

# Expanding the link between core self-evaluations and affective job attitudes

Citation for published version (APA):

Stumpp, T., Hülshager, U. R., Muck, P. M., & Maier, G. W. (2009). Expanding the link between core self-evaluations and affective job attitudes. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 18*(2), 148-166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320802281110>

## Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2009

## DOI:

[10.1080/13594320802281110](https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320802281110)

## Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

## Document license:

Taverne

## Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

[Link to publication](#)

## General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:

[www.umlib.nl/taverne-license](http://www.umlib.nl/taverne-license)

## Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:

[repository@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:repository@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

providing details and we will investigate your claim.



## Expanding the link between core self-evaluations and affective job attitudes

Thorsten Stumpp , Ute R. Hülshager , Peter M. Muck & Günter W. Maier

To cite this article: Thorsten Stumpp , Ute R. Hülshager , Peter M. Muck & Günter W. Maier (2009) Expanding the link between core self-evaluations and affective job attitudes, European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 18:2, 148-166, DOI: [10.1080/13594320802281110](https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320802281110)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320802281110>



Published online: 01 May 2009.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 711



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 5 View citing articles [↗](#)

## Expanding the link between core self-evaluations and affective job attitudes

Thorsten Stumpp

*University of Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Germany*

Ute R. Hülshager

*Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands*

Peter M. Muck and Günter W. Maier

*University of Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Germany*

The present study examined the differentiated relationship between core self-evaluations and affective job attitudes. In previous research, job characteristics were proposed to mediate this relationship. However, the facets of the job characteristics model have not yet been assessed separately. In the present study we tested which job characteristics (i.e., skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) mediate the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction as well as organizational commitment in a sample of 199 employees. Results revealed that core self-evaluations were related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Task significance was found to mediate these relationships. These findings are discussed with respect to the level on which people regulate their actions.

**Keywords:** Core self-evaluations; Job satisfaction; Organizational commitment; Job characteristics; Task significance; Action identification.

In recent years a lot of research has been dedicated to the dispositional source of affective job attitudes. Since the work of Staw and colleagues (Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986; Staw & Ross, 1985), researchers mostly agree

---

Correspondence should be addressed to Thorsten Stumpp, Department of Psychology, Work- and Organizational Psychology, University of Bielefeld, PO Box 10 01 31, 33501 Bielefeld, Germany. E-mail: thorsten.stumpp@uni-bielefeld.de

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Maya Bayer-Kothy and Hagen Baumgardt in collecting the data, as well as the assistance of Paula Niemietz in translating the German version of the Core Self-Evaluations Scale.

that personality or dispositions affect job attitudes, especially job satisfaction (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Judge & Larsen, 2001). A variety of traits has been discussed as dispositional sources of job satisfaction, e.g., positive and negative affect (Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000; Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003; Watson & Slack, 1993) or dimensions of the five-factor model of personality (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002). One trait recently linked to job satisfaction was core self-evaluations (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). Core self-evaluations are a higher order construct that refers to the appraisals people hold about themselves. The relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction has been confirmed in a wide range of studies (for a review, see Bono & Judge, 2003). Research has also shown that people with high core self-evaluations are more satisfied because they hold jobs comprising intrinsically motivating job characteristics (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). However, in previous studies intrinsic job characteristics were not treated as separate facets, but as a composite factor. Furthermore there are studies that showed relationships between different personality traits and organizational commitment. Yet, until now, no study has directly investigated the relationship between core self-evaluations and this important job attitude. Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold: First, the mediation between core self-evaluations and job attitudes was expanded by a differentiated investigation of intrinsic job characteristics. Second, the influence of core self-evaluations on affective job attitudes was extended to organizational commitment.

## CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS

Nearly 10 years ago, Judge and colleagues (1997) introduced a higher order personality construct related to job satisfaction: core self-evaluations. Core self-evaluations are defined as “fundamental evaluations that people make about themselves, their worthiness, competence, and capability” (Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005, p. 258). This construct is a broad personality concept that encompasses four dispositional traits: neuroticism, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control. Judge and colleagues argue that these specific traits are self-evaluative, fundamental, and broad and form a higher order factor (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002). Although core evaluations do not only relate to the self, but also to appraisals of the world and of others, research has shown that the evaluations of the self are the most relevant (Judge et al., 1998). As core self-evaluations define how a person sees her- or himself, they also affect how a person perceives and assesses situations, a process referred to as emotional generalization

(Judge et al., 1997; Packer, 1985). A person who has a positive self-appraisal (high *self-esteem*), believes in his own performance capacity (high *self-efficacy*), has a positive view of the world as well as a low tendency to focus on negative aspects of the self (low *neuroticism* or high *emotional stability*), and believes to have control about events in one's life (high *internal locus of control*) will tend to assess a situation more favourably. Judge and colleagues (1997) stated that this process does not only affect job satisfaction, but also other affective attitudes as well as any situationally specific appraisal. Findings suggest that individuals with positive core self-evaluations are more satisfied with their job (Bono & Judge, 2003) and their life (Judge et al., 1998). However, core self-evaluations are not only related to job attitudes but also to actual job performance (Bono & Judge, 2003; Judge & Bono, 2001), objective career success (e.g., salary or promotions: Kesting, Stumpp, Hülshager, & Maier, 2006), and health (e.g., burnout: Best, Stapleton, & Downey, 2005).

### CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS AND JOB CHARACTERISTICS

But how could the effect of core self-evaluations on job satisfaction be explained? Judge et al. (2000) shed light on the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction by investigating job characteristics as a potential mediator. In the job characteristics model (JCM), five job characteristics (i.e., skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) are described which impact intrinsic work motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Job satisfaction is an outcome of tasks characterized by these characteristics. There is substantial empirical evidence that the effect of core self-evaluations on job satisfaction is mediated by perceptions of intrinsic job characteristics (Judge et al., 1998, 2000). Individuals with positive self-evaluations perceive their jobs as more challenging and this in turn makes them more satisfied with those jobs. Besides this effect of an enriched task perception, Judge et al. (2000) showed that people with high core self-evaluations gravitate towards more complex and enriched jobs. However, job complexity (derived from job titles) failed to mediate the relation between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2000). In addition to the direct effect of core self-evaluations on job satisfaction, Judge et al. (1997; see also Dormann & Zapf, 2001) suggested two possible mediation models: First, an effect through the perception of job characteristics (perception mediation model) or second, an effect through actions people perform as a result of their core self-evaluations (action mediation model). The action model comprises changing the task as well as changing the job (Frese, Garst, & Fay, 2007). It has been

shown that the direct effect model, as well as both mediation models, is appropriate (Judge et al., 1998, 2000). Therefore, different findings and theories suggest different underlying processes of mediation, based either on perception or action.

However, it remained unanswered which specific facets of intrinsic job characteristics mediate the effect of core self-evaluations on job satisfaction. In contrast to the five-factor structure of the JCM proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980), Judge et al. (1998, 2000) aggregated job characteristics to form one factor. This is supported by Loher, Noe, Moeller, and Fitzgerald (1985), who stated in their meta-analysis that job characteristics are more an indicator of job complexity rather than of specific job characteristics (see also Dunham, 1976). On the other hand, the multidimensionality of job characteristics has been confirmed in a meta-analysis by Fried and Ferris (1987), and findings of recent studies are based on the proposed five-factor structure (e.g., Oliver, Bakker, Demerouti, & de Jong, 2005).

Furthermore, differential relationships of job characteristics and dispositions were found. Saavedra and Kwun (2000) for example reported unique effects of the different job characteristics on affect. Additionally, Cohrs, Abele, and Dette (2006) demonstrated that job characteristics differentially mediate the relation between personality traits and job satisfaction. But how do core self-evaluations affect the different job characteristics?

People with low core self-evaluations can be expected to perceive less autonomy because of their external locus of control (perception mediation model). Thus, they do not recognize their tasks as controllable by themselves even if they fall into their responsibility. As another core trait, neuroticism might also effect the perception of autonomy. With depression as a major facet of neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1992), Alloy and Abramson (1979) showed that depressed students made more accurate judgements about their control in an uncontrollable experimental task. Nondepressed students overestimated the degree of control. Furthermore, Cohrs et al. (2006) reported a negative relationship between neuroticism and the perception of autonomy. Thus, low core self-evaluations should lead to perceptions of low autonomy, which in turn lead to low job attitudes. The link between core self-evaluations and autonomy is not restricted to the mere perception of autonomy. Referring to the action mediation model, people with high core self-evaluations may also change their work environment by fostering their latitude, comparable to people with high personal initiative (Frese et al., 2007).

The action mediation model could also apply to the effect of core self-evaluations on getting feedback from the job: People with an internal locus of control are more active in terms of seeking feedback and more cognitively

alert to environmental cues (Perrewé & Mizerski, 1987). Furthermore, research from organizational socialization has shown that self-efficacy is a positive predictor of feedback-seeking behaviour (Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006), as is self-esteem (for a review, see Pierce & Gardner, 2004). Given that feedback seeking is related to getting feedback, people with high core self-evaluations can be expected to receive and perceive more feedback than people with low core self-evaluations.

A perception-based explanation could account for the mediation through task significance. Action identification theory posits that successful actions are identified on a higher level than unsuccessful actions (Vallacher, Wegner, & Frederick, 1987). According to Vallacher et al., actions on higher levels (e.g., “writing an essay”) are perceived as more meaningful than low level actions (“typing on a keyboard”). It can therefore be expected that people with high self-efficacy have a dispositional tendency to identify their actions on a higher level. People with high self-efficacy believe in their own performance capacity and might therefore judge their future actions as more successful. Thereby, they might perceive their tasks as more meaningful to others. A first clue about the relationship between self-efficacy and task significance was found by Jex and Bliese (1999), who report a strong correlation of these constructs.

From an action-related perspective regarding the relation between core self-evaluations and task identity it can be expected that people with high core self-evaluations strive for more challenging and thus more responsible tasks. For example, Sadri and Robertson (1993) meta-analytically confirmed the link between self-efficacy and choosing challenging goals. In jobs involving high responsibility, a person attends to a task from the beginning to the end and thus perceives the task as holistic.

The perception of task variety also has a link to personality as Münsterberg (1912) claimed. He stated that the perception of monotony—the ultimate result of low skill variety—seems to be more effected by dispositions than by the kind of job. This assumption was confirmed for self-esteem in several studies finding a negative relationship between self-esteem and monotony (e.g., Kivimäki & Kalimo, 1996). Consequently, people with high core self-evaluations will perceive more skill variety (perception mediation model) than people with low core self-evaluations.

In sum, there are various theoretical ways that job characteristics might mediate the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction. With the knowledge of a differentiated mediation by job characteristics, we gain insight into the underlying process of mediation. Thus, it is important to know if the common core of job characteristics accounts for that mediation or if particular facets mediate the relationship.

## CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Research on the relation between core self-evaluations and job-related outcomes has predominantly focused on job satisfaction. The link to other job attitudes, such as organizational commitment, has not been investigated so far. Apart from job satisfaction, organizational commitment is one of the most frequently studied job attitudes in industrial and organizational psychology (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Affective organizational commitment refers to the extent to which a person is emotionally attached to his or her organization. Although job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment are highly correlated, these two attitudes are distinct (Maier & Woschée, 2002; Mathieu & Farr, 1991). Whereas job satisfaction refers to the quality of one's work, organizational commitment focuses on the organization. Organizational commitment has a positive influence on a wide range of attitudes and behaviours that are beneficial to the organization. For example, people with high organizational commitment show lower intention to leave (Riketta & van Dick, 2005). It is particularly important for organizations with expansive human resource development projects that employees stay with the organization. Furthermore, affective organizational commitment has significant relationships with performance and organizational citizenship behaviour, as recent meta-analyses have shown (Riketta, 2002; Riketta & van Dick, 2005). Therefore, it is important not only to study why people are satisfied with their job, but also why they feel attached to their organization.

Although the relation between core self-evaluations and organizational commitment has not been addressed explicitly so far, previous studies and meta-analyses that investigated the core traits and organizational commitment give a sense of the relationship. In their meta-analysis, Thoresen et al. (2003) found a moderate but generalizable negative relationship between neuroticism and organizational commitment. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) showed in their meta-analysis that one antecedent of organizational commitment is perceived personal competence, a construct closely related to self-efficacy. A number of studies report positive relationships between internal locus of control and affective organizational commitment (e.g., Coleman, Irving, & Cooper, 1999). These results were confirmed in a recent meta-analysis (Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006). Regarding the fourth core trait, self-esteem, a number of studies report a significant positive relation between organization-based self-esteem (a more specific aspect of self-esteem) and organizational commitment (for a review, see Pierce & Gardner, 2004). Thus, a lot of studies and reviews as well as meta-analyses have found a relationship between the core traits and organizational commitment. In one study, Judge, Thoresen, Pucik and Welbourne (1999) could show that a

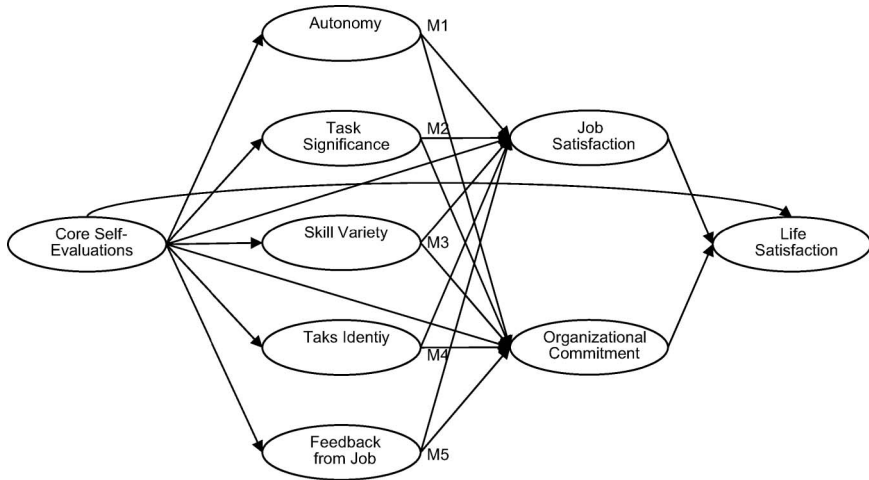


factor called positive self-concept (which is akin to core self-evaluations) was positively related to organizational commitment. However, no study illuminated the direct relationship between core self-evaluations and organizational commitment.

As organizational commitment is an affective appraisal and the process underlying organizational commitment also involves an emotional judgement, it should be affected by the self-assessment of a person as a result. In their seminal paper, Judge et al. (1997) stated that “the dispositional approach asserts that core evaluations and thinking processes underlie and/or affect these situationally specific appraisals” (p. 179). Thus, the process of emotional generalization should apply to this relationship in a similar way as it does to job satisfaction: Positive feelings about oneself influence the feelings about the organization. A person high on core self-evaluations will not only be more satisfied with the job, but also more committed to the organization he or she works for. The direct relationship between core self-evaluations and organizational commitment also raises the question how this effect could be explained. Intrinsic job characteristics have been identified as a category of antecedents of organizational commitment (Mathieu & Hamel, 1989). In a meta-analysis, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) demonstrated high relationships between intrinsic job characteristics and organizational commitment. They concluded that job characteristics, as an aggregate, could be antecedents of organizational commitment. However, they also found correlations between specific facets of the job characteristics model and organizational commitment. Thus, job characteristics can be expected to serve as a potential mediator between core self-evaluations and organizational commitment.

Beside the relationships of core self-evaluations with job-related outcomes like performance, attitudes, and health, Judge and colleagues demonstrated an effect on life satisfaction (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003; Judge et al., 1998; Piccolo, Judge, Takahashi, Watanabe, & Locke, 2005). Judge et al. (1998) confirmed a model in which core self-evaluations have a direct effect on life satisfaction as well as an indirect effect through job satisfaction. This is in line with a model proposed by Heller, Watson, and Ilies (2004). They showed that the Big Five traits (e.g., neuroticism) as well as domain satisfaction determine life satisfaction. Thus, we included life satisfaction as a distal outcome as well as job satisfaction and organizational commitment as proximal outcomes of core self-evaluations.

