

WHO PUT THE FUN IN FUNCTIONAL?  
FUN AT WORK AND ITS EFFECTS ON JOB PERFORMANCE

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2008

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To Mom & Dad

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I thank my fantastic husband, Rob Woolf, for supporting my education habit throughout the whole nine years we have been together. Without his encouragement, patience, and quiet understanding, I would have gone even crazier throughout this whole process of getting my degree and finishing my dissertation. It has truly been an adventure for us, and I would not trade any minute of it!

Both of my parents have always encouraged me to follow my dreams, and for that I cannot thank them enough. Thanks go to my dad, David Fluegge, for always saying that everything builds character. He is right; I feel super-full of character from coming here to UF to get my PhD and also from my dissertation journey. Dad also taught me a lesson a long time ago about five plus five plus five; I am thankful for that lesson to ensure I take time to do things right (the Fluegge way). I also thank my mom, Cheryl Reinagel, for encouraging me that I was doing the right thing, even when it was so scary for me to start this program (and even though she did not want me to leave either). I thank her for always advising me to love many, trust few, and always paddle my own canoe. I have really tried to follow that advice, and doing so built character too.

The rest of my family has definitely been a stronghold throughout my whole experience, and each of them also deserves special recognition. Thanks go to my sisters, Sarah Geringer and Leni Fluegge, who often let me vent or rant and then cheered me up with fun news, stories, and pictures from home. I also appreciate that both Grandpa and Grandma just smiled even though they did not understand “why I couldn’t just get a PhD in Missouri”. All of the visits to the farm to see them provided me with a certain peace that made everything a bit easier when I would get off the plane back in Florida and had to go back to work.

My committee, without a doubt, was a perfect match for me. I extend a very gracious thank you to Tim Judge and Amir Erez, my co-chairs, who allowed me to stay true to myself and make

my own path at the University of Florida. It is not often that one finds advisors that are so easy going. Their sound advice coupled with creative freedom was more than I could have expected. I also want to express gratitude towards my other committee members, Jeff LePine and James Algina, for their unique contributions to my dissertation. The leadership demonstrated by each of my committee members set a great example for me to follow in the future, and I sincerely appreciate everyone's efforts.

I also extend enormous thanks to my pseudo-cohort, as they are so wonderfully known. Specifically, I thank Ryan Klinger and Jenny Strohsahl for many much-needed nights at Las Margaritas (and 32-ounce beers) and float trips on the Santa Fe (and coolers of beers). Also, Jessica Mueller's copy editing, statistics refreshers, and simple encouragement made this final project so much better. I must also say thanks to Jessica Saul for always having something random and fun to talk about or be annoyed with – always an entertaining distraction. Overall, each of my pseudo-cohort members made me appreciate just how fun work can be. I appreciate all of the good times we shared.

Finally, I have never officially thanked him, but maybe somehow he will hear this... I thank Mr. Haring for writing those words in my high school yearbook so long ago (in red, nonetheless), "Always work to your potential!" Those words have stuck with me ever since, and I may have even said them to my own students along the way. Funny how things work out!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	4
LIST OF TABLES .....	8
LIST OF FIGURES .....	9
ABSTRACT.....	10
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	12
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	15
Definition of Fun at Work .....	15
Elements of Fun at Work.....	15
Outcomes of Fun at Work.....	17
Individual Differences .....	18
Research Objective .....	19
3 THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES .....	21
Theoretical Model.....	21
Fun at Work and Task Performance .....	22
Fun at Work and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors .....	24
Fun at Work and Creative Performance .....	26
Fun at Work and Positive Affect .....	29
Positive Affect and Task Performance .....	31
Positive Affect and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors .....	33
Positive Affect and Creative Performance .....	35
Positive Affect as a Mediator of Fun at Work and Performance Outcomes .....	37
Fun at Work and Work Engagement .....	39
Work Engagement and Task Performance .....	42
Work Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors .....	45
Work Engagement and Creative Performance .....	47
Engagement as a Mediator of Fun at Work and Performance Outcomes.....	49
Measurement of Fun at Work .....	50
4 METHODS .....	51
Sample .....	51
Procedure .....	51
Measures .....	52
Analysis .....	55

5	RESULTS .....	57
	Part I: Measurement Model and Convergent Validity.....	57
	Part II: Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing.....	63
6	DISCUSSION.....	73
	Fun at Work and Performance.....	73
	Practical Implications .....	76
	Limitations.....	77
	Future Research .....	78
	Conclusion.....	81
 <b>APPENDIX</b>		
A	EMPLOYEE SURVEY ITEMS .....	82
B	SUPERVISOR SURVEY ITEMS.....	84
	LIST OF REFERENCES .....	85
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .....	99

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>page</u>
5-1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Between Study Variables .....	58
5-2 Comparison of Factor Structures of Fun at Work.....	59
5-3 Usefulness Analyses of Multiple Correlations .....	63
5-4 Comparison of Factor Structures of Performance .....	64
5-5 Comparison of Factor Structures of Overall Measurement Model.....	65
5-6 Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Fun at Work on Performance Outcomes .....	68
5-7 Fun at Work and Performance: The Mediating Effect of Positive Affect .....	69
5-8 Fun at Work and Performance: The Mediating Effect of Work Engagement .....	71

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>page</u>
3-1 Conceptual Model of the Relations Among Fun at Work, Positive Affect, Work Engagement, and Performance Outcomes .....	21
5-1 Standardized Effects of Fun at Work on Task Performance.....	67
5-2 Standardized Effects of Fun at Work on Organizational Citizenship Behavior .....	67
5-3 Standardized Effects of Fun at Work on Creative Performance.....	68

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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May 2008

Chair: Timothy A. Judge

Cochair: Amir Erez

Major: Business Administration

Despite the popularity of workplace fun in the popular press, little empirical research has adequately addressed the effects of fun at work on individual job performance. In addition, the measurement of workplace fun has not been extensively validated. Accordingly, this study was designed to address two questions. First, do measures of fun at work display convergent validity (i.e., a common construct)? Second, if the four measures do indicate a common construct, what is the nature of this concept relative to three elements of job performance (i.e., task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance) and affective and cognitive processes (e.g., positive affect and work engagement, respectively)?

In order to effectively address these questions, analyses were conducted in two phases using data from a sample of 205 working undergraduate students and their immediate supervisors. In the first phase, the measurement model of fun at work was extensively examined. A principal components analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and usefulness analysis were conducted to assess the convergent validity of the measurement of fun at work. The results of these analyses suggest that fun at work is a second-order construct consisting of socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun. In the next phase, structural

equation modeling techniques were used to examine the relationship of fun at work and various outcomes. Overall, the findings of this study provide evidence to suggest that fun at work affects individual job performance. Specifically, fun at work was positively and directly related to organizational citizenship behavior, and positively and indirectly to both task performance and creative performance.

Affective and cognitive mechanisms (e.g., positive affect and work engagement, respectively) also demonstrated unique relationships with fun at work and the individual performance outcomes. As expected, fun at work was positively related to both positive affect and work engagement. With respect to the three performance outcomes, positive affect positively predicted only task performance and was not related to organizational citizenship behavior or creative performance. In addition, this study was one of the first to find a positive relationship between work engagement and creative performance. However, work engagement was not significantly related to task performance or organizational citizenship behavior as previously suggested. Positive affect and work engagement were then tested as mediators of the fun at work and performance relationship. No support was found for positive affect as a mediator, but work engagement as a mediator was supported for the effect of fun at work on creative performance. Thus, individuals having fun at work were also more likely to be more engaged in their work, and consequently exhibit greater creative performance.

Overall, the findings of this study provide evidence to suggest that fun at work directly and indirectly affects job performance. Furthermore, these results suggest that the notion that a fun working environment results in greater employee productivity may indeed be true and seems worthy of further investigation. The practical implications and limitations of these findings are followed by suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

If you have fun at what you do, you'll never work a day in your life. Make work like play-and play like hell.

–Norm Brinker, *On the Brink*

In the dot-com trend of the '90s, new corporate cultures of fun emerged such that business became more associated with play and less related to work (Van Meel & Vos, 2001). Recent literature indicates that employees desire a fun workplace: a majority of workers under the age of 30 list having coworkers who “make work fun” as an important factor in their job search (Belkin, 2007). Undoubtedly, these new entrants into the workforce may not have a hard time finding an organization that also values a fun work environment. For example, from the omnipresent college-campus feel of the Googleplex (Schoeneman, 2006) to the free gourmet bistros and cafes onsite (“There’s always a free lunch”, 2007), Google embodies a fun workplace. In a similar vein, Southwest Airlines’ “corporate culture of fun” encourages employees to engage in outrageous behaviors with the goal of fostering a friendly and fun work environment (Sunoo, 1995). Other companies are on board with the idea of letting their employees engage in rather non-traditional work activities. For example, the Kodak headquarters office in New York allows employees to go to a “humor room” to take a “fun break” (Caudron, 1992). Even at IBM employees are encouraged to test out “playrooms” and “imagination spaces” (Collinson, 2002).

Although popular press articles continue to inundate curious readers with the notion that fun workplaces create more satisfied and productive employees, little empirical research has tested these assertions. Therefore, questions about fun in the workplace remain. How exactly do these companies instill fun within their organizations, and more importantly, why? Along those same lines, does fun in the workplace really promote positive organizational outcomes? And,

perhaps most fundamentally, is fun a valid construct, or is it one of those management buzzwords that pass in and out of vogue with little lasting effect? To test the ideas of whether or not fun truly does benefit individuals and organizations, systematic research is necessary.

Therefore, two main issues need to be addressed with respect to fun in the workplace. First, the concept of fun at work needs to be explored empirically and with a rigorous analytic approach. With few exceptions (i.e., Karl, Peluchette, Hall, & Harland, 2005; Karl, Peluchette, & Harland, 2007; McDowell, 2005), most of the research on fun at work relies mostly on anecdotal evidence from consultants. The few empirical studies that do exist are limited by their mono-source, cross sectional nature (e.g., Karl et al., 2005, 2007). Second, although an abundance of popular press articles suggest that fun at work enhances performance outcomes such as creativity and innovation (e.g., Abramis, 1989; Caudron, 1992) virtually no research supports such claims. For these reasons, the structure and nomological network of the construct of fun at work is essentially non-existent.

In light of these two issues, the purpose of this research is to establish the construct of fun at work and empirically test the effects of fun at work on performance outcomes in an exploratory fashion. Specifically, the measurement structure of fun at work will be extensively examined and tested. Next, fun at work will be explored as a determinant of positive affect and work engagement and corresponding effects on multiple dimensions of performance including task, contextual, and creative performance. In addition, affective and cognitive facilitation of fun at work will be investigated in terms of positive affect and work engagement, respectively. Consequently, the outline for this paper is to 1) present a theoretical model, 2) propose hypotheses, 3) provide methodology and sample information, 4) present details of the data

analysis, 5) discuss results, and 6) provide future research suggestions. In the next section, a review of the extant literature on fun at work is provided.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of the existing literature on fun at work is organized into the subsequent sections: (1) Definition of fun at work, (2) Elements of fun at work, (3) Outcomes of fun at work, (4) Individual differences, and (5) Research objective.

### **Definition of Fun at Work**

*Fun at work* involves any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure. This definition is consistent with previous conceptualizations, such as McDowell (2005) who defined *fun at work* as “engaging in activities not specifically related to the job that are enjoyable, amusing, or playful (p. 9).” Such activities are indicative of a fun work environment, which, according to Ford, McLaughlin, and Newstrom (2003), “intentionally encourages, initiates, and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities that positively impact the attitude and productivity of individuals and groups” (p. 22).

