction indirectly, which are much the same as the arguments made for general self-efficacy. First, internals are more likely to take action as a result of dissatisfaction (and thus should be less likely to currently occupy a dissatisfying job). Second, internals may perform their jobs better and advance more quickly, thus receiving the benefits of high performance and advancement. Finally, Spector notes, "Cognitive consistency theory would predict that individuals who have perceived personal control to leave the situation and who choose to stay will tend to reevaluate the situation favorably to retain consistency between their attitudes and behavior" (p. 490). Thus, due to its implicit conceptual tie to self-efficacy, we predict that:

**Proposition 9.** Internal locus of control will positively influence job satisfaction. The effect of locus of control on satisfaction will be significant but smaller than the effect of general self-efficacy.

#### *Affective Disposition*

Positive and negative affectivity (PA and NA) have been widely studied as correlates of job satisfaction (George & Brief, 1992; Levin & Stokes, 1989; Watson & Slack, 1993), absence (George, 1989), and even performance (Staw & Barsade, 1993). PA has been defined as the tendency to experience positive emotional states and NA as the tendency to experience negative ones. NA is close in meaning to neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1980), while PA is related to extraversion (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

The independence of PA and NA has been the subject of much debate in the personality literature. Some researchers (e.g., Bradburn, 1969; Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Tellegen, 1985) have supported the independence view while others (e.g., Diener, Larsen, Levine, & Emmons, 1985; Green, Goldman, & Salovey, 1993; Larsen & Diener, 1987) have questioned it. This controversy, however, is not of fundamental relevance to this chapter. More important is the issue of what PA and NA actually measure. It was noted earlier that the most commonly used NA scale consists of items drawn from neuroticism

scales (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). This would suggest that NA would have little predictive power over the more cardinal (and less controversial) trait of neuroticism. Accordingly, no separate hypothesis is offered for NA.

Evidence suggests that PA actually may be an alternative measure of subjective well-being, which is essentially the same as life satisfaction. This would make its correlation with job satisfaction somewhat spurious in that job satisfaction is an aspect of life satisfaction. Judge and Locke (1993) found that a common PA/NA measure loaded heavily on their subjective well-being factor. An alternative and closely related possibility is that PA is a measure of self-esteem. Staw, Bell, and Clausen's (1986) discussion of their affective disposition measure suggested that some of the items actually involved or implied happiness and self-esteem. Two of the key items on their scale were "cheerful" (the opposite of depressed) and "satisfaction with self." Clausen (1991), working with the same scale and database as Staw, Bell, and Clausen (1986), found that adolescent self-esteem (which he labeled self-confidence) was a significant predictor of job satisfaction later in life for males ( $r = .36, p < .01$ ). Second, Judge and Locke (1993) found that two items referring to self-evaluation within the Weitz (1952) affective disposition scale were almost entirely responsible for its correlation with other scales, including subjective well-being and job satisfaction. Of course, we are not arguing that affective disposition has no influence on job satisfaction. Considerable research, using various measures, provides strong indication that job satisfaction, in part, is based on affective disposition (Judge & Hulin, 1993; Judge & Locke, 1993; Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986). Nor are we arguing that affective disposition and core evaluations cannot have independent (nonredundant) effects on job satisfaction. Indeed, while it is likely that affective disposition and core evaluations are related, each is expected to influence job satisfaction. Thus, we predict that:

**Proposition 10.** (a) Affective disposition will influence job satisfaction; (b) PA and NA will not explain unique variance in job satisfaction beyond that explained by self-esteem and neuroticism.

#### *Optimism*

Another potentially relevant dispositional concept is optimism. Carver, Scheier, and colleagues have shown that dispositional

optimism, or the tendency to expect events to turn out positively and the expectancy that desired outcomes will occur, is related to coping with adversity and cognitive strategies to deal with goal discrepant outcomes. As in the case of generalized self-efficacy and locus of control, optimism may be a core evaluation and also may have indirect effects on satisfaction. Carver and Scheier's (1981) theory of behavioral self-regulation assumes that expectations of success in prospective endeavors cause individuals to renew their commitment to these endeavors. When outcomes from these efforts fall short of expectations (goals), some individuals persist in the face of this adversity while others disengage. Carver and Scheier have found that dispositional optimism, because it is a generalized expectancy that good rather than bad things will happen, influences persistence in the face of goal failure. Dispositional optimism has been shown to correlate with positive reinterpretation of negative events, seeking social support to deal with problems, and constructive problem-focused (versus emotion-focused, such as denial) strategies to deal with stressors (Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986). Other research has shown that dispositional optimists dwell less on negative affect and report higher quality of life than do pessimists (Scheier, Matthews, Owens, Magovern, Lefebvre, Abbott, & Carver, 1989), and may perform better in certain situations (Lee, Ashford, & Jamieson, 1993). These findings indicate that dispositional optimism may be related to job satisfaction because optimists are more likely to persist (and even succeed) in work activities with positive and hopeful expectations.