Our model includes direct and indirect relations of core self-evaluations and job attitudes as well as life satisfaction (cf. Figure 1). Based on existing findings we assumed that core self-evaluations have a direct relationship with job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment) and life satisfaction. However, we also hypothesized that parts of these direct effects on job attitudes could be accounted for by the



**Figure 1.** Expanded mediation model (full model). M1 to M5=Model 1 to Model 5; refer to the specific mediation models. Error correlations between job characteristics as well as between job satisfaction and organizational commitment are allowed.

mediating role of the five job characteristics (Model 1 to Model 5). Besides the direct effect of core self-evaluations on life satisfaction we expect a mediated effect through job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

### Participants

In this study, 199 employees from different organizations volunteered. They were approached in different companies and public transportation. Their age ranged from 20 to 64 years, with an average of 38.8 years ( $SD = 9.0$  years); 113 (57%) of the respondents were female and 79 (40%) were married. In our study, 114 participants (57%) had an apprenticeship and 73 (37%) had a university diploma as highest vocational qualification; 11 (6%) had no vocational qualification at all. Most of the participants (104, 54%) had a monthly income of €2500 or less, 79 (40%) between €2.501 and €5000, and 9 (5%) had a monthly income of more than €5000. The participants were employed in different branches, mostly in health care (38; 19%), industry (32; 16%), and in the service sector (27; 14%).

## Measures

*Core self-evaluations.* The core self-evaluations were measured with a German version (Stumpp, Muck, Hülshager, Judge, & Maier, 2008) of the core self-evaluations scale (Judge et al., 2003). The scale consists of 12 items, which were answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The one-factor structure of the scale as well as convergent and discriminant validity has been confirmed (Stumpp et al., 2008). The original scale has already been used in various other studies (e.g., Brown, Ferris, Heller, & Keeping, 2007; Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorensen, 2005).

*Attitudes.* *Life satisfaction* was measured with a German version (Maier, 2001) of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; example item: “I am satisfied with my life”). The scale consists of five items ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). To measure *job satisfaction* we used the short version of the job description form of Neuberger and Allerbeck (1978). This instrument assesses various facets of job satisfaction (i.e., relationship with colleagues, relationship with supervisor, job in general, work conditions, organization and management, promotion opportunities, and payment) and consists of seven items. The response scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). *Affective organizational commitment* was measured with the German version (Maier & Woschée, 2002) of the nine-item short form of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Porter & Smith, 1970; example item: “The future of this organization is close to my heart”). This scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

*Job characteristics.* We used the German version (Schmidt, Kleinbeck, Ottmann, & Seidel, 1985) of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1975) to measure the five facets of perceived *job characteristics* (i.e., skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback). The subscales consist of three items each, and the response scale ranges from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Following the suggestion of Renn, Swiercz, and Icenogle (1993) to test the factor structure of the JDS in each sample, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the fit of the five-factor structure. The fit indices for the five-factor solution were acceptable:  $\chi^2(80) = 178.97$ ,  $p < .000$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.237$ ; goodness of fit index (GFI) = .89; comparative fit index (CFI) = .94; non-normed fit index (NNFI) = .92; incremental fit index (IFI) = .94; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .08. All item loadings were significant ( $p < .001$ ); the average standardized item loadings onto each of the factors were as follows: skill variety = .83, task identity = .79, task

significance = .77, autonomy = .69, and feedback = .88. The five-factor solution provides a significantly better fit than the one-factor solution,  $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 622.23, p < .000$ , supporting the five-factor structure of the JDS in our study.

## Analysis

To test our hypothesis we used AMOS 5 (Arbuckle, 2003). According to the recommendations about applying several fit indices (Bollen, 1989), we used the following fit indices to assess the model: chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), non-normed fit index (NNFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

We first tested the full model displayed in Figure 1. In a second step, we tested specific mediation models (Model 1 to Model 5, see Figure 1) and compared them to the full model. Chi-square difference ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) was used to indicate a significant decline of model fit. With regard to parsimony a specific mediation model is preferred to the full model if there is no significant decline in model fit.

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities, and correlations, both uncorrected and corrected, for all study variables are displayed in Table 1. The correction of correlations was based on latent variable correlations. Because of the high correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment we tested the structure of the constructs using confirmatory factor

TABLE 1  
Descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities, and correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Core self-evaluation	3.82	.48	.83	.42	.53	.70	.27	.33	.30	.24	.36
2. Job satisfaction	4.73	1.08	.38	.82	.83	.37	.20	.20	.34	.20	.22
3. Organizational commitment	3.26	.74	.46	.75	.88	.50	.28	.23	.41	.26	.24
4. Life satisfaction	3.53	.64	.59	.35	.44	.83	.35	.30	.25	.20	.14
5. Skill variety	5.20	1.26	.22	.18	.24	.30	.86	.48	.61	.58	.40
6. Task identity	5.76	1.09	.29	.18	.21	.27	.45	.82	.49	.57	.55
7. Task significance	5.35	1.26	.26	.28	.35	.21	.51	.42	.81	.42	.41
8. Autonomy	5.58	1.09	.19	.18	.23	.15	.53	.50	.37	.81	.55
9. Feedback	5.44	1.16	.33	.20	.22	.13	.38	.49	.38	.49	.90

*N* = 199. Scale reliabilities (coefficient alpha) are on the diagonal. Latent correlations are above the diagonal, uncorrected correlations below.  $r_s > |.14|, p < .05$ ;  $r_s \geq |.18|, p < .01$ ;  $r_s \geq |.23|, p < .001$ .

analysis (Maier & Woschée, 2002). The results supported a significantly better fit of a two-factor,  $\chi^2(8) = 26.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 3.259$ ; GFI = .96; CFI = .98; NNFI = .95; IFI = .98; RMSEA = .11, in comparison to a one-factor solution,  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 39.07$ ,  $p < .000$ .