### **Elements of Fun at Work**

Due to the nature of fun at work as somewhat broad and all-encompassing, several researchers have sought out to more specifically identify elements of fun at work. For example, to determine the specific features that entail a fun work environment, Ford et al. (2003) surveyed 572 members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Ford and colleagues found that the top three categories of activities that contribute to a fun work environment, in order of importance, were recognition of personal milestones (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries), social events (e.g., picnics, parties, social gatherings), and public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g. award banquets). More recently, researchers (i.e., Karl et al., 2007; McDowell, 2005) have begun to focus on presenting more comprehensive models of fun at work.

Although these models include elements of fun at work, the research has expanded to also include related outcomes.

In their exploratory piece, Karl et al. (2007) proposed a model of fun at work which incorporated elements of attitudes towards fun, experienced fun, personality, emotional dissonance, and related consequences. Experienced fun was defined as “the extent to which a person perceives the existence of fun in their workplace” (p. 415). Attitudes towards fun included elements regarding both the importance and appropriateness of having fun at work as well as the perceived consequences related to having fun at work. Karl and colleagues found support for an inverse relationship between experienced fun and emotional exhaustion and dissonance, such that those individuals experiencing fun at work reported lower levels of emotional exhaustion and dissonance. Furthermore, Karl et al. (2007) also found evidence to suggest that those individuals experiencing fun at work were also more likely to report higher job satisfaction. While the findings are promising for this study, it is limited by self-reported data and a narrow study setting. Noting such limitations, the authors explained that further research, including replication and extension, is necessary.

Also proposing a theoretical model of fun at work, McDowell (2005) broke down fun at work into distinct categories: socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and also global fun. The first three categories seem similar to experienced fun as defined by Karl et al. (2007) in that they tap the elements of experiencing fun, whereas the global fun construct is more of an attitude towards fun at work. In either case, experiencing fun and attitudes towards fun are both important elements to consider in systematic study of fun in the workplace. McDowell (2005) examined the effects of the various dimensions of fun on outcomes of job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intentions. Results suggest that fun at work positively impacts both

job satisfaction and affective commitment and negatively impacts turnover intentions. McDowell (2005) additionally explored a “fun person” dimension and attempted to link it to trait positive affect. Although results were not supported for trait positive affectivity in the analyses, this study marks an important step forward for exploring the link between fun at work and positive affect.

### **Outcomes of Fun at Work**

Popular press articles include a variety of positive outcomes that may stem from having fun at work. It has been suggested that people who have fun at work should experience less stress (McGhee, 2000; Miller, 1996), demonstrate lower turnover and absenteeism (Marriotti, 1999; Zbar, 1999), and are more energized and motivated (Stern & Borcia, 1999). People having fun doing their jobs get along with others better (Meyer, 1999) and provide better customer service (Berg, 2001). Unfortunately, the majority of these claims rely on anecdotal evidence provided by proponents of fun at work, rather than from systematic testing by researchers examining such statements. The few pieces of empirical research that seek to test actual relationships between fun at work and various outcomes are described and briefly outlined below.

A stream of research by Karl and colleagues focuses on the positive impacts of fun at work on various job attitudes and outcomes (i.e., Karl et al., 2005, 2007; Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Peluchette & Karl, 2005). In each of these studies, fun at work was positively related to job satisfaction, although other outcomes were also explored. Specifically, Karl et al. (2005) examined three sectors – public, non-profit, and private organizations – and found no significant differences across the three sectors in attitudes towards fun. However, further exploration revealed that while no significant differences were found for attitudes towards fun, there were significant differences in experienced fun. These findings are consistent with the assertion that significant differences exist in organizations regarding fun at work, specifically how cultures facilitate, reward, and tolerate fun (Aldag & Sherony, 2001). In a similar vein, Karl and

Peluchette (2006) found that experienced fun leads to greater job satisfaction and the relationship was greater for individuals placing a high value on workplace fun. In this study, undergraduate students employed in various service roles who reported greater levels of workplace fun were also more likely to have higher job satisfaction. Integrating other outcomes in addition to job satisfaction into their research, Karl et al. (2007) examined fun at work using graduate students employed in a health care setting. Results revealed that individuals with greater levels of experienced workplace fun reported significantly lower emotional exhaustion and emotional dissonance.

### **Individual Differences**

Two camps of thought characterize an individual's preference for inclusion of fun in the workplace. First, fun in the workplace is portrayed in a positive light. Specifically, Aldag and Sherony (2001) contend that one's preferences for fun in the workplace may have to do with a person's work history, peer influences, personality characteristics, and also socialization experiences. Those with high social needs may also be more inclined to engage in fun activities in the workplace (Clouse & Spurgeon, 1995). Testing these assertions, Karl et al. (2007) sought to examine which personality types may be indicative of preferring fun in the workplace. Their results provided evidence to suggest that extraversion and emotional stability were positively related to the level of experienced fun by the individual. Specifically, extraverted and emotionally stable people were more likely to report greater fun at work. Overall, these results provide evidence to suggest that people's preference for fun in the workplace may vary based on certain individual characteristics.

While many people emphasize the benefits of such positivity and having fun at work, others are more cautious, which reflects the ideology of the second camp of thought regarding fun at work. Fineman (2006) heeds caution by explaining that there is a dark side to positivity in

organizations. Specifically, he reveals that programs with the specific objective of raising positive awareness in the organization may backfire. In fact, programs without definite track records may actually have the reverse effects and inhibit fun at work. Addressing the potential for companies to run rampant with “fun solutions” rather than addressing real problems, Buchanan (2007) warns, “The common practice of treating sick cultures with a fun-graft – parties, silly hats, visits from Mister Softee – is insulting to employees and vaguely grotesque. For fun to thrive, meaningful work, competent management, fair compensation, and mutually respectful employees are table stakes. If you lack any of those, start there.” Consistent with this sentiment, Whiteley and Hessian (1996) explained that people may have different attitudes in regards to workplace fun. On one hand, people may welcome integration of fun activities into the workplace and see them as a release from stressful jobs. On the other hand, other individuals may resist and begrudge the appropriateness of such activities as part of the work environment and respond accordingly with cynicism (Whiteley & Hessian, 1996). Further empirical investigation of fun at work may clarify these issues and help determine the bottom line for individuals and organizations.

### **Research Objective**

While these studies are some of the first to emerge that actually attempt to quantify the construct of fun at work and empirically test related outcomes, additional research is necessary to more rigorously examine the construct validity of fun. It is simply not enough to assert that having fun at work enhances motivation and productivity and reduces stress (Lundin, Paul, & Christensen, 2002; McGhee, 2000; Paulson, 2001; Ramsey, 2001; Weiss, 2002) without thorough systematic testing. If the supporters of fun at work are right and it should be incorporated into every workplace (Yerkes, 2001), then it is necessary to examine the true individual and organizational consequences of integrating fun into the workplace. Consistent

with such an objective, the following section includes a presentation and discussion of a theoretical model linking fun at work with various elements of job performance and potential mediating mechanisms.

CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

**Theoretical Model**

Evidence suggests that performance is multi-faceted (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), and each part represents a unique piece of the individual’s overall job performance. Although organizations value an individual’s task performance on the job, other aspects of job performance, such as organizational citizenship behaviors and creative performance, are also important and should be included. Accordingly, three performance dimensions will be considered in regards to fun at work: task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and creative performance. Positive affect and work engagement serve as affective and cognitive mechanisms, respectively, through which performance outcomes of fun at work are investigated. Specifically, direct effects between fun at work and performance outcomes are proposed. Indirect effects are positioned in terms of positive affect and work engagement as mediators of the fun at work and performance relationship. In this section, an explanation for each proposed link in the model is provided. The conceptual model of the relationships among fun at work, positive affect, work engagement, and performance outcomes is depicted in Figure 1.

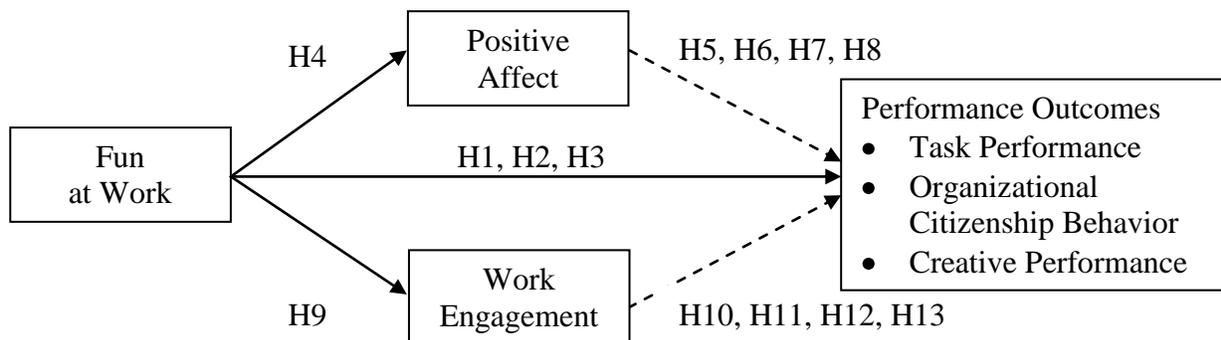


Figure 3-1. Conceptual model of the relations among fun at work, positive affect, work engagement, and performance outcomes. (Note: H = Hypothesis)

## **Fun at Work and Task Performance**

“A fun working environment is much more productive than a routine environment,” noted Van Oech (1982; p.110). An abundance of anecdotal evidence reflects a similar sentiment and suggests that fun at work should enhance employee productivity (i.e., Caudron, 1992; Hudson, 2001; Lundin et al., 2002) but an actual relationship between the two remains untested. Relevant research on the merits of fun in the workplace often includes elements of humor. For example, scholars and popular press authors often use humor interchangeably with fun at work (e.g., Euchler & Kenny, 2006; Newstrom, 2002) because humor and fun are conceptually similar constructs by definition. Despite their similarities, researchers note that the two constructs are conceptually distinct (see Cooper, 2003, for a discussion). Although fun and humor can both be enjoyable, fun at work encompasses a somewhat different spectrum of activities. Cooper (2005) defined humor as an event shared by individuals that is intended to be amusing and perceived as intentional. Fun at work, by comparison, involves socially engaging in amusing and spontaneous positive events in the workplace; such events are essential in humanizing organizations for employees (Barsoux, 1993). Therefore, the research on humor seems particularly relevant when investigating potential outcomes of fun at work. Using humor creates a positive environment in which ideas and knowledge are shared freely (Clouse & Spurgeon, 1995) which, in turn, promotes performance (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). This type of atmosphere is consistent with what consultants and researchers term a “fun culture” (Ford et al., 2003; Hudson, 2001; McDowell, 2005). Consequently, a fun work atmosphere may be conducive to employee productivity.