However, serious concerns have been raised over the conceptualization and measurement of dispositional optimism. Smith, Pope, Rhodewalt, and Poulton (1989) found that measures of optimism loaded negatively on the same factor as neuroticism and negative affectivity, and once neuroticism was controlled, links between optimism and successful coping with stress disappeared. These authors concluded, "It is quite likely that associations involving [measures of optimism] reflect neuroticism rather than optimism" (p. 645). Similarly, Lee, Ashford, and Jamieson (1993) found that significant associations between optimism and health complaints became nonsignificant once trait anxiety (a close correlate of neuroticism) was controlled. Thus, because optimism may lack discriminant validity with neuroticism, as well as other dispositional concepts in the model such as locus of control and self-efficacy, it is not explicitly included in our model but deserves further investigation.

Still other personality traits could be mentioned, but we predict that the ones we have listed as core evaluations will be more strongly and more consistently related to satisfaction than any others for reasons given earlier. This prediction can be tested by comparing the variance accounted for by core evaluation measures in comparison to other types of dispositional measures. Although some of the Big Five personality traits may be related to satisfaction, we would expect that their effects are mediated and/or moderated by other variables. For example, openness to experience may influence job satisfaction only in challenging or enriched work environments while extraversion versus introversion may be relevant only in affiliative work environments. The exception is neuroticism which, as noted, is the converse of self-esteem and thus should display a direct, negative relationship to satisfaction, in addition to any indirect effects.

#### Sources of Dispositional Traits

It is not the purpose of this chapter to make original contributions to the longstanding debate in psychology concerning the causes or sources of personality dispositions. Such a discussion is more appropriate in the literature on genetics and child development. But, for reasons to be made clear, some discussion of the issue is necessary.

First, an increasing body of research is identifying the genetic basis of some human action. Most early studies were of intelligence, and it is fairly well accepted that IQ is about 50 percent genetic in origin (Chipuer, Rovine, & Plomin, 1990; Loehlin, 1989). The genetic basis of personality also is well-established (Eysenck, 1990; Heath, Neale, Kessler, & Eaves, 1992). Some recent studies have focused on the genetic source of job attitudes. Evidence suggests that the job satisfaction levels of identical twins reared apart are substantially correlated (Arvey, Bouchard, Segal, & Abraham, 1989). Thus, Arvey and his colleagues (1989) argue for a genetic component in job satisfaction. The Arvey and colleague study has been criticized (Cropanzano & James, 1990), and the criticisms have been rebutted (Bouchard, Arvey, Keller, & Segal, 1992), but no definitive conclusions can be reached yet as to the meaning of these studies. Certainly one factor that must be considered is that identical twins, being of similar intelligence, tend to end up in jobs with similar amounts of challenge. Challenge, as an umbrella term for an enriched job, is strongly associated with job satisfaction (Stone, 1986).

Typically the measurements of job attributes in these studies have not been totally adequate since only job types have been assessed.

Another issue that must be considered here is the mechanism by which genetics would affect satisfaction. Since people are born *tabula rasa* with respect to mental content, it is difficult to envision how reactions toward a specific job could be affected except through some specific mechanisms such as self-esteem, job-specific values, or job perceptions. And yet all of these we assume derive from life experiences and one's appraisal of such experiences. Could genetic mechanisms "pre-wire" (or, short-circuit) the neural pathways of the brain to process information in a certain way, for example, by recycling negative affect? Preliminary evidence suggests that information processing style is genetically based (McGue & Bouchard, 1989). There is also evidence that some chronic mood states, and especially mood disorders, have a neurological disorder at their base. Further, there is evidence some children frighten more readily than others from birth (Stevenson, Batten, & Cherner, 1992). None of this, however, proves that mental content is pre-wired.