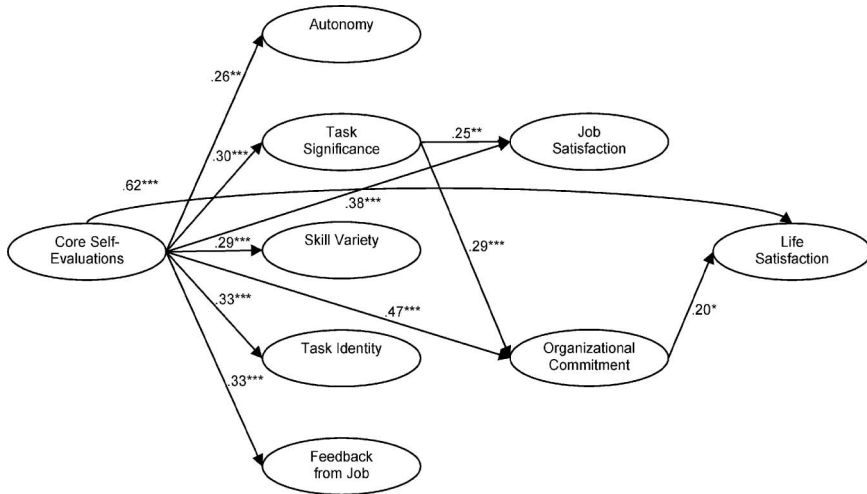
We used item parcels as indicators for the latent variables. In doing so, we combined the items with the highest and with the lowest factor loadings to form the first indicator, the items with the second highest and with the second lowest factor loading to form the second indicator, etc. Factor loadings were derived from an exploratory factor analysis. This strategy equalizes the influence of the primary factor across item parcels (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999). Three parcels were used to measure each construct.

To test our model we used the same item parcels as described earlier. Fit statistics for the full model displayed in Figure 1 were good (see Table 2). The comparison with each mediation model reveals that all specific models showed a significant decline in model fit with the exception of the task significance mediation model (Model 2). This specific mediation model is presented in Figure 2. As shown in Figure 2, core self-evaluations had strong direct effects on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction ( $ps < .01$ ). Core self-evaluations had also direct effects on skill variety ( $p < .01$ ), task identity ( $p < .01$ ), task significance ( $p < .01$ ), autonomy ( $p < .01$ ), and feedback ( $p < .01$ ). There were indirect effects of core self-evaluations on job satisfaction ( $r = .08$ ,  $p < .01$ ) as well as on organizational commitment ( $r = .09$ ,  $p < .01$ ) which were mediated through task significance. Table 3 displays total as well as direct effects. The results

TABLE 2  
Model fit and model comparison for the full model and the specific mediation models

Model	Model fit							Model comparison <sup>a</sup>	
	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	CFI	NNFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$
Full model	548.28***	294	1.87	.83	.92	.90	.066		
Autonomy (Model 1)	573.51***	302	1.90	.83	.91	.90	.067	25.23**	8
Task significance (Model 2)	557.06***	302	1.85	.84	.92	.91	.065	8.77	8
Skill variety (Model 3)	572.53***	302	1.90	.83	.92	.90	.067	24.25**	8
Task identity (Model 4)	576.66***	302	1.91	.83	.91	.90	.068	28.38***	8
Feedback (Model 5)	576.60***	302	1.91	.83	.91	.90	.068	28.32***	8

$N = 199$ . <sup>a</sup>Model comparison with full model. \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 2.** Mediation model with task significance (Model 2).  $N=199$ . Reported are standardized regression weights and indirect effects. Error correlations between job characteristics as well as between job satisfaction and organizational commitment are allowed. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 3**  
 Direct, indirect, and total effects of core self-evaluations on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction<sup>a</sup> mediated through task significance

<i>Effect</i>	<i>Job satisfaction</i>	<i>Organizational commitment</i>	<i>Life satisfaction</i>
Direct	.377**	.473**	.615**
Indirect	.075**	.087**	.080
Total	.452**	.560**	.695**
Proportion of effect mediated <sup>b</sup>	.17	.16	.12

$N = 199$ . Reported are standardized effects. <sup>a</sup>The effect on life satisfaction is mediated through task significance and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. <sup>b</sup>Proportion of effect mediated was calculated by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect. \*\* $p < .01$ .

support a partially mediated effect of core self-evaluations on job attitudes. The decomposition of the total effect displays that about 17% of the effect on job attitudes is mediated through task significance. However, the main part of the relationship is due to a direct effect of core self-evaluations.

To further investigate the mediation, we compared the task significance mediation model first to a model that only contains direct effects of core

self-evaluations on job attitudes (direct model) and second to a model, that only contains the mediated, indirect effects (indirect model). The model fit for the direct model,  $\chi^2(309) = 610.97$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 1.977$ ; GFI = .82; CFI = .91; NNFI = .89; IFI = .91; RMSEA = .07, as well as for the indirect model,  $\chi^2(309) = 690.86$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.236$ ; GFI = .80; CFI = .88; NNFI = .86; IFI = .88; RMSEA = .08, were not acceptable. Furthermore, both models resulted in a significant decline in chi-square, direct model:  $\Delta\chi^2(7) = 53.92$ ,  $p < .000$ ; indirect model:  $\Delta\chi^2(7) = 133.80$ ,  $p < .000$ , compared to the task significance mediation model. These findings further support the partial mediation through task significance.