Performance is a function of ability and motivation (Locke, 1965; Locke, Mento, & Katcher, 1978), and research suggests that using humor enhances performance in field and lab studies (e.g., Avolio, Howell, & Sosik, 1999; Smith, Ascough, Ettinger, & Nelson, 1971). Humor

has been positively linked to both components of performance such that it enhances competence (i.e., Mettee, Hrelec, & Wilkens, 1971) and energy on tasks (i.e., Dienstbier, 1995). First, the use of humor may lead to attributions of competence in both lab and field studies (c.f., Filipowicz, 2002; Lippitt, 1982). For example, Mettee et al. (1971) found that the use of humor increased competence ratings of a speaker in a lab setting. In this study, undergraduates watched a video tape of a communicator using humor. When the speaker was reputed to be aloof and detached (compared to “clownish”), participants rated him more positively. Mettee et al. (1971) explained that the effect reflected a competency rating such humorous individuals elicit more positive performance evaluations from independent raters. A lab study by Smith et al. (1971) also revealed a positive relationship between humor and performance. In this study, undergraduate subjects received two different forms of an exam: one contained humorous test items and the other did not. Results suggested that the high anxiety group that received the humorous form of the test performed better than those with low or medium levels of anxiety that received the non-humorous form of the exam. Specifically, exposure to humor reduced anxiety and increased competence, and thereby improved task performance (Smith et al., 1971). A separate study by Avolio et al. (1999) explored the effects of humor on performance by examining the relationship between leaders and followers at a Canadian financial institution. Results indicated that leaders who used humor (i.e., to defuse conflicts, to take the edge off of stressful situations) were rated higher on performance appraisals by their direct supervisor compared to leaders that did not employ humorous techniques (Avolio et al., 1999). Collectively, the results of these studies provide evidence to suggest that the use of humor fosters competence, which reflects the ability facet of performance. Accordingly, if fun at work functions similarly to humor, it may also impact performance in a congruent fashion.

Second, the use of humor has been associated with increased task motivation (Dienstbier, 1995; Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995). Specifically, Dienstbier (1995) suggested that exposure to humorous stimuli should lead to increased feelings of energy towards challenging tasks. In this study, participants who watched a video clip of a comedy routine felt more energized compared to a control group that watched a video analyzing the comedy routine. Furthermore, participants in the humor condition showed a stronger preference for engaging in challenging tasks than did the control group. Similarly, Kuiper et al. (1995) found a positive link between humor and motivation on a drawing task. Overall, the results suggested that humorous individuals are more likely to show a positive orientation and motivation towards tasks (Kuiper et al., 1995). The results of the two studies suggest that using humor facilitates motivation on tasks, thus increasing performance. Consistent with the notion that fun at work and humor are similar but distinct constructs, fun at work should enhance task performance in a comparable manner.

Cumulatively, the results of these studies indicate that humor promotes both ability and motivation, which are functions of performance (Locke, 1965; Locke et al., 1978). Specifically, humor increases components of ability such as competence and attention. In addition, the use of humor enhances energy on tasks and task motivation. Because humor has been linked to these fundamental components of performance, it should influence task performance. Since fun at work is conceptually similar to humor as previously discussed, similar results should emerge for fun at work. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H1: Fun at work is positively related to task performance.*

### **Fun at Work and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors**

The influence of fun at work may reach beyond general task performance to include extra role behaviors, referred to as organizational citizenship behaviors. Organ (1988, p. 4) defined

organizational citizenship behavior as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization.” With one exception (i.e., Karl et al., 2005), the topic of fun at work and organizational citizenship behaviors is unexplored in the literature. Extending the findings of Karl et al. (2005), the proposed link between fun at work and performance may be explained by social exchange theory and reciprocity norms. Specifically, fun at work may build trust with one’s coworkers, making them more likely to reciprocate with organizational citizenship behaviors.

A study by Karl et al. (2005) demonstrated a positive relationship between fun at work and trust in one’s supervisor and coworkers. In this study, Karl and colleagues examined attitudes toward fun at work in three different sectors: public, nonprofit, and private. Results revealed that, in all three sectors, employees’ attitudes towards fun positively predicted both trust in supervisors and trust in coworkers (Karl et al., 2005). Specifically, people with more positive attitudes towards fun in the workplace were more likely to report greater trust in their supervisors and coworkers. Although the data in the Karl et al. (2005) study was all self-reported, the incorporation of trust may provide an important clue for how fun at work impacts organizational citizenship behaviors. Trust entails individuals’ judgment of the target’s reliability, integrity, competence, and benevolent motivation toward others (Mayer & Davis, 1999) and has been identified as an antecedent of interpersonal cooperation (McAllister, 1995). Trust fosters organizational citizenship behavior since it allows individuals to feel less worried about being exploited for their helping behavior. Moreover, employees may believe that their helping behavior will be more likely to be appreciated and reciprocated by the target (Organ, Podsakoff,

& MacKenzie, 2006). If fun at work promotes employees' trust in their supervisors and coworkers, then perhaps they will also engage in organizational citizenship behaviors.

Two main reasons may explain the nature of the relationship between fun at work and organizational citizenship behavior: social exchange theory and reciprocity norms. Social exchange theory is often coupled with reciprocity norms to explain why people may engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Coyle-Shapiro, Kessler, & Purcell, 2004; Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Lambert, 2000). According to social exchange theory, employees form relationships in and with organizations which involve open-ended obligations (for a review, see Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Reciprocity exists because individuals exhibit discretion and choose to give back to the organization when engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors. (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). Coupling social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) with reciprocity norms (Gouldner, 1960) suggests that people direct positive behaviors back towards the organization. Consistent with this notion, if fun at work builds trust with one's coworkers, then individuals may be more likely to reciprocate with organizational citizenship behaviors.

Overall, incorporating the findings of Karl et al. (2005) with social exchange theory and reciprocity norms suggests that fun at work positively impacts organizational citizenship behaviors. Supposing that fun at work leads to increased reciprocity, people having fun at work may be more helpful and more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H2: Fun at work is positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors.*

### **Fun at Work and Creative Performance**

Creative performance in organizations is defined as the behavioral manifestation of creativity which refers to the generation of ideas, procedures, and products that are both novel

and useful (Amabile, 1988, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Creativity is increasingly being considered as an important asset to organizations. As such, scholars have been more and more concerned with the organizational determinants of creative performance and factors that may enhance creative performance (Amabile, 1988, 1996; Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2001; George & Zhou, 2001; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Shalley, 1995). Anecdotal evidence suggests that fun at work should directly impact creativity (e.g., Abramis, 1989; Caudron, 1992). However, with one exception (i.e., Friedman, Forster, & Denzler, 2007), research on the relationship between fun at work and creativity is essentially non-existent.

The one study to examine fun and creativity took place in a lab setting. Friedman et al. (2007) found that framing a task as fun and silly resulted in greater performance on an alternate uses creativity task (i.e., “list as many uses for a brick as you can think of”). Specifically, participants in a positive mood performed better when the task was framed as fun and silly compared to a control group who were told that the task was serious (Friedman et al., 2007). Although this lab study provides evidence to suggest that fun may increase creative performance, it also revealed that positive mood may be driving the overall effect on creativity.

Unfortunately, researchers have yet to rigorously test the relationship between fun and creative performance in a work environment. Therefore, it is again helpful to draw on the related literature of humor to propose the empirically unexplored relationship of fun at work and creative performance. Because humor promotes openness to ideas, it also relaxes people and makes them less likely to criticize new ideas or mistakes (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Research across various populations indicates that humor simulates mental flexibility and incongruity perceptions which enhance creative performance (Koestler, 1964; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; McGhee, 1979; Murdock & Ganim, 1993). Furthermore, O’Quin’s meta-analysis (cited in

O'Quin & Derks, 1997) revealed a significant positive correlation of .34 between humor and creativity. These results cumulatively suggest that the use of humor facilitates creative performance. Consistent with the notion that humor and fun at work function similarly, then fun at work should also facilitate creative performance.

The link between humor and creative performance is often explained by the increased mental flexibility associated with humor. Humor functions as a source of creative, unconventional, divergent, and innovative thinking (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), which Morreall (1991) collectively refers to as "mental flexibility". A similar cognitive explanation of the effect of humor on creativity is offered by Ziv (1983, 1989) who explained that divergent thinking is a product of humor. Most people have been trained to engage in convergent thinking, the opposite of divergent thinking, such that individuals search for one correct answer or solution to a problem (Ziv, 1983, 1989). Divergent thinking allows an individual to make new connections between ideas and relationships previously unconsidered. Consistent with this reasoning, Dixon (1980) contended that humor fosters a shift in perspective that allows individuals to take a new and unique perspective to address a problem. Because humor promotes openness to ideas, it also relaxes people and makes them less likely to criticize new ideas or mistakes (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Collectively, these findings suggest that humor influences creative performance because it fosters mental flexibility. Consequently, if fun at work functions similar to humor, then fun at work should also enhance individual creative performance.

By definition, fun at work may provide humorous amusement for individuals via socializing, celebrating, and personal freedoms (McDowell, 2005). Furthermore, such amusement may foster mental flexibility and result in greater creative performance. Overall,

since fun at work is conceptually similar to humor as previously discussed, analogous results should emerge for fun at work. Hence, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H3: Fun at work is positively related to creative performance.*

### **Fun at Work and Positive Affect**

The link between fun at work and positive affect is unexplored in the literature. However, past research indicates that accepted humorous stimuli have the ability to induce positive affect (Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Isen & Daubman, 1984; Isen & Gorgoglione, 1983; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987; Melton, 1995). However, in order for humorous stimuli to facilitate positive mood, it must be accepted by the audience. Acceptance means that the humor attempt is appropriate for the context, and the audience understands that the humor was intended to be funny (Emerson, 1969; cited in Filipowicz, 2002). A discussion of what makes humor funny is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to note that accepted and positive stimuli are likely to induce positive affect. Accordingly, fun at work can be considered as such a stimulus and may function similar to humor. More specifically, fun at work should enhance positive affect consistent with the empirical results of humorous stimuli and positive events on positive affect.

Much of the research on positive affect has used accepted humorous stimuli like funny film clips or cartoons to induce mild positive mood inductions. For example, humorous video clips have often been used to manipulate and induce positive affect in a laboratory setting (Isen & Daubman, 1984; Isen et al., 1987). Participants in these studies were shown two different videos: a comedy clip and a mathematics film. Participants who watched the comedy clip reported feeling more positive and more amused compared to the control group who watched the mathematics film (Isen & Daubman, 1984; Isen et al., 1987). Similar findings resulted from using cartoons to induce positive affect in subjects (Carnevale & Isen, 1986). Participants in this

study who read the funny cartoons reported a more positive mood compared to a control group. Cumulatively, the above research suggests that material which people perceive as positive or amusing typically puts them in a good mood.

Second, ample evidence suggests that positive events lead to positive affect (Clark & Watson, 1988; Gable, Impett, Reis, & Asher, 2004; Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000). For example, Clark and Watson (1988) found that positive events, particularly social events, were related to positive affect. In this daily diary study, undergraduate student subjects recorded various positive events that occurred. The researchers then coded subjects' responses into different categories of positive events, one of which was socializing. Sample items for the socializing category included going out to dinner with others, attending parties, and physical activities. More specifically, Clark and Watson (1988) found a positive relationship between positive events and positive affect. A particularly robust positive relationship was found between socializing events and positive affect, such that socializing lead to even more positive mood. These results suggest that engaging in fun events, particularly those with a social nature, is likely to put people in a better mood.