Genetics aside, we believe that there are two major direct causes of core evaluations: life experiences and the thinking processes by which these experiences are evaluated and conclusions reached. The first category is mainly a result of one's environment and experience, though Bandura (1986) has noted that these are partly self-made. The second category involves the conclusions one draws from one's experiences and how one copes (Pines, 1979). Volition (Binswanger, 1991) is relevant here, especially as the individual becomes able to think conceptually. For example, if an unathletic, physically weak child is attacked by bullies and hurt or humiliated, he may conclude that he is worthless and ineffectual and therefore incapable of achieving success in life. In contrast, another unathletic, unmuscular child may conclude, when thinking about a similar experience, that he is all right, but that he had better not hang out with bullies in the future or that he needs to improve his strength and stamina. A child who is chronically criticized by her parents for no explicable reason may conclude that she is inept and stupid; alternatively, after reflection she may decide that she knows more than her parents think and that their judgment is flawed. A child who is betrayed by his best friend and receives no support from his parents may conclude that the world is a treacherous place and that people cannot be trusted, or he may conclude that you have to choose your friends carefully. The first set of conclusions in each case would be invalid in that they would constitute overgeneralizations

(metaphysical conclusions), but nevertheless could be stored as core evaluations.

In contrast, a child who is intelligent, athletic, and has fair and supportive parents is likely to conclude that he is good and that the world is an exciting and benevolent place, but he might also decide that he has to be perfect and the master of every situation. Core evaluations, of course, can be changed through subsequent experiences and changes in one's thinking processes. Modifying negative conclusions requires that the child or adult be aware of what conclusions were reached, why they were wrong, and how to change them.

Extensive research in clinical psychology by Beck and others (e.g., Beck, 1987; Kuiper, Olinger, & Swallow, 1987) has shown consistent evidence that dysfunctional thinking processes and premises have profound effects on affect. Specifically, they have found that depressed or unhappy individuals have repetitive, automatized thoughts (Beck, 1987) which are illogical in nature. Those thought processes are manifested in such cognitive tendencies as overgeneralization (e.g., "If I do any bad thing, it means I am a bad person"), irrational perfectionism (e.g., "If I am any good, I should be able to excel at anything I attempt"), overdependence on others (e.g., "If people whom I care about do not care for me, it is awful"), and desire for social approval (e.g., "I should be able to please everybody"). Such thinking processes foster unhappiness because they lead people to reach inappropriate conclusions from innocuous events, to constantly fail due to judging themselves by unrealistic standards, and to sacrifice their own judgment and interests to others, thus negating their own values. Research has suggested that dysfunctional thoughts make individuals vulnerable to depression because they undermine self-worth (Kuiper, Olinger, & Swallow, 1987; Quackenbush, 1989). Even in cases of real failure against objective standards (e.g., flunking out of college, bankruptcy), depressives will make more dysfunctional interpretations than non-depressives (e.g., "I am fundamentally no good" versus "This is a temporary setback from which I can learn something").

Research has shown considerable support for the Beck model of depression and for the thesis that cognitive therapy which modifies dysfunctional thinking habits significantly reduces unhappiness and depression (Haaga, Dyck, & Ernst, 1991). More recently, Judge and Locke (1993) found that Beck's dysfunctional thinking scale was significantly and negatively related to subjective well-being (a composite measure of life satisfaction) and to job satisfaction through its effects

on dysfunctional thinking about the job. They also found (as noted earlier) that dysfunctional thinking was negatively related to two items from an affective disposition scale which focused on satisfaction with oneself. This suggests that dysfunctional thinking could be a cause of low self-esteem, in accord with Rand's (1964) argument that self-esteem stems from reliance on one's power to think (Locke, McClellan, & Knight, 1996). However, dysfunctional thinking should affect other core evaluations as well since it should affect all of one's conclusions. Weissman and Beck's (1978) Dysfunctional Attitude Scale, however, is actually not focused on process but on content (*viz.*, dysfunctional beliefs). Assuming one measured actual processes, we would predict:

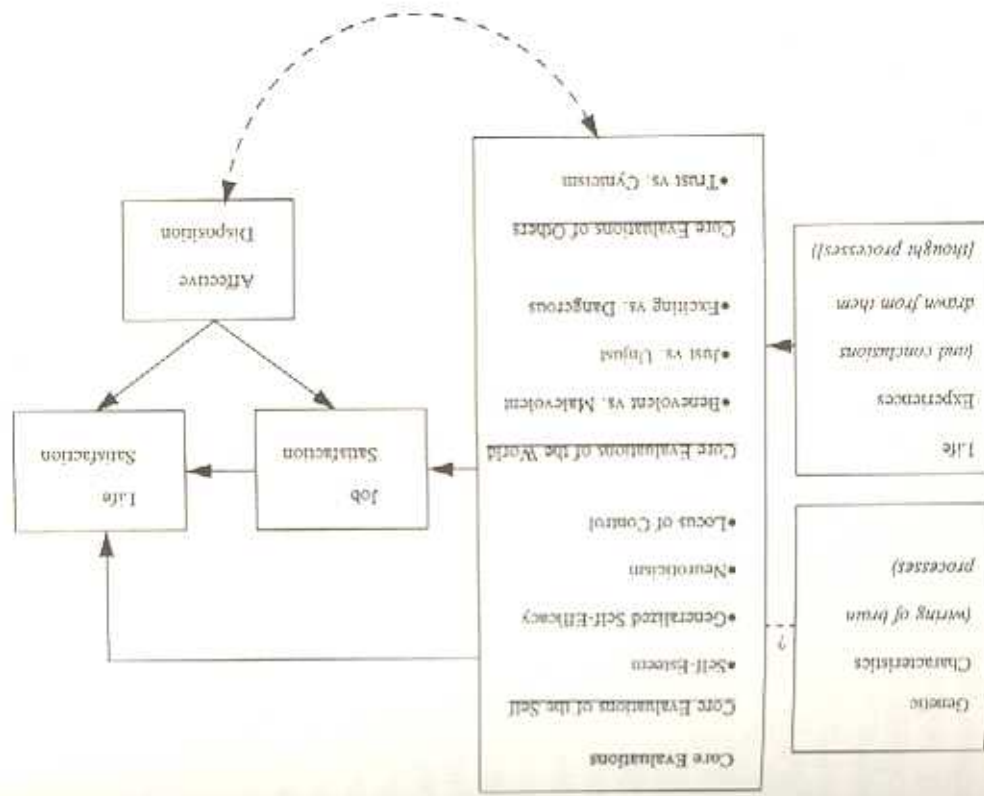
**Proposition 11.** Dysfunctional thinking processes will lead to lower self-esteem and hence lower job satisfaction than functional thinking processes.

### THEORETICAL MODEL

Figure 1 summarizes and integrates our discussion to this point. It shows an effect of the three classes of core evaluations (self, world, and other people) on job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Consistent with our earlier discussion, the sources of core evaluations are assumed to be genetic characteristics and life experiences. The model also shows direct effects of affective disposition on job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Core evaluations and affective disposition are linked, although the causality here is unclear. It remains to discuss the causal mechanism by which core evaluations and dysfunctional thinking affect specific evaluations of one's job. Also included in Figure 1 is a link from job satisfaction to life satisfaction. This follows from considerable research suggesting that job satisfaction influences subjective well-being (Diener, 1984; Judge & Hulin, 1993; Judge & Locke, 1993), undoubtedly because jobs are such a central part of most individuals' lives (Near, Rice, & Hunt, 1978). As noted earlier, life satisfaction reflects affect or happiness experienced, and thus is not a trait (although it is influenced by traits such as affective disposition).

Most of the personality variables considered in this chapter could be expected to influence life satisfaction as much as they do job satisfaction. In fact, in Figure 1 we have included a link from the dispositional variables to life satisfaction to reflect this likely influence. Because the

Figure 1. Overall Model of the Sources, Composition, and Outcomes of Core Evaluations



focus of this paper is on the dispositional source of job (rather than life) satisfaction, we have not discussed the relationship between dispositions and life satisfaction. Nevertheless, the likely relevance of these variables to life satisfaction must be acknowledged and included in the model.