With respect to life satisfaction, no mediation by both job attitudes was found. Core self-evaluations accounted for 88% of the total effect. Job satisfaction had no direct effect on life satisfaction (for a similar effect cf. Rode, 2004). However, the results show that organizational commitment had a significant direct effect on life satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to differentiate and extend the previous model of the relationship between core self-evaluations and job attitudes. As hypothesized, we found a positive relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction, a finding which is in accordance with previous research (Bono & Judge, 2003). Apart from the replicated findings of a direct relationship of core self-evaluations with job and life satisfaction, we also found a direct relationship with affective organizational commitment. Accordingly, people with a positive self-perception are more attached to their organization.

In explaining the relationship, we found task significance partly mediated the relationship between core self-evaluations and job attitudes. People with positive self-evaluations perceive their job as more important to others; they are therefore more satisfied with their jobs and feel more attached to their organization. This effect might be explained by differences in the level of task identification between people high or low in core self-evaluations. In action identification theory (Vallacher & Wegner, 1985, 1987), every task or action can be decomposed into different identities which are hierarchically organized and thus are located on different levels. An action can be represented on a low level that encompasses the details or specific aspects of an action. These action identities indicate how the task is done. A higher level action identity encompasses a more general understanding of the action and indicates why the action is done (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). An identity on a higher level is more meaningful than a low-level identity of the same action (Vallacher et al., 1987). An explanation why task significance

partly mediates the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction could be that persons with positive self-evaluations are more confident in their actions and therefore choose more ambitious goals. Striving for more challenging goals should lead to the perception of more meaningfulness of one's job in the short run and to more job satisfaction and higher organizational commitment in the long run. A bricklayer building a pier of the Oresund bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden by setting brick on brick could identify his action as working on a pier (a low-level identity) or taking part in a prestigious venture like connecting two countries with the world's second longest suspension bridge and the world's longest submerged tunnel (a high-level and meaningful identity). In the latter case, the bricklayer perceives his/her work as affecting other people's lives in a stronger way than in the former case. This results in the bricklayer working on the Oresund bridge having a higher job satisfaction than the one working on the pier. The same applies for the mediation between core self-evaluations and organizational commitment. A bricklayer identifying his/her action on an abstract and high level feels more attached to the organization because it offers the possibility to be engaged in such an important venture. Furthermore, the bricklayer could be proud because he/she works for the organization building the bridge and thus will be highly attached to it.

But why does a person with high core self-evaluations identify his or her actions on a higher level? People with high core self-evaluations believe in their own performance capacity. Thus, they do not have to concentrate on specific operations involved in fulfilling the task, but they see the task as a whole matter. This in turn leads them to identify their actions on a higher level. This kind of mediation supports the perception-based indirect effect of core self-evaluations on job satisfaction. It might be a fruitful pathway for future research to examine this theoretical rationale empirically.

Another, more action-related explanation of the mediation could be the actual level of job complexity. Judge et al. (2000) showed that people with high core self-evaluations do not only perceive their jobs as more challenging, but that they also hold more complex jobs. In general, more complex jobs are perceived as more meaningful to others (for a meta-analytic review, see Taber & Taylor, 1990). Thus, the mediation of core self-evaluations and affective job attitudes through task significance could also be caused by the level of complexity. However, it has to be noted that job complexity had a direct effect on job satisfaction only in one of the studies of Judge et al. (2000, Study 2). They stated that "this should not be surprising considering that virtually all of the effects of environmental conditions are mediated by conscious perceptions" (p. 247). To further investigate whether the mediation is perception or action based, we have to



include job complexity in addition to action identification level in further studies.

In interpreting the results of this study, it is important to bear in mind that all measures were assessed via self-report. Therefore, one goal of future studies should be to replicate the present findings, using objective assessments of job characteristics through task analysis in order to obtain individual assessments for each job. Furthermore, personality constructs could be assessed by significant others (as done so in other studies; cf. Judge et al., 2000) to avoid monomethod bias. Another limitation of the study is that we cannot draw causal inferences from a cross-sectional study. Judge et al. (2000) proposed that job characteristics mediate the relationship between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction by the same way we proposed here. With our study design it was not possible to draw conclusions about the link between core self-evaluations and job attitudes. However, the causal assumptions of our model are in line with the assumptions of other cross-sectional studies (e.g., Judge et al., 2000).

Despite these limitations, our study has several implications for research and practice. First, in personnel selection our results support the use of core self-evaluations as a predictor to select employees with positive job attitudes. Second, leaders or supervisors should highlight the task significance of their employees' tasks especially if their employees have low core self-evaluations. As employees with low core self-evaluations do not perceive their tasks as important to others they need supervisors who point this out. Leaders who articulate a vision—a dimension of transformational leadership—provide meaning for the tasks of their employees (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Therefore, it is expected that employees with low core self-evaluations should benefit more from supervisors with transformational leadership than employees with high core self-evaluations. Third, research on core self-evaluations has so far mainly focused on the positive aspects of high core self-evaluations. In future studies we should broaden this perspective and also consider possible undesired effects. For one of the core traits, self-esteem, negative consequences have already been discussed in the literature (Crocker & Park, 2004). Apart from temporary emotional benefits, pursuing self-esteem interferes with one's own perceived autonomy, learning and competence, self-regulation, and even physical and mental health. In contrast, Hiller and Hambrick (2005) assume that very high core self-evaluations (called hypercore self-evaluations) of CEOs have no detrimental effects; they even propose that high core self-evaluations are related to healthy narcissism and negative or unrelated to a more psychopathological form. As no empirical research on the relationship of core self-evaluations and narcissism has been done so far, further research in this area would be valuable to answer the question whether core self-evaluations is more than just overestimating one's own capabilities.