Research by Gable and colleagues provides further evidence to suggest that positive events foster positive affect (i.e., Gable et al., 2000, 2004). Using a daily diary method to determine positive events in college students, Gable et al. (2000) found that subjects experiencing positive events were more likely to be in a good mood. Positive events in this study were classified as either social (e.g., "went out to eat with a friend/date") or personal achievement (e.g., "got ahead in course work or duties"). Positive social and achievement events were both significantly and positively related to daily positive affect in participants. In a separate study, Gable et al. (2004) examined the effects of the capitalization (i.e., communicating and sharing) of positive events

with others on positive affect. Participants recorded the sharing of various positive events that happened during the day and their level of positive affect using a daily diary method. Gable and colleagues (2004) found that capitalizing on positive events and sharing the experience with others resulted in better moods in the subjects.

Because fun at work is a humorous and positive event that includes sharing experiences and socializing with coworkers, these results collectively suggest fun at work should lead to enhanced positive affect in individuals. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H4: Fun at work is positively related to positive affect.*

### **Positive Affect and Task Performance**

Performance is a function of ability and motivation (Locke, 1965; Locke et al., 1978). Research by Staw and colleagues (Staw & Barsade, 1993; Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994; Wright & Staw, 1994) demonstrates an overall positive facilitation of performance through positive affect. More specifically, positive affect is positively linked to both components of performance. For example, positive affect increases components of ability such as decision making and problems solving (i.e., Isen, 1999a). In addition, positive affect enhances both expectancy motivation and intrinsic motivation (i.e., Erez & Isen, 2002; Isen & Reeve, 2005). Therefore, ability and motivation are two mechanisms by which positive affect enhances performance.

First, induced and naturally occurring positive affect tend to facilitate performance in terms of decision making, problem solving, and thinking (e.g., Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992; Estrada, Isen & Young, 1997; Isen, 1993, 1999a; Staw & Barsade, 1993; Taylor & Aspinwall, 1996; Weiss, Nicholas, & Daus, 1999). For example, various studies have examined the effects of positive affect on decision making performance. Staw and Barsade (1993) found that high-scoring positive affect people were typically more accurate in their decisions, requested more information, and performed better in processes underlying effective decision making.

Furthermore, Isen, Rosenzweig, and Young (1991) examined the effects of positive affect in medical problem solving processes in a medical setting. Clinicians in the positive affect condition were more thorough in their investigations of hypothetical patients and were more likely to expend additional effort to go beyond the task requirements. Estrada and colleagues' findings illustrate similar effects in a hospital setting such that positive affect improved decision making among medical students and physicians (Estrada, Isen, & Young, 1994, 1997).

Second, positive affect not only influences ability but also promotes motivation, which increases performance. For example, focusing explicitly on expectancy motivation, Erez and Isen (2002) examined the effects of positive affect on task performance in a lab setting. In this study, positive affect was positively related to each of the three components of expectancy motivation (i.e., expectancy, instrumentality, and valence; Vroom, 1964). Specifically, compared to the neutral control group, participants in a positive mood reported higher levels of motivation, displayed greater performance and persistence, and tried harder (Erez & Isen, 2002). A separate study examined the effects of positive affect on intrinsic motivation and performance (Isen & Reeve, 2005). Results from two studies provided evidence to suggest positive affect promotes intrinsic motivation. In the first study, participants in a positive mood were more likely to engage in a fun and interesting (i.e., intrinsically motivating) task rather than an uninteresting and extrinsically rewarded task. In the second study, participants in a positive mood spent more time on an enjoyable task but still made sure to complete a simple work task. In both studies, subjects in a positive mood reported liking the intrinsically motivating task more than the control group did. The results of the two studies by Isen and Reeve (2005) suggest that positive affect facilitates intrinsic motivation but not at the expense of performing necessary work tasks.

Cumulatively, the results of these studies indicate that positive affect promotes both ability and motivation, which are functions of performance (Locke, 1965; Locke et al., 1978). Specifically, positive affect increases components of ability such as decision making and problem solving. In addition, positive affect enhances both expectancy motivation and intrinsic motivation. Because positive affect has been linked to these fundamental components of performance, it should influence task performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H5: Positive affect is positively related to task performance.*

### **Positive Affect and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors**

Multiple studies have identified positive affect as a dispositional antecedent of organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Additionally, positive affect has been found to facilitate various forms of organizational citizenship behaviors including helping, prosocial behaviors, and interpersonal cooperation (i.e., George, 1991; George & Brief, 1992; Isen & Levin, 1972), all of which are organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988). Ample evidence suggests that when people are in a good mood, they are likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors.

A stream of research by Alice Isen and colleagues demonstrates that people in a positive mood will be more sociable, friendly, and helpful (Isen, 1999b). People strive to maintain positive moods (Clark & Isen, 1982; Isen & Simmonds, 1978), and being helpful enables individuals to prolong positive moods because it is self-reinforcing (Clark & Isen, 1982; Isen, Shalker, Clark, & Karp, 1978). Furthermore, when in a positive mood, people are more likely to help others than those in neutral or negative moods (e.g., Isen & Levin, 1972; Isen & Baron, 1991). For instance, shoppers in a mall using a public telephone that found a coin in the return

slot (assumed to induce positive mood) were more likely to help a person who dropped some papers, compared to those who did not find a coin (Isen, 1972). Likewise, participants in a positive mood were more likely to help a stranger carry books and donate to a charity collection can after receiving information indicating success on an inconsequential task (Isen, 1970). Since the previous findings indicate that positive mood promotes helping behaviors, this effect should translate to organizations (Isen, & Baron, 1991). Specifically, positive mood may prime employees to think more favorably about coworkers, positively facilitating organizational citizenship behavior. Consistent with this reasoning, several studies have revealed positive relationships between positive affect and organizational citizenship behavior (George, 1991; George & Brief, 1992; Williams & Shiaw, 1999). For example, George and Brief (1992) identified several behavioral outcomes of positive affect including making constructive suggestions, spreading goodwill, and protecting the organization, which are considered organizational citizenship behaviors.

George's (1991) work on prosocial behavior provides an explanation of the relationship between positive affect and organizational citizenship behaviors. George (1991) describes why positive moods foster prosocial behaviors, consistent with Carlson, Charlin, and Miller (1988). People perceive stimuli in a more positive light when in a positive mood (i.e., Clark & Teasdale, 1985; Forgas, Bower, & Krantz, 1984; Isen et al., 1978). In turn, individuals in a positive mood may also be more attracted to others (e.g., Bell, 1978; Mehrabian & Russell, 1975, Gouaux, 1971). Therefore, individuals in a positive mood are more likely to see coworkers more favorably, and may possess a better social outlook than those not in a positive mood (Carlson et al., 1988). Because people in a positive mood possess an enhanced social outlook, they may be more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors.

The above research suggests that increased positive affect facilitates organizational citizenship behaviors via positive perceptions. Since positive affect has been linked organizational citizenship behaviors in previous research and across a variety of settings, it should influence organizational citizenship behaviors in this study. Thus, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H6: Positive affect is positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors.*

### **Positive Affect and Creative Performance**

The generally accepted definition of creativity refers to the generation and elaboration of ideas and/or products that are both novel and useful (Amabile, 1996). With several exceptions (e.g., Kaufman & Vosburg, 1997; George & Zhou, 2002), most studies reveal that positive affect increases creative performance in both field and laboratory studies. A few field studies have illustrated a positive relationship between positive affect and creative performance, but the bulk of the research support stems from lab studies. Various methods are used to assess creative performance, and research across various populations indicates that positive affect simulates cognitive flexibility which enhances creative performance (see Isen, 1999a, for a review).

Several field studies have examined the relationship between positive affect and creative performance. For example, George and Zhou (2007) found that positive affect promoted creativity in employees of an oil field services company particularly in contexts where creativity was supported. Specifically, employees in a positive mood were more likely to exhibit creative performance when their supervisor supported creative activity. Examining a different type of support, Madjar, Oldham, and Pratt (2002) determined positive affect as a mediator of the relationship between social support and creative performance. In this study, both work and non-work support facilitated positive affect which in turn enhanced creative performance. The results

of these field studies posit that positive affect enhances creative performance, which has been more extensively investigated in lab settings.

Isen's extensive program of laboratory research generated the bulk of the empirical support for a positive link between positive affect and creativity (Isen, 1999a, 1999b). Much of her research has used mild positive mood inductions, such as a bag of candy or funny film clip, to examine the effects of positive affect on creativity. In this research, two common tasks have been used to assess creative performance: Mednick's Remote Associates Test (Mednick, Mednick, and Mednick, 1964) and Duncker's (1945) Candle Task. In the Remote Associates Test, respondents are prompted to generate a word related to the other three words provided. Research indicates that people in a positive mood tend to provide more unusual but sensible word associations to neutral words compared to individuals in a neutral mood (Isen, Johnson, Mertz, & Robinson, 1985). In the Candle Task, participants are given a candle, a box of tacks, and a book of matches, and are asked to affix a candle to a wall and light it safely using only the materials provided. Participants must overcome "functional fixedness" and "break set" by using one of the items (the box) in a non-typical way in order to demonstrate creative performance (Duncker, 1945; Wertheimer, 1945). Findings suggest that being in a positive mood enables individuals to perform better on the Candle Task (Isen et al., 1987). Overall, participants induced with positive affect tend to exhibit enhanced creativity on both of these tasks (Isen, 1999b). Furthermore, support for this link has been found in populations of young adolescents (Greene & Noice, 1988), practicing medical doctors (Estrada et al., 1994), and college students (Isen et al., 1987).

Positive affect results in creative performance due to increased cognitive flexibility (Isen et al., 1987; Isen & Daubman, 1984; Isen, Niedenthal, & Cantor, 1992). Cognitive flexibility involves increased access to non-negative cognitive material meanings and influences the way

people relate ideas to each other (Isen, 1999a). Positive affect cues similarly valenced material in memory which leads to improved cognitive flexibility (e.g., Isen et al., 1978; Laird, Wagener, & Halal, 1982; Nasby & Yando, 1982; Teasdale & Fogarty, 1979). The cuing process in turn may make a person more likely to see multiple ways of interpreting and organizing material and may result in increased perceived interrelatedness of information (Isen et al., 1992). Therefore, cognitive flexibility enables a person's ability to organize ideas in multiple ways. Consistent with this reasoning, positive affect resulted in improved outcomes in an integrative bargaining situation and thus facilitated the negotiation process (Carnevale & Isen, 1986). Specifically, participants in the positive affect condition were not only more likely to reach agreement but also to reach an optimal agreement. Subjects were also less likely to break off the negotiation. These findings indicate that positive affect improves an individual's ability to determine ways to relate situational aspects and consequently generate a creative solution (Carnevale & Isen, 1986).