#### Mechanisms of the Core Evaluations-Satisfaction Relationships

We now must consider in a little more detail the mechanisms by which core evaluations could affect job satisfaction. We have suggested four mechanisms by which this could occur. These mechanisms are included in Figure 2. There could be a *direct effect* of such evaluations through emotional generalization (Model 1). A second possibility is an *indirect* or *mediated effect* through appraisals (Model 2). By this we mean that core evaluations affect the cognitive appraisal processes leading to job satisfaction. This involves primarily two processes: cognition (identifying what is, including perceptual and stored perceptual knowledge) and appraisal (estimating the relationship between the cognized facts and one's value standards) (Locke, 1976). One possibility here is that core evaluations affect how people perceive the attributes of their jobs (e.g., challenge, feedback, autonomy, equity, safety). People with high generalized self-efficacy may describe the same job differently than people with low generalized efficacy. For example, the former may see autonomy where the latter see bureaucracy. The other possibility (not incompatible with the first) is that core evaluations affect how one judges or estimates the relation of things to oneself. For example, a person low in self-esteem may view a personal rejection as destroying his desire for an intimate relationship and even his life, whereas one with high self-esteem may consider it only a temporary setback. A third possible mechanism by which core evaluations could affect job satisfaction is also a *mediated effect* but through the actions that people take as a result of their core evaluations (e.g., job selection, persistence in the face of setbacks, attaining practical success) (Model 3). (Obviously, any given action is also caused by situationally specific factors such as goals and self-efficacy.)

The final model (Model 4) proposes *moderator effects*. This model would be in line with both Korman's (1970) findings regarding self-esteem and job satisfaction and our own earlier discussion in the "core evaluations" section. The effect of gaining situationally specific values would be positive for those with positive core evaluations and neutral

(or negative) for those with negative core evaluations. Recall the example given earlier of a person with negative core evaluations getting a desired raise and promotion but responding to it with fear and repudiation, because he does not think himself worthy of or able to handle the new responsibility. In contrast, the high self-esteem person would respond to the same rewards with pleasure and the sense that they were deserved and would open up new challenges and opportunities. The moderator model was recently supported in a clever study by Brief, Butcher, and Roberson (1995). Brief, Butcher, and Roberson (1995) administered questionnaires measuring negative affectivity (NA) and job satisfaction to two groups of employees. The control group simply received the questionnaires. The experimental group also got the questionnaires, but received a gift of cookies at the beginning of the session. Brief, Butcher, and Roberson found that NA was negatively related to job satisfaction in both groups and the group that received the cookies reported higher levels of job satisfaction. More importantly for the moderator hypothesis, however, was the finding that high NA employees were less affected by the gift than low NA employees. The results of this study would suggest that more substantial work rewards, such as job enrichment, may be less satisfying to high NA employees.

It should be noted that the main effects, mediated, and interactive models are *not* mutually exclusive. It is possible that all types of effects could be found. If only interactive effects were obtained, however, this would contradict the main effect hypothesis. The four models are shown in Figure 2. Since the first 11 hypotheses all pertained to main effects, we will now add a hypothesis that pertains to a mediator (proposition 12 and a moderator (proposition 13) model:

**Proposition 12.** (a) Situationally specific value, percept, and importance judgments and/or (b) actions will be affected by and mediate the effects of core evaluations on job satisfaction.

**Proposition 13.** There will be an interaction in effect between core evaluations and situationally specific percept-value discrepancies (holding importance constant) with low discrepancies leading to greater satisfaction for those with positive core evaluations than for those with negative evaluations.