## REFERENCES

- Alloy, L. B., & Abramson, L. Y. (1979). Judgement of contingency in depressed and non-depressed students: Sadder but wiser? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *108*, 441–485.
- Arbuckle, J. L. (2003). *AMOS 5 update to the AMOS User's Guide*. Chicago: Small Waters.
- Best, R. G., Stapleton, L. M., & Downey, R. G. (2005). Core self-evaluations and job burnout: The test of alternative models. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *10*, 441–451.
- Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural equations with latent variables*. New York: Wiley.
- Bono, J. E., & Judge, T. A. (2003). Core self-evaluations: A review of the trait and its role in job satisfaction and job performance. *European Journal of Personality*, *17*, S5–S18.
- Brief, A. P., & Weiss, H. M. (2002). Organizational behavior: Affect in the workplace. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *53*, 279–307.
- Brown, D. J., Ferris, D. L., Heller, D., & Keeping, L. M. (2007). Antecedents and consequences of the frequency of upward and downward social comparisons at work. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *102*, 59–75.
- Cohrs, J. C., Abele, A. E., & Dette, D. E. (2006). Integrating situational and dispositional determinants of job satisfaction: Findings from three samples of professionals. *Journal of Psychology*, *140*, 363–395.
- Coleman, D. F., Irving, G. P., & Cooper, C. L. (1999). Another look at the locus of control-organizational commitment relationship: It depends on the form of commitment. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *20*, 995–1001.
- Connolly, J. J., & Viswesvaran, C. (2000). The role of affectivity in job satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *29*, 265–281.
- Costa, P. T. J., & McCrae, R. (1992). *Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Crocker, J., & Park, L. E. (2004). The costly pursuit of self-esteem. *Psychological Bulletin*, *130*, 392–414.
- Cropanzano, R., James, K., & Konovsky, M. A. (1993). Dispositional affectivity as a predictor of work attitudes and job performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *14*, 595–606.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *49*, 71–75.
- Dormann, C., & Zapf, D. (2001). Job satisfaction: A meta-analysis of stabilities. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *22*, 483–504.
- Dunham, R. B. (1976). Measurement and dimensionality of job characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *61*, 404–409.
- Frese, M., Garst, H., & Fay, D. (2007). Making things happen: Reciprocal relationships between work characteristics and personal initiative in a four-wave longitudinal structural equation model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *92*, 1084–1102.
- Fried, Y., & Ferris, G. R. (1987). The validity of the job characteristics model: A review and meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, *40*, 287–322.
- Gruman, J. A., Saks, A. M., & Zweig, D. I. (2006). Organizational socialization tactics and newcomer proactive behaviors: An integrative study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *69*, 90–104.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of Job Diagnostic Survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *60*, 159–170.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through design of work—Test of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, *16*, 250–279.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1980). *Work redesign*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

- Hall, R. J., Snell, A. F., & Foust, M. S. (1999). Item parceling strategies in SEM: Investigating the subtle effects of unmodeled constructs. *Organizational Research Methods, 2*, 233–256.
- Heller, D., Watson, D., & Ilies, R. (2004). The role of person versus situation in life satisfaction: A critical examination. *Psychological Bulletin, 130*, 574–600.
- Hiller, N. J., & Hambrick, D. C. (2005). Conceptualizing executive hubris: The role of (hyper-) core self-evaluations in strategic decision-making. *Strategic Management Journal, 26*, 297–319.
- Jex, S. M., & Bliese, P. D. (1999). Efficacy beliefs as a moderator of the impact of work-related stressors: A multilevel study. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84*, 349–361.
- Judge, T. A., & Bono, J. E. (2001). Relationship of core self-evaluations traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability—with job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 80–92.
- Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Erez, A., & Locke, E. A. (2005). Core self-evaluations and job and life satisfaction: The role of self-concordance and goal attainment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*, 257–268.
- Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., & Locke, E. A. (2000). Personality and job satisfaction: The mediating role of job characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*, 237–249.
- Judge, T. A., Erez, A., Bono, J. E., & Thoresen, C. J. (2002). Are measures of self-esteem, neuroticism, locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy indicators of a common core construct? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*, 693–710.
- Judge, T. A., Erez, A., Bono, J. E., & Thoresen, C. J. (2003). The core self-evaluations scale: Development of a measure. *Personnel Psychology, 56*, 303–331.
- Judge, T. A., Heller, D., & Mount, M. K. (2002). Five-factor model of personality and job satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 530–541.
- Judge, T. A., & Larsen, R. J. (2001). Dispositional affect and job satisfaction: A review and theoretical extension. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 86*, 67–98.
- Judge, T. A., Locke, E. A., & Durham, C. C. (1997). The dispositional causes of job satisfaction: A core evaluation approach. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 19*, 151–188.
- Judge, T. A., Locke, E. A., Durham, C. C., & Kluger, A. N. (1998). Dispositional effects on job and life satisfaction: The role of core evaluations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 17–34.
- Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*, 755–768.
- Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Pucik, V., & Welbourne, T. M. (1999). Managerial coping with organizational change: A dispositional perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84*, 107–122.
- Kesting, M., Stumpp, T., Hülshager, U. R., & Maier, G. W. (2006, September). *Zentrale Selbstbewertungen: Validierung eines Messinstruments [Core self-evaluations: Validation of a measurement]*. Poster presented at the 45th Congress of the German Psychological Association, Nurnberg, Germany.
- Kivimäki, M., & Kalimo, R. (1996). Self-esteem and the occupational stress process: Testing two alternative models in a sample of blue-collar workers. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 1*, 187–196.
- Loher, B. T., Noe, R. A., Moeller, N. L., & Fitzgerald, M. P. (1985). A meta-analysis of the relation of job characteristics to job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 70*, 280–289.
- Maier, G. W. (2001). *Deutsche Übersetzung der satisfaction with life scale [German translation of the Satisfaction with Life Scale]*. (Interne Forschungsbericht [Internal research paper]), Munich, Germany: University of Munich.