Empirical research in both field and lab settings demonstrates a positive relationship between positive affect and creativity. In addition, positive affect has been shown to affect cognitive flexibility, which enhances creative performance. Collectively, this empirical support suggests that positive affect should influence task performance. Hence, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H7: Positive affect is positively related to creative performance.*

### **Positive Affect as a Mediator of Fun at Work and Performance Outcomes**

A mediator variable accounts for the relation between a predictor and criterion (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Specifically, in the case of an independent variable (i.e., the predictor) and the dependent variable (i.e., the criterion), another variable (i.e., the mediator) may explain some or all of the variance in the relationship. One common method for explaining mediation is that of Baron and Kenny (1986) who provided three conditions which a variable must meet to function

as a mediator. First, the independent variable must significantly impact the mediator (Path *a*). Second, the mediator must significantly account for variation in the dependent variable (Path *b*). Third, the path between the independent and dependent variables (Path *c*) is no longer significant when Paths *a* and *b* are controlled. Full mediation occurs when Path *c* is reduced to zero, but partial mediation is present if Path *c* is not zero. The latter scenario suggests that multiple mediating factors may be present (Baron & Kenny, 1986). It is important to note that the Baron and Kenny method is only one of many techniques for testing mediation (for a review of other methods, see MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). In any case, the mediator variable clarifies the nature of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Accordingly, positive affect as a mediator may help to explain the relationship between fun at work and individual performance outcomes. Specifically, fun at work involves engaging in amusing and spontaneous positive events, and may therefore lead to increased positive affect at work. In turn, enhanced positive mood may be linked to greater individual job outcomes. Specifically, positive affect has been found to be positively related to elements of performance including task performance, creativity, and organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g. Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992; George, 1991; Isen et al., 1992) in both laboratory and field settings (i.e., Erez & Isen, 2002; Estrada et al., 1994, 1997; Staw & Barsade, 1993). If fun at work enhances positive affect which increases performance outcomes, then positive affect may mediate the relationship between fun at work and the three performance outcomes. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H8: Positive affect mediates the relationship between fun at work and (a) task performance, (b) organizational citizenship behavior, and (c) creative performance.*

## **Fun at Work and Work Engagement**

Deal and Kennedy (1999) suggested that if an organization's "Fun Quotient" is high, then employees "will pour their hearts and souls into what they do" (p. 234). Consistent with this sentiment, fun at work should promote work engagement. Engagement is defined by Kahn (1990) as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and active, full performances" (p. 700). Focusing on an organizational setting, Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) clarified that work engagement is a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (p. 72). Vigor consists of willingness to invest effort in work, high levels of energy while working, and persistence in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of inspiration, pride, challenge, and enthusiasm at work. Absorption refers to being happily engrossed and fully concentrated in one's work such that one has difficulty detaching and time passes quickly. Research using confirmatory factor analysis supports this three-factor model of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002b; Schaufeli, Salanova, et al., 2002).

Although no research has examined the relationship between fun at work and engagement, two theoretical explanations provide means for how fun at work may impact engagement: by acting as a job resource and by functioning as a recovery mechanism. More specifically, due to its social and interactive nature, fun at work may serve as a positive job resource consistent with the Job Demands-Resources Model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). In addition, fun at work may also provide a cognitive break from one's work and act as an individual recovery mechanism (Sonnentag, 2003). Both job resources and recovery have been found to heighten work engagement across various populations (i.e., Bakker, Hakanen,

Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003). Accordingly, fun at work should promote work engagement by functioning as a job resource and as a recovery agent, which are both discussed in greater detail below.

First, fun at work may act as a job resource to facilitate work engagement. To a great extent, research on engagement points to The Job Demands-Resources Model, which proposes that job resources lead to positive outcomes including engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources are physical, social, psychological, or organizational aspects of the job that may reduce job demands and the related psychological and physiological costs, stimulate personal growth and learning, or enhance achievement of work goals (Demerouti et al., 2001). Consistent with the Job Demands-Resources Model, ample evidence suggests that job resources positively predict engagement (Bakker et al., 2007; Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). For example, results of Christian and Slaughter's (2007) meta-analysis revealed significant (i.e., confidence intervals did not include zero) positive mean correlations between job resources and each dimension of work engagement ( $M_{\rho}$  = .29, .34, .25, for vigor, dedication, and absorption, respectively).

Consistent with the Job Demands-Resources Model, job resources can be located at multiple levels (Bakker et al., 2007). These levels include: the task (i.e., skill variety, performance feedback), the organization of work (i.e., participation in decision making, role clarity), interpersonal and social relations (i.e., coworker and supervisor support), and the organization (i.e., career opportunities, salary) (Bakker et al., 2007). Due to the social and interactive nature of fun at work, it may function similar to the interpersonal and social relations element of job resources. In support of this notion, social support stemming from job resources

also results in increased work engagement (Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Saks, 2006). Overall, since job resources have been found to enhance work engagement and because fun at work involves socializing, celebrating, and interacting with others; accordingly, fun at work functions as interpersonal and social job resources that should enhance an individual's respective work engagement.

A second explanation for the impact of fun at work on engagement is that fun at work may provide a recovery period from work, allowing individuals to then become more engaged. Much of the recovery literature has focused on the effects of insufficient recovery which leads to reduced alertness, increased reluctance, and decreased concentration (i.e., Hobfoll, 1998; Krueger, 1989; Lorist, Klein, Nieuwenhuis, de Jong, Mulder, & Meijman, 2000) which represent low work engagement. However, other evidence shows the benefits of adequate recovery. For example, Roy's (1959) classic "Banana Time" study provided evidence to suggest that having fun at work may help to break up monotony at work. Fun and playful social interactions functioned as recovery mechanisms that allowed individuals to engage in their work. Specifically, talking, joking around, and fun provided "psychological survival" for factory workers in this study. Employees collectively improved their workplaces (or at least made them tolerable) by participating in activities which were off-task but build camaraderie within the group. More recently, Sonnentag's (2003) study demonstrated that having a recovery period positively facilitated each dimension of work engagement. In this study, employees of a public service organization completed measures of work engagement and recovery. Sonnentag (2003) asked participants to answer questions about recovery and incorporated leisure time (i.e., "Because of leisure activities I pursue, I feel recovered"). Results suggested that greater recovery promoted individual's work engagement. Although recovery was somewhat framed as a leisure

activity, no data was reported for the types of leisure activities in which people engaged. However, because it implies somewhat of a diversion from work itself, fun at work could also be manifested as recovery.

Cumulatively, these findings suggest that fun at work may positively impact work engagement for two reasons. First, due to the social and interpersonal nature of fun at work, it may serve as a job resource for individuals, thus enhancing their work engagement. Second, fun at work may function as a recovery period to provide individuals break from work, consequently resulting in increased work engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H9: Fun at work is positively related to work engagement.*

### **Work Engagement and Task Performance**

Task performance represents the proficiency with which employees perform the activities recognized as part of their jobs (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement entails the active investment of one's personal energies into task performance. Specifically, Kahn suggested that investing personal energy into one's work should result in contributions that are valued by the organization. The more individuals are engaged in their work, the greater their investment of effort and attention to task activities will be (Kahn, 1990). Consequently, work engagement should positively impact task performance. However, with few exceptions (i.e., Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Rich, 2007; Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002a) little research has examined the relationship between work engagement and task performance. Nonetheless, the idea of employee engagement facilitating organizational performance has become a prominent fixture in the popular press.

Much interest in employee engagement sparked from Buckingham and Coffman's (1999) book, *First, Break All the Rules*. The book presents the results of 25 years of Gallup survey research on over a million employees to determine a set of factors to distinguish between

effective less effective work units. Specifically, the authors discuss the twelve-item Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA; The Gallup Organization, 1992-1999) which was developed to measure employee perceptions of work characteristics. The authors suggested that employees who display certain characteristics are therefore “engaged” and are likely to be more productive. Also known as the “Gallup 12”, the GWA is largely credited as igniting the popularity of employee engagement assessments in organizations (Schneider, 2006). In an interview for the Gallup Journal about his book, co-author Curt Coffman explained that “engaged workers show consistent levels of high performance” (Sanford, 2002, p.1). Coffman’s assertion has not been widely tested at the individual level, but one study examined the effects of engagement at the organizational level.

In their meta-analysis of employee engagement and organizational outcomes, Harter and colleagues found evidence to suggest that employee engagement measured with the GWA was positively related to business unit performance outcomes of productivity and profitability. Harter et al. (2002) examined the relationship between employee engagement and performance using data from 7,939 business units in 36 companies. Results from the meta-analysis suggested employee engagement was positively related to productivity at the business-unit level. Specifically, the true score correlation between employee engagement and business-unit level productivity was  $\rho = .25$ , and the 90% credibility interval exceeded zero. The findings of Harter et al. (2002) provide a positive connection between employee engagement and organizational performance results. However, because engagement is an individual level construct and leads to organizational-level performance outcomes, it should first impact performance at the level of the individual (c.f., Saks, 2006).

Although employee engagement should enhance performance at the individual level, little research has tested this assumption. Only two studies have examined the relationship between work engagement and individual task performance (e.g., Rich, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002a). In the first study to explore this relationship, Schaufeli and colleagues (2002a) examined the relationship between engagement and academic performance using a sample of 1,677 undergraduate students. Each of the three dimensions of engagement (dedication, vigor, and absorption) was positively related to the number of exams passed in the term which served as a measure of academic performance. Even though Schaufeli et al. (2002a) used a student sample and academic performance, the results of this study provide preliminary evidence to suggest that engagement impacts performance. A separate study by Rich (2007) provided a first step in linking employee work engagement and actual job performance.

Using a sample of fire department employees, Rich (2007) revealed that increased job engagement resulted in higher ratings of employee performance. Specifically, individuals who reported higher levels of job engagement were also given higher task performance ratings by their supervisors. Furthermore, results from Rich's dissertation suggested that engagement explained significant and unique variance in performance controlling for job satisfaction, job involvement, and intrinsic motivation. It is important to note that in this study, Rich used a tripartite model of physical, emotional, and cognitive elements to represent job engagement, rather than work engagement typically measured with the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Although distinguishing the features between work and job engagement is beyond the scope of this paper, it is noteworthy to mention that various conceptualizations blur the boundaries between job and work engagement (see Saks, 2006, for a discussion). Overall, the

results of Rich's study provide initial support for a direct and positive link between work engagement and task performance.

Collectively, these findings suggest that work engagement should positively impact task performance. Investing personal energy into one's work in the form of engagement should result in contributions that are valued by the organization represented by task performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H10: Work engagement is positively related to task performance.*

### **Work Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors**

Employee's overall performance on the job extends past task performance to include engaging in "innovative and spontaneous behaviors that go beyond role requirements for accomplishments of organizational functions" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 337). Commonly referred to as organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Organ, 1988), these discretionary behaviors may be directed towards other individuals or to the organization itself (Lee & Allen, 2002; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Only a few studies have investigated the impact of work engagement on organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., Rich, 2007; Saks, 2006; Sonnentag, 2003), but initial results indicate a positive relationship between the two constructs. Specifically, engaged employees may demonstrate their work engagement by engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors (Rich, 2007) consistent with Social Exchange Theory (SET; for a review, see Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, these research findings and propositions from SET provide support and theoretical rationale to suggest that work engagement promotes organizational citizenship behaviors.

Results from three separate studies suggest a positive relationship exists between work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior. For example, Sonnentag's (2003) study of employees from six public service organizations revealed that work engagement was positively

related to two different proactive behaviors. Specifically, participants in this study who reported increased work engagement also reported greater levels of personal initiative and pursuit of learning. Another study by Saks (2006) revealed a positive relationship between engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors directed towards individuals (OCBI) and the organization (OCBO). Consistent with LePine, Erez, and Johnson's (2002) meta-analysis which demonstrated that strong relationships exist among most of the dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior (i.e., in this case OCBI and OCBO), the results from Saks' (2006) provide initial support for a positive link between work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior in general. Another study to reveal a positive relationship between engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors was Rich's (2007) study of fire department workers. Participants in this study who reported higher levels of engagement were also more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. Taken together, these studies provide evidence to suggest that work engagement positively facilitates organizational citizenship behaviors.