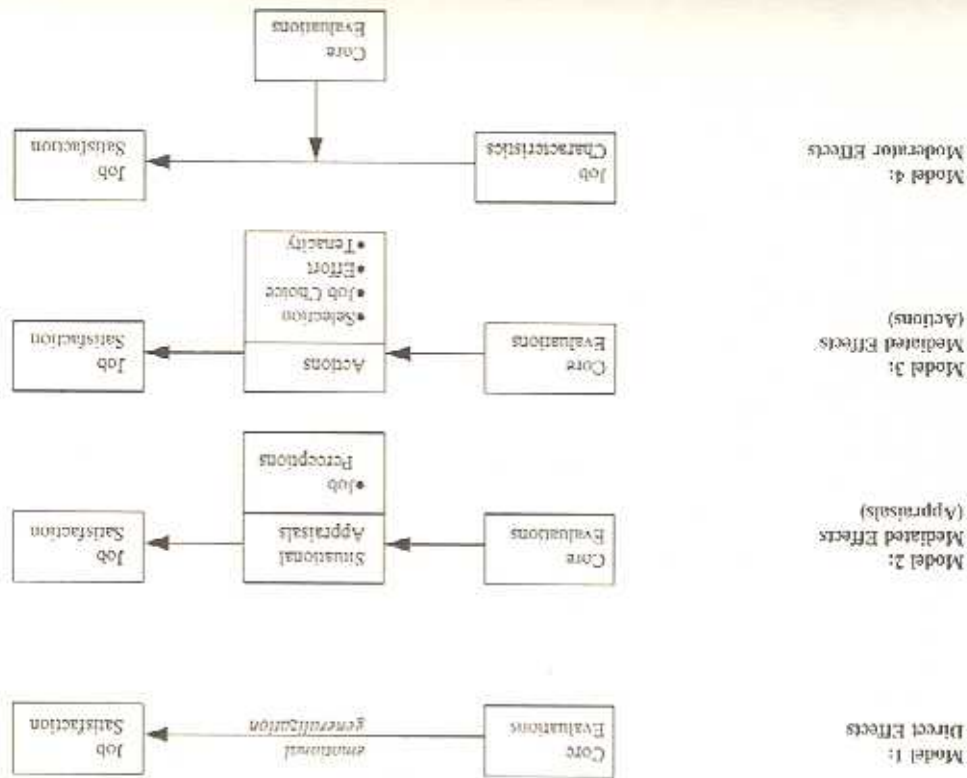
## DISCUSSION

We have argued that there are person-characteristics/dispositions that affect the individual's affective responses to specific jobs independently of, or in addition to, the characteristic of those jobs. These characteristics consist of both content features, which we have labeled "core evaluations" based on Packer (1985, 1985/1986), and process features which we have called thinking processes. Core evaluations pertain to individuals' global evaluations of themselves, other people, and the world. Thinking processes pertain to how people process their experiences.

It will be useful at this point to discuss the relationship of the dispositional approach to the other two approaches noted in the introduction: the job characteristics approach and the situational appraisal approach. We view the three approaches as complementary rather than contradictory. In terms of the dispositional versus the person-situation approach, the dispositional approach does not deny that people appraise their jobs against job-specific value standards. There is overwhelming evidence that people do this (Locke, 1969, 1976). The dispositional approach asserts that core evaluations and thinking processes underlie and/or affect these situationally specific appraisals (see Figure 2). One might view dispositional factors, then, as the "frame" within which situational appraisals are made. Combining the situational and dispositional approaches, we suggest, allows a more complete and deeper explanation of job satisfaction than using either approach alone.

In terms of the dispositional versus the job characteristics approach, the job characteristics approach assumes that all people have the same objective needs (e.g., psychological growth). If one defines a need as that which is required for survival and happiness, this claim is no doubt true (Locke, 1976). However, it does not follow from this that all people value or want the same things. There are people, for example, who do not want to grow on their jobs or in their careers—a fact recognized in Hackman and Oldham's (1980) theory. Dispositional characteristics may help account for discrepancies between needs and values. People with low self-esteem and/or low general self-efficacy, for example, may doubt their ability to grow successfully, such as through learning new skills and taking on new responsibilities. This could affect not only their job choices (Brockner, 1988), but also their responses to opportunities on any given job. People with poor self-evaluations are liable to react with fear or anxiety rather than pleasure at the prospect of new challenges (Bandura, 1986) and thus may attempt to avoid them.

Figure 2. Alternative (but Complementary) Models of the Relationship Between Core Evaluations and Job Satisfaction



Testing the models in Figure 2 will require measures of core evaluations, job characteristics, job values, value importance, and job satisfaction. Well-established measures or measurement procedures already exist for job characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Stone, 1992), self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979), generalized self-efficacy (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, & Rogers, 1982), locus of control (Lefcourt, 1991), subjective well-being (Diener, 1984), neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1992), affective disposition (Judge, 1993; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), and for job values, value importance, and job satisfaction (Locke, 1976).

Since core evaluations are asserted to be implicit or subconscious, the issue arises of how they can be measured. In response, we first must emphasize that our concept of the subconscious (defined as that which is in consciousness but not in focal awareness) should not be confused with Freud's concept of the unconscious. For Freud, unconscious material was not accessible to awareness through introspection but could only be inferred from dreams, slips of the tongue, accidents, symptoms, and the like. In contrast, material from the subconscious (a concept somewhat related to Freud's preconscious) is, in principle, accessible focal awareness, depending on the individual's ability and willingness to introspect. Thus, self-reports of core evaluations can be attempted. Such reports can also be compared with more indirect (e.g., projective measures) such as incomplete sentence tests and TAT measures.