- Maier, G. W., & Woschée, R.-M. (2002). Die affektive Bindung an das Unternehmen: Psychometrische Überprüfung einer deutschsprachigen Fassung des Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) von Porter und Smith (1970) [Affective commitment to an organization: Psychometric examination of a German version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) of Porter and Smith (1970)]. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie*, *46*, 126–136.
- Mathieu, J. E., & Farr, J. L. (1991). Further evidence for the discriminant validity of measures of organizational commitment, job involvement, and job-satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *76*, 127–133.
- Mathieu, J. E., & Hamel, K. (1989). A causal model of the antecedents of organizational commitment among professionals and nonprofessionals. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *34*, 299–317.
- Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin*, *108*, 171–194.
- Münsterberg, H. (1912). *Psychologie und Wirtschaftsleben [Psychology and business life]*. Leipzig, Germany: Barth.
- Neuberger, O., & Allerbeck, M. (1978). *Messung und Analyse von Arbeitszufriedenheit [Measurement and analysis of job satisfaction]*. Bern, Switzerland: Huber.
- Ng, T. W. H., Sorensen, K. L., & Eby, L. T. (2006). Locus of control at work: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *27*, 1057–1087.
- Oliver, J., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & de Jong, R. D. (2005). Projection of own on others' job characteristics: Evidence for the false consensus effect in job characteristics information. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, *13*, 63–74.
- Packer, E. (1985). Understanding the subconscious. *The Objectivist Forum*, *6*, 1–10.
- Perrewé, P. L., & Mizerski, R. W. (1987). Locus of control and task complexity in perceptions of job dimensions. *Psychological Reports*, *61*, 43–49.
- Piccolo, R. F., Judge, T. A., Takahashi, K., Watanabe, N., & Locke, E. A. (2005). Core self-evaluations in Japan: Relative effects on job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and happiness. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *26*, 965–984.
- Pierce, J. L., & Gardner, D. G. (2004). Self-esteem within the work and organizational context: A review of the organization-based self-esteem literature. *Journal of Management*, *30*, 591–622.
- Porter, L. W., & Smith, F. J. (1970). *The etiology of organizational commitment*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Renn, R. W., Swiercz, P. M., & Icenogle, M. L. (1993). Measurement properties of the revised job diagnostic survey: More promising news from the public sector. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *53*, 1011–1021.
- Riketta, M. (2002). Attitudinal organizational commitment and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *23*, 257–266.
- Riketta, M., & van Dick, R. (2005). Foci of attachment in organizations: A meta-analytic comparison of the strength and correlates of workgroup versus organizational identification and commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *67*, 490–510.
- Rode, J. C. (2004). Job satisfaction and life satisfaction revisited: A longitudinal test of an integrated model. *Human Relations*, *57*, 1205–1230.
- Saavedra, R., & Kwun, S. K. (2000). Affective states in job characteristics theory. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *21*, 131–146.
- Sadri, G., & Robertson, I. T. (1993). Self-efficacy and work-related behaviour: A review and metaanalysis. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *42*, 139–152.
- Schmidt, K.-H., Kleinbeck, U., Ottmann, W., & Seidel, B. (1985). Ein Verfahren zur Diagnose von Arbeitsinhalten: Der Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) [An instrument for the diagnosis of work content: The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS)]. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie*, *29*, 162–172.

- Staw, B. M., Bell, N. E., & Clausen, J. A. (1986). The dispositional approach to job-attitudes: A lifetime longitudinal test. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 31, 56–77.
- Staw, B. M., & Ross, J. (1985). Stability in the midst of change: A dispositional approach to job-attitudes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 70, 469–480.
- Stumpp, T., Muck, P. M., Hülshager, U. R., Judge, T. J. & Maier, G. W. (2008). Core self-evaluations in Germany: Validation of a German measure and its relationships with career success. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.
- Taber, T. D., & Taylor, E. (1990). A review and evaluation of the psychometric properties of the job diagnostic survey. *Personnel Psychology*, 43, 467–500.
- Thoresen, C. J., Kaplan, S. A., Barsky, A. P., Warren, C. R., & de Chermont, K. (2003). The affective underpinnings of job perceptions and attitudes: A meta-analytic review and integration. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 914–945.
- Vallacher, R. R., & Wegner, D. M. (1985). *A theory of action identification*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Vallacher, R. R., & Wegner, D. M. (1987). What do people think they're doing? Action identification and human behavior. *Psychological Review*, 94, 3–15.
- Vallacher, R. R., Wegner, D. M., & Frederick, J. (1987). The presentation of self through action identification. *Social Cognition*, 5, 301–322.
- Wanberg, C. R., Glomb, T. M., Song, Z., & Sorensen, S. (2005). Job-search persistence during unemployment: A ten wave longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 411–430.
- Watson, D., & Slack, A. K. (1993). General factors of affective temperament and their relation to job-satisfaction over time. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 54, 181–202.

*Original manuscript received April 2006*

*Revised manuscript received July 2007*

*First published online August 2008*