Social Exchange Theory (SET; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) provides a theoretical rationale for a positive relationship between work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior. According to SET, loyal and trusting relationships and mutual commitments result when both parties abide by certain exchange rules. Specifically, individuals continue to engage in certain activities because of the favorable reciprocal exchanges that result from doing so, such as more high-quality and trusting relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). As a result, individuals are more likely to report more positive intentions and attitudes towards the organization itself and other employees in the form of organizational citizenship behavior (Saks, 2006). Accordingly, engaged employees may demonstrate their work engagement by engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors (Rich, 2007). Consistent with

this notion, Sonnentag (2003) noted that “when dedicated to their work and enthusiastic about it, individuals will be more likely to engage in proactive actions to keep the work situation a positive one and to further improve it” (p. 520). Therefore, engaged employees may perform organizational citizenship behaviors in order to maintain and improve their current work situation.

The preliminary findings presented above collectively indicate that work engagement positively facilitates organizational citizenship behaviors. The driving force behind the relationship rests on the premises of Social Exchange Theory such that employees perform organizational citizenship behaviors to demonstrate their work engagement and to maintain and improve their work situation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H11: Work engagement is positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors.*

### **Work Engagement to Creative Performance**

The generally accepted definition of creative performance refers to the generation and elaboration of ideas and/or products that are both novel and useful (Amabile, 1996). Kahn (1990) suggested that creativity is self-expression that results from personal engagement, sometimes manifested as flow. To date, no studies have empirically tested the link between work engagement and individual creative performance in organizations. As a result, little is known about how work engagement impacts individual creative performance. However, support for a positive link between work engagement and creative performance may stem from related research on flow. Based on the notion that engagement functions similar to flow, work engagement should enhance creative performance.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined flow as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter” (p. 4). Research on flow in various environments indicates that it is characterized by an increased centering of attention (Webster, Trevino, &

Ryan, 1993), heightened involvement (Webster & Martocchio, 1992), and greater positive subjective experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977). Furthermore, flow, as a state of optimal experience and involvement, most closely resembles the absorption dimension of work engagement (Langelaan, Bakker, van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006). Both flow and engagement reflect states in which individuals are happily engrossed in an activity (i.e. work) such that time passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching. Although the two constructs are similar, it is important to point out that flow may occur in various domains such work, leisure, and home whereas work engagement is environment specific. Despite this difference, researchers discuss flow and engagement as similar and inter-related functions (e.g., Agarwall & Karahanna, 2000; Fave & Massimini, 2003; Webster & Ho, 1997). Empirical research has not yet positioned nor supported work engagement as an antecedent of creative performance. However, because of its similarities to work engagement, the concept of flow may provide evidence to suggest that work engagement may facilitate creative performance.

Although flow has been widely associated with creativity through anecdotal evidence (c.f., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997), one study actually measured the relationship between flow and creative performance. Using a sample of 1,026 workers from five large companies in an urban area, LeFevre (1988) found evidence to suggest a positive relationship between experienced flow and creativity. Participants carried electronic paging devices, or “beepers”, and responded to multiple daily pages throughout the duration of the one-week experience sampling study. Upon receiving a page, participants assessed their flow and creative performance by responding to one-item Likert-type measures for both constructs. Results from over 4,800 daily responses suggested that flow and creative performance on the job were significantly and positively related ( $r = .41$ ;  $p < .0001$ ). Specifically, participants who experienced flow more frequently were also more likely

to exhibit greater creative performance. Although this study involved only self-reported data, it provides initial evidence to suggest that flow is positively related to creative performance. Because the absorption dimension of work engagement closely resembles flow, work engagement should also be positively related to creative performance.

Collectively, the propositions and findings from the literature on flow provide evidence to suggest a positive relationship between work engagement and creative performance. Provided that engagement functions similar to flow, work engagement should enhance creative performance. Hence, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H12: Work engagement is positively related to creative performance.*

### **Engagement as a Mediator of Fun at Work and Performance Outcomes**

Fun at work may function as a job resource and provide individuals with a break or recovery period from work, thus increasing their work engagement. Consequently, enhanced work engagement may be linked to greater individual performance outcomes. Work engagement has been shown to relate to task performance (Rich, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002a) and organizational citizenship behavior (Rich, 2007; Saks, 2006; Sonnentag, 2003). Peripheral evidence on flow suggests that work engagement should also lead to enhanced creative performance (Langelaan et al., 2006; LeFevre, 1988). If fun at work increases work engagement which positively facilitates performance outcomes, then work engagement may mediate the relationship between fun at work and the three performance outcomes. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is offered:

*H13: Work engagement mediates the relationship between fun at work and (a) task performance, (b) organizational citizenship behavior, and (c) creative performance.*

### **Measurement of Fun at Work**

Because one purpose of conducting this study was to investigate the structure and validity of fun at work, an investigation of the measurement structure of fun at work is necessary. Such an investigation should reveal whether or not the measurement of fun at work displays convergent validity, such that elements of socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun indicate a common concept of fun at work. The use of a principal-components analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis, and a usefulness analysis should provide evidence to effectively investigate the factor structure of fun at work. Therefore, an in-depth evaluation of the measurement of fun at work will be conducted prior to examining the relationships with fun at work and the outcomes hypothesized above.

## CHAPTER 4 METHODS

### **Sample**

Participants were 245 working students in an introductory management course at a large southeastern university. These individuals were employed in various organizational roles and worked an average of 24.4 hours per week ( $SD = 11.7$ ) and had an average organizational tenure of 2.2 years ( $SD = 2.9$ ). The average age of the sample was 22.0 years ( $SD = 4.9$ ), and the majority of respondents were male (51.5%).

### **Procedure**

An announcement was posted on an online course management system to advertise the study. Individuals were informed that they must be employed in an organization at which they worked at least 20 hours per week. Approximately 267 people signed up to take the survey, of which 245 completed the study yielding a response rate of 91.8%. In return for their participation in the study, participants were awarded extra credit in the introductory management course. Participants completed a one-time online survey and were asked to have their supervisor at work also fill out a one-time survey about them. The employee survey contained measures of fun at work, positive affect, job engagement, and basic demographic information. Supervisors were asked to complete measures regarding the employee's task performance, creativity, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Of the 245 employees who completed the survey, 205 also had a supervisor fill out a survey about them, representing a supervisor response rate of 83.7%. Supervisors also filled in optional demographic information at the end of the survey. The average age of the supervisors was 34.9 years ( $SD = 12.7$ ), and the majority of supervisors were male (58.8%). Employed in various organizational roles, these individuals worked an average of 42.4 hours per week ( $SD = 12.2$ ) and had an average organizational tenure of 7.2 years ( $SD = 7.4$ ).

Participants were asked to provide a unique identifier when beginning the survey and a supervisor's work email address in order to match responses. Any identifying information provided by the employee or supervisor such as names and email addresses was used solely for matching and verification purposes. This, along with the unique identifier, allowed participants to maintain complete confidentiality for the study. Participants were also notified that supervisors would be randomly emailed to verify the employee's employment in the organization. In addition, participants were informed that IP addresses would also be compared in order to provide the employees with a deterrent to fill in both surveys. Investigation of IP addresses and random verification of employee employment did not result in any participants being dropped from the study.

### **Measures**

*Fun at work.* Fun at work was measured using the four subscales of McDowell's (2005) Fun at Work Scale: socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work. Each subscale consisted of six items. For the first three subscales, participants were asked to rate the degree to which each of the following items occurs in their workplace using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = almost always). Sample items included "socializing with coworkers at work", "celebrations at work", and "relaxed dress code" which reflect socializing with coworkers, celebrating with coworkers, and personal freedoms, respectively. In the case of global fun at work, participants were asked to rate the degree to which he or she agreed with each of the statements using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A sample item measuring global fun was "this is a fun place to work". Coefficient alphas for these scales were  $\alpha = .85, .88, .74, .95$  for socializing with

coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work, respectively. The Fun at Work Scale in its entirety can be found in Appendix A.

*Positive affect.* The PANAS-X (Watson & Clark, 1999) was used to assess positive affect. Employees were asked to indicate to what extent they felt each of the items at work in general. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = very slightly or not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = moderately, 4 = quite a bit, and 5 = very much. The complete list of the ten positive affect items used in the study to measure positive affect can be found in Appendix A. Sample items measuring positive affect were: “active”, “excited”, and “sluggish” (reverse scored). Internal reliability analysis revealed a coefficient alpha of  $\alpha = .93$  for positive affect.

*Work Engagement.* Work engagement was measured using the nine-item version of Schaufeli and Bakker’s (2003) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9). Three items from each of three subscales reflected work engagement dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which he or she agreed with each of the statements using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). All nine items used to measure work engagement can be found in Appendix A. Sample items reflecting vigor, dedication, and absorption, respectively, were: “At my job, I am very resilient, mentally”, “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose”, and “When I am working, I forget about everything else around me”. Principal-components analysis of the work engagement scale revealed one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The factor explained 60.3% of the variance in the items and had an eigenvalue of 5.42. These results justified aggregating work engagement into one factor for the remainder of analyses. Internal reliability analysis revealed a coefficient alpha of  $\alpha = .92$  for work engagement.

*Task Performance.* The seven-item scale by Williams and Anderson (1991) was used to measure task performance. Supervisors were asked to indicate how often the employee engaged in each behavior using a 5-point Likert response scale (1 = never to 5 = almost always). A full list of the seven items measuring task performance can be found in Appendix B. Sample items included “adequately completes assigned duties”, “performs tasks that are expected of him/her”, “meets formal requirements of the job”, “neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform” (reverse coded). Internal reliability analysis of the task performance scale revealed a coefficient alpha of  $\alpha = .80$ .

*Organizational Citizenship Behaviors.* A shortened seven-item version of Lee and Allen’s (2002) OCB scale was used to measure organizational citizenship behaviors. Supervisors were asked to indicate how often their employee engaged in the various behavioral items. Appendix B includes the full list of the seven items in the reduced scale. Sample items were “shows genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations”, “assists others with their duties”, and “shows pride when representing the organization in public”. Internal consistency reliability analysis revealed an alpha of  $\alpha = .91$  indicating adequate reliability for this shortened measure of organizational citizenship behaviors.

*Creative Performance.* A shortened version of the George and Zhou (2002) Creative Performance Scale was used to measure creative performance. Supervisors were asked to report how often the employee engaged in each behavior using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = often). The complete five-item scale can be found in Appendix B. Items used to measure creativity were “exhibits creativity on the job when given the opportunity to do so”, “often has new and innovative ideas”, and “comes up with creative solutions to problems”. This shortened version featured adequate reliability with a coefficient alpha of  $\alpha = .97$ .

## **Analysis**

In order to investigate the validity of the conceptual model of fun at work, both principal-components analyses and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted. Principal-components analysis is useful to extract factor scores used in subsequent analyses. Confirmatory factor analysis procedures allow testing the number of factors in the data in addition to the structure of those factors. The measurement model of fun at work was tested by entering the covariance matrix of the items into LISREL 8.52 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Alternative measurement models were examined to determine the best fitting model. Several combinations were possible for combining the factors for the measurement models. For example, fun at work was combined with the other constructs in the model (i.e., positive affect and work engagement) to form one factor. In addition, positive affect and work engagement were combined to form one factor. Such analyses were useful to determine the best fitting overall measurement model.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used because of the advantages it offers for the present study. In particular, covariance structure models allow joint specification and estimation of the measurement model and the structural model hypothesized to account for the observed data. Additionally, such models also allow investigation of the loadings of the measures on their hypothesized constructs (i.e., convergent validity) and the degree to which supposedly different constructs are capable of being distinguished from each other in the structural model (i.e., discriminant validity) (Bollen, 1989; Long, 1983). Another advantage is that covariance structure models provide more accurate estimates of the 'true' relations among the variables by correcting the estimates for unreliability. Covariance structure modeling also features the ability to estimate indirect effects to provide important information on the overall effects of variables within the model (Hayduk, 1987). Finally, covariance structure models provide a wide range of statistics

that aid in diagnosing the acceptability of a particular model. Since some fit statistics are more sensitive to sample size, multiple fit statistics are typically reported.