The issue of the validity of self-reports has been discussed and studied most thoroughly with respect to self-esteem. Typically self-esteem is measured almost exclusively by self-report. Most self-esteem scales for adults and adolescents measure dichotomous or Likert-type responses to a number of questionnaire items, which are summed or scored to produce a self-esteem index (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Some measures attempt to tap multidimensional facets of self-esteem by assessing individuals' self-evaluations of social confidence, academic ability, emotionality, physical appearance, and physical ability (Fleming & Courtney, 1984; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). Rosenberg (1979), on the other hand, has argued cogently that global self-esteem is phenomenologically real to adults, that is, experienced directly, and can be assessed directly. He does not, therefore, attempt in his scale to tap underlying dimensions of self-worth (Harter, 1990).

The problem with reliance on self-report scales is that because self-esteem is a profound psychological need, people who do not possess it may attempt to fake it, through false self-reporting (Locke, McClellan, & Knight, 1996). Furthermore, people may not be skillful enough at introspection to accurately assess their own self-worth. Thus, other measurement methods may need to be developed which assess genuine self-esteem and distinguish it from pseudo self-esteem—that is, self-esteem inflated by defensive maneuvers.

Another concern for job satisfaction research pertains to the issue of causal inference. The job satisfaction realm presents special problems, because not only is the dependent variable assessable only by introspection, but the immediate (e.g., perceptions of job characteristics, values) and remote (e.g., core evaluations) determinants of it also must be assessed by self-reports. It is true that job characteristics can be assessed independently of the respondent (e.g., by the observations of other people), but this does not guarantee that the respondent will view the job the same way as another person. A job does not consist solely of a set of tasks to be accomplished; it also includes the way the person chooses to go about approaching those tasks, that is, the mental frame brought to the job, the mental effort exerted, and the creativity applied. The job is an integration of what is to be done and how the person goes about doing it, and even expanding it.

There are several ways the inference problem can be approached. One method that has been exploited in some recent research is to rely on dual sources of data. For example, Judge and Hulin (1993) and Judge and Locke (1993) used "significant other" reports of dispositions and satisfaction in addition to self-reports. In both cases, use of significant other data lead to the same substantive conclusions as the model which relied solely on self-report data. In terms of testing the models proposed here, significant others might reasonably be used to assess life satisfaction, affective disposition, and perhaps even several of the core evaluations (e.g., self-esteem, locus of control). Although using significant other reports removes the possibility that common method variance biases the relationships observed, often the price of using such data is paid in the coin of inferior measurements of the concepts. For example, it is likely that individuals know their own happiness and personality better than anyone else. Despite the potential limitations in using significant other reports, the freedom from the confound of self-report bias seems worth it in research of this nature.



Another methodological strategy that increases confidence in causal inferences involving job satisfaction is covariance structure modeling. Although use of covariance structure modeling often has been used to draw causal inferences, an important caveat to keep in mind is that unless a covariance structure model includes all relevant influences, the validity of the causal inferences drawn are suspect. Since rarely, if ever, are all relevant influences included in any model, there is always some reason to be cautious in drawing causal inferences based on the results from covariance structure analysis. Nevertheless, properly identified covariance structure models do make causal inferences easier to make, which can be particularly useful in conducting field research that would be involved in testing the models presented here.

### Conclusion

This chapter presented a theoretical model of dispositional sources of job satisfaction. Because the dispositional perspective is early in its evolution, past dispositional research often has lacked strong theory (Judge, 1992). Accordingly, the aim has been to provide a theoretical framework that, when subject to testing, will increase the knowledge base of *what* dispositions affect job satisfaction and *how* they do it. The dispositional model presented in this chapter focused on core evaluations that individuals make about themselves, others, and the world around them. Undoubtedly there are other theoretical perspectives that could be taken in investigating the dispositional source of job satisfaction. The chief advantage of the model presented in this chapter is that it can easily be integrated with other theoretical perspectives on job satisfaction, and thus serves as a complement to, rather than a competitor of, the more well-established situational and interactional approaches to job satisfaction.

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