In order to determine adequate fit for the models in the study, several fit statistics are presented. Fit statistics include: chi-square with corresponding degrees of freedom, Bentler's Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and the Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Kline, 2005). The CFI indicates how much the fit improves going from the null model to the target model. The NNFI penalizes for complexity of the model by adjusting the proportion of explained variance. The SRMR is a measure based on the standardized average covariance residuals of the model. Finally, RMSEA is a population-based index that corrects for model complexity. Good model fit is typically inferred when  $\chi^2/df$  falls below 3; when the CFI or NNFI rise above .90; and when SRMR and RMSEA fall near .05 (Kline, 2005). The combination of these statistics provides a good measure of overall model fit.

## CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

Table 5-1 reports the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among each of the study variables, and the coefficient alpha along the diagonal. Because the purpose of conducting this study was to investigate the structure and validity of fun at work and its relations with elements of job performance and potential mediating mechanisms, two central questions are addressed. First, does the measurement of fun at work display convergent validity, such that elements of socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms and global fun indicate a common concept of fun at work? Second, if the four measures do indicate a common construct, what is the nature of this concept relative to three elements of job performance (i.e., task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance) and affective and cognitive processes (e.g., positive affect and work engagement, respectively)?

### **Part I: Measurement Model and Convergent Validity**

In order to address the convergent validity of the measurement of fun at work, a principal-components analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis, and a usefulness analysis were conducted. First, to investigate the factor structure of fun at work, a principal-components analysis was conducted. An overall fun at work factor was extracted by analyzing the data at the scale level. Results of the principal-components analysis of the scales measuring the four dimensions of fun at work identified one component with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The one factor explained 59.5% of the variance in the scales and had an eigenvalue of 2.38. A factor score was then created by multiplying the scales by their factor weights from the principal-components analysis. The correlations between the four factors of fun that emerged (i.e., socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun) and the higher-order fun at work factor score (i.e., fun at work) are reported in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Between Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Fun at Work	0.00	1.00	-									
2. Socializing	3.73	0.70	.79	(.85)								
3. Celebrating	2.99	0.99	.78	.56	(.88)							
4. Freedoms	3.18	0.77	.66	.47	.43	(.74)						
5. Global Fun	3.67	0.85	.85	.62	.57	.58	(.95)					
6. Positive Affect	3.40	0.83	.51	.46	.36	.15	.57	(.93)				
7. Work Engagement	3.38	0.77	.62	.52	.42	.32	.63	.74	(.92)			
8. Task Performance	4.46	0.57	.11	.13	-.02	.07	.15	.21	.17	(.80)		
9. Organizational Citizenship Behavior	4.23	0.70	.34	.24	.34	.26	.23	.32	.40	.36	(.91)	
10. Creative Performance	3.88	0.96	.33	.24	.24	.26	.27	.29	.34	.57	.73	(.97)

Note: *N* = 245 for variables 1-7, and *N* = 205 for variables 8-10. Reliabilities are in parentheses along the diagonal. Correlations greater than .17 are significant at the  $p < .01$  level; Correlations greater than .14 but less than or equal to .18 are significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

As Table 5-1 illustrates, the correlations among the four fun at work dimensions are moderately strong. Specifically, the correlation between global fun and socializing was the strongest ( $r = .62$ ), followed by global fun and personal freedoms ( $r = .58$ ), global fun and celebrating ( $r = .57$ ), and socializing with coworkers and celebrating at work ( $r = .56$ ). The correlations for the personal freedoms measure were lower for socializing ( $r = .47$ ) and celebrating ( $r = .43$ ). In addition, the average correlation for the four measures is relatively strong ( $\bar{r} = .54$ ). These correlations were approximately similar to the intercorrelations reported by McDowell (2005) in her analysis of the measurement of fun at work using socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun. The moderately strong intercorrelations among the four measures of fun at work indicate that they may be dimensions of one single underlying construct. Accordingly, the fun at work factor correlated the strongest with global fun ( $r = .85$ ), followed by socializing ( $r = .79$ ), celebrating ( $r = .78$ ), and personal freedoms ( $r = .66$ ). Correlations between the four components and the fun at work factor were similar, though not equivalent, to factor loadings.

Next, to explicitly address whether the measures of fun at work indicate a single higher-order construct, a confirmatory factor analysis was necessary. In the confirmatory factor analyses, five models were investigated including four first-order models (Models 1, 2, 3, and 4) and one second-order model (Model 5). Table 5-2 reports the results of each model and corresponding fit statistics. First, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted where socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun represented four separate first-order factors (Model 2). Results of the confirmatory factor analysis revealed the following fit statistics:  $\chi^2(246, N = 205) = 533.61, p < .01; \chi^2/df = 2.17; CFI = .96; NNFI = .96; SRMR = .09; RMSEA = .08$ . Next, this hypothesized four factor model of fun at work (Model 2) was compared to the

one-factor fun at work scale (Model 1). The one-factor model was used as a “straw model”, or baseline, in order to determine how much fit improved by using the other models. The fit indices of Model 1 were as follows:  $\chi^2$  (252, N = 205) = 1342.16,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 5.33$ ; CFI = .86; NNFI = .85; SRMR = .12; RMSEA = .18. Compared to Model 1, the four-factor Model 2 demonstrated better fit to the data. However, because several alternate models were possible, additional confirmatory factor analyses were conducted.

Table 5-2. Comparison of Factor Structures of Fun at Work

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NNFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model 1 (All items)	1342.16	252	5.33	.86	.85	.12	.18
Model 2 (4 factors)	533.61	246	2.17	.96	.96	.09	.08
Model 3 (2 factors; IE)	1139.91	251	4.54	.89	.88	.13	.17
Model 4 (2 factors; AJ)	1024.04	251	4.08	.90	.89	.11	.15
Model 5 (1 second-order factor)	535.30	248	2.16	.96	.96	.09	.08

*Note.*  $N = 205$ . All  $\chi^2$  values are significant at  $p < .01$ . CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. IE = internal and external; AJ = activities and judgments.

In Model 3, socializing with coworkers and personal freedoms were combined to form a 12-item Internal Fun factor; similarly, celebrating and global fun were merged to form a 12-item External Fun factor. The fit of this model was as follows:  $\chi^2$  (251, N = 205) = 1139.91,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 4.54$ ; CFI = .89; NNFI = .88; SRMR = .13; RMSEA = .17. Model 4 featured socializing with coworkers, celebrating with coworkers, and personal freedoms combined to form one 18-item factor, and one other six-item factor of global fun. The fit of this two-factor first order model was as follows:  $\chi^2$  (251, N = 205) = 1024.04,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 4.08$ ; CFI = .90; NNFI = .89; SRMR = .11; RMSEA = .15. The fit of these models by comparison to both the one-factor model

and the proposed four-factor model suggests that a different factor structure may result in better fit to the data. Overall, the results from these two models suggest that both of the models fit only slightly better than one-factor model (Model 1), but not as well as the four-factor model (Model 2).

In Model 5, the latent constructs of socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun were allowed to load onto a second-order fun at work factor. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis revealed the following fit statistics:  $\chi^2$  (248, N = 205) = 535.30,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.16$ ; CFI = .96; NNFI = .96; SRMR = .09; RMSEA = .08. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis were essentially identical to those of Model 2. It is important to note that a first-order correlated factor model is functionally and mathematically equivalent to a second-order factor model (Bollen, 1989). However, because it more explicitly considers the structural nature of the constructs, a second-order factor model is preferred over the correlated factor model (Gerbing & Anderson, 1984). Thus, the higher-order Model 5 was preferred over the first-order Model 2 (and each of the other first-order models). These results suggest that fun at work is a second-order factor that explains the associations among the four lower-level dimensions.

Although the principal-components and confirmatory factor analyses provide initial evidence to suggest that a second-order fun at work factor emerged, a usefulness analysis was conducted in order to determine the contribution of the higher-order fun at work factor (i.e., the principal component factor score) over the prediction of any single dimension (Darlington, 1990). In the usefulness analysis, each individual lower level dimension of fun at work (i.e., socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun) was entered first into a regression to predict the criterion variables, and then the fun at work factor was added to the equations to determine the increase in the multiple correlation. Results of these regressions were then

compared with the opposite situation, where the fun at work factor was entered first and the dimension second. The results from the usefulness analysis provide information about the relative contribution of the second-order factor versus the specific-factor variance (attributable to the individual dimensions). If the second-order factor predicts controlling for the specific dimension, but the reverse is not true, then the broad factor dominates. If the specific factor predicts but the broad factor does not, then the specific-factor variance dominates. If both predict, then both the overall factor and the variance attributable to one or more of the dimensions are each important (Darlington, 1990).

These results of the usefulness analysis show that overall the second-order fun at work factor dominates, though in several cases the specific dimensions do significantly add while controlling for the overall fun at work factor. Specifically, as demonstrated in Table 5-3, the results of the usefulness analysis revealed that fun at work significantly increased the multiple correlation in 15 of the 20 relationships, beyond the correlation provided by any fun at work dimension. Additionally, the dimensions of fun at work significantly increased the multiple correlations in only 5 of the 15 relationships controlling for fun at work. Overall, the results of the usefulness analysis demonstrate that the second-order fun at work factor was indeed useful as a consistent predictor of criteria beyond the four dimensions of fun at work.

Collectively, the results of the confirmatory factor analyses, the principal-components analysis, and the usefulness analysis suggest that the fun at work factor is indeed a second-order construct and a more consistent predictor of criteria than when the dimensions are used separately. That is, yes, it does appear that elements of socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms and global fun indicate a common concept of fun at work. In the next section, this

second-order fun at work construct is further investigated with respect to the other study variables.

Table 5-3. Usefulness Analyses of Multiple Correlations

Variable	Positive Affect	Work Engagement	Task Performance	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Creative Performance
1. Socializing	.46**	.52**	.13	.24**	.24**
2. Fun at Work	.06**	.11**	.00	.08**	.11**
1. Fun at Work	.51**	.62**	.11	.33**	.34**
2. Socializing	.01	.00	.02	.00	.00
1. Celebrating	.36**	.43**	.02	.24**	.34**
2. Fun at Work	.16**	.21**	.18**	.08**	.02
1. Fun at Work	.51**	.62**	.11	.33**	.34**
2. Celebrating	.01	.01	.18*	.00	.02
1. Freedoms	.15*	.32**	.07	.26**	.26**
2. Fun at Work	.42**	.31**	.04	.07**	.09**
1. Fun at Work	.51**	.62**	.11	.33**	.34**
2. Freedoms	.06**	.01*	.00	.01	.00
1. Global Fun	.57**	.63**	.15*	.27**	.23**
2. Fun at Work	.00	.02**	.00	.06**	.13**
1. Fun at Work	.51**	.62**	.11	.33**	.34**
2. Global Fun	.06**	.03**	.04	.00	.02

Note. Numbers in the second stages are changes in multiple correlations. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

## Part II: Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Prior to running the complete structural model to test the study hypotheses, additional confirmatory factor analyses were conducted on the structure of performance and also on the overall measurement model. First, in order to reduce the complexity of the model and to determine whether the three performance dimensions could load onto one overall rated performance factor, a confirmatory factor analysis of the performance models was conducted.

Three separate performance models were investigated representing one-, two-, and three-factor models of performance. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis are reported in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4. Comparison of Factor Structures of Performance

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NNFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model 1 (All items)	1795.33	189	9.50	.86	.85	.13	.28
Model 2 (2 factors; Task, Extra)	1076.77	188	5.73	.92	.92	.11	.18
Model 3 (3 factors; Task, OCB, Create)	696.13	186	3.74	.96	.95	.07	.11

*Note.*  $N = 205$ . All  $\chi^2$  values are significant at  $p < .01$ . CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. Task = task performance; Extra-role = combined factor of organizational citizenship behavior and creative performance; OCB = Organizational citizenship behavior; Create = creative performance.

Model 3 consisted of the three hypothesized performance factors: task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance. The fit statistics of Model 3 were as follows:  $\chi^2 (186, N = 205) = 696.13, p < .01; \chi^2/df = 3.74; CFI = .96; NNFI = .95; SRMR = .07; RMSEA = .11$ . Model 3 was then compared to Model 1, a one-factor model where all three performance dimensions (i.e., task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance) were combined to form one factor. The fit statistics of Model 1 were as follows:  $\chi^2 (189, N = 205) = 1795.33, p < .01; \chi^2/df = 9.50; CFI = .86; NNFI = .85; SRMR = .13; RMSEA = .28$ . These results suggest that the three-factor Model 3, compared to the one-factor Model 1, is a better fit to the data.

To further examine whether or not the hypothesized three factor model was the best fit to the data, Model 3 was next compared to Model 2, a two-factor model in which task performance was one factor, and organizational citizenship behavior and creative performance were combined to form one extra-role performance factor. Model 2 resulted in the following fit statistics:  $\chi^2 (188, N = 205) = 1076.77, p < .01; \chi^2/df = 5.73; CFI = .92; NNFI = .92; SRMR = .11; RMSEA =$

.18. Again, Model 3 resulted in better fit to the data. Accordingly, the remainder of analyses used the three-factor model of performance where task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance remained separate factors.

An additional confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the overall measurement model once the structure of performance was established. The additional analysis was prompted by the high correlations between fun at work and positive affect ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ) and work engagement ( $r = .62, p < .01$ ). Consequently, three separate models were investigated to determine the best of the following three scenarios: 1) whether fun at work could be combined with positive affect, 2) whether fun at work could be combined with work engagement, or 3) if fun at work, positive affect, and work engagement should be allowed to remain as separate factors. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis are reported in Table 5-5.

Table 5-5. Comparison of Factor Structures of Overall Measurement Model

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NNFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model 1 (6 factors)	4686.91	1937	2.42	.93	.92	.10	.09
Model 2 (5 factors; FUN-PA)	5383.44	1942	2.77	.91	.90	.11	.12
Model 3 (5 factors; FUN-ENG)	5046.85	1942	2.60	.92	.91	.11	.10
Model 4 (5 factors; PA-ENG)	4861.95	1942	2.50	.92	.92	.10	.10

*Note.*  $N = 205$ . All  $X^2$  values are significant at  $p < .01$ . CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. FUN-PA = fun at work and positive affect combined as one factor. FUN-ENG = fun at work and work engagement combined as one factor. PA-ENG = positive affect and work engagement combined as one factor.

Model 1 consisted of the six factors hypothesized in the full measurement model: fun at work, positive affect, work engagement, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance. The fit statistics of Model 1 were as follows:  $\chi^2$  (1937,  $N = 205$ ) = 4686.91,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.42$ ; CFI = .93; NNFI = .92; SRMR = .10; RMSEA = .09. Model 1 was

then compared to Model 2, a five-factor measurement model where fun at work and positive affect were combined to form one factor. The fit statistics of Model 2 were as follows:  $\chi^2$  (1942, N = 205) = 5383.44,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.77$ ; CFI = .91; NNFI = .90; SRMR = .11; RMSEA = .12. Next, Model 1 was then compared to Model 3, a five factor-model where fun at work and work engagement were combined to form one factor. The fit statistics of Model 3 were as follows:  $\chi^2$  (1942, N = 205) = 5046.85,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.60$ ; CFI = .92; NNFI = .91; SRMR = .11; RMSEA = .10. Finally, Model 1 was compared to Model 4, a five-factor model where positive affect and work engagement were combined to form one factor. The fit statistics of Model 4 were as follows:  $\chi^2$  (1942, N = 205) = 4861.95,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.50$ ; CFI = .92; NNFI = .92; SRMR = .10; RMSEA = .10. Overall, these results suggest that Model 1, compared to the other three models, is a better fit to the data. Accordingly, fun at work, positive affect, and work engagement were retained as separate factors in the remainder of the analyses.

Upon determining the best factor structure for the performance dimensions and the mediator variables, a full structural equation model was used to test hypothesized relationships among the variables. Results of the structural equation model should provide insight regarding the nature of fun at work and three elements of job performance (i.e., task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance) and affective and cognitive processes (e.g., positive affect and work engagement, respectively). Investigating the structural model of fun at work involved specifying a model where each of the four fun at work dimensions loaded onto one latent factor of fun at work, and each of the other constructs (i.e., positive affect, work engagement, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance) loaded on its own latent construct. The disturbance terms for positive affect and work engagement were allowed to covary, as were task performance, organizational citizenship

behavior, and creative performance. Adding these paths to the combined measurement model resulted in a good fit to the data, as indicated by the following fit statistics:  $\chi^2$  (17, N = 205) = 51.33,  $p < .01$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 3.02$ ; CFI = .97; NNFI = .93; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .10.

Because of the large number of paths included, structural equation modeling results are presented as three separate figures. It is important to note that the structural model tested actually represents all three figures in combination such that all structural equation models ran simultaneously. The standardized effects of fun at work on task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance are represented in Figure 5-1, Figure 5-2, and Figure 5-3, respectively. For the purpose of clarity, covariances between exogenous variables and disturbance terms are omitted from the figures.

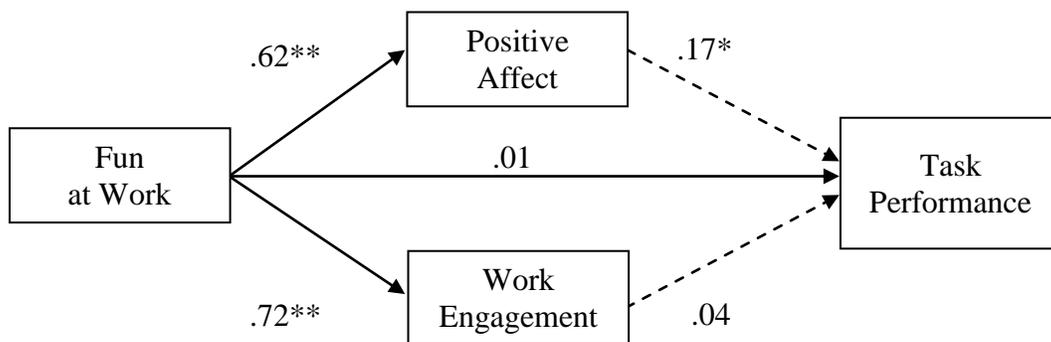


Figure 5-1. Standardized Effects of Fun at Work on Task Performance. (Note: \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .)

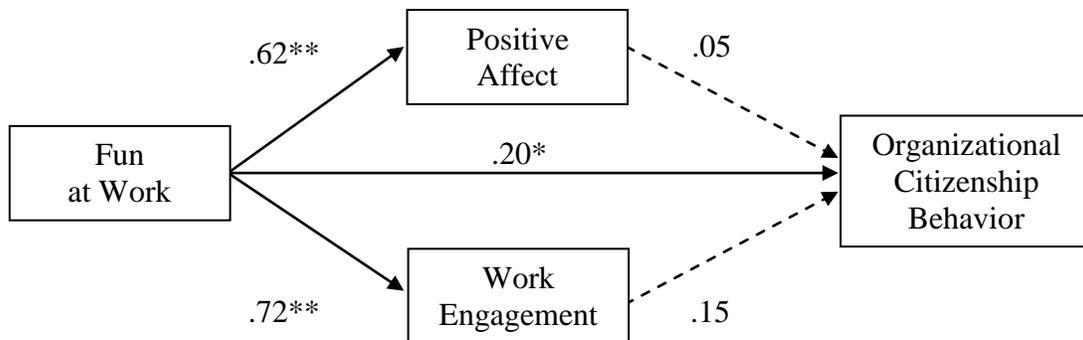


Figure 5-2. Standardized Effects of Fun at Work on Organizational Citizenship Behavior. (Note: \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .)

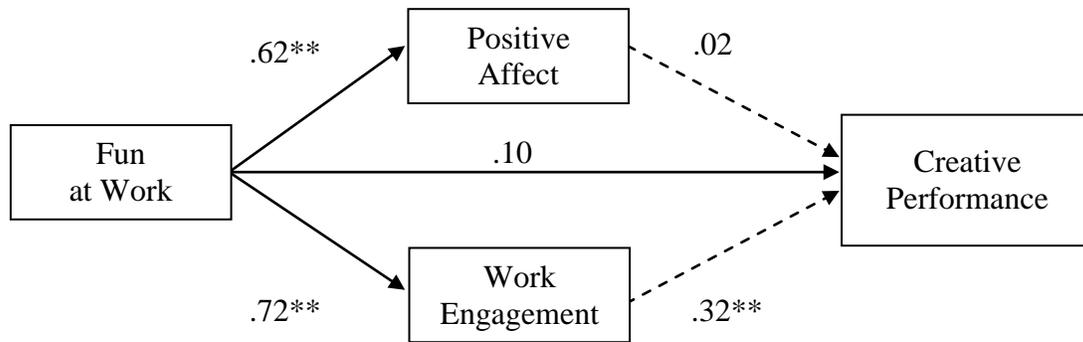


Figure 5-3. Standardized Effects of Fun at Work on Creative Performance. (Note: \*\* $p < .01$ .)

The first three hypotheses suggested that fun at work would be positively related to individual performance. The part of the structural model relevant to these hypotheses regressed the three dimensions of performance on fun at work. Hypothesis 1 predicted that fun at work would be positively related to task performance. As demonstrated in Figure 5-1 and Table 5-6, the direct effect of fun at work on task performance was not significant ( $\beta = .01$ ). However, the total effects (.15) and indirect effects (.14) of fun at work on task performance were both significant at the  $p < .05$  level. This provides evidence to support Hypothesis 1 that fun at work positively impacts task performance.

Table 5-6. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Fun at Work on Performance Outcomes

	Outcome		
	Task Performance	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Creative Performance
Direct	.01	.20*	.10
Indirect	.14*	.14*	.24**
Total	.15*	.34**	.34**

Note.  $N = 205$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \* $p < .05$ .

Hypothesis 2 predicted that fun at work would be positively related to organizational citizenship behavior. As demonstrated in Figure 5-2 and Table 5-6, the direct effect of fun at work on organizational citizenship behavior is significant ( $\beta = .20$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Also, both the total

effects (.34;  $p < .01$ ) and indirect effects (.14;  $p < .05$ ) of fun at work on contextual performance were significant. These results support Hypothesis 2, indicating that fun at work has a significant and positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that fun at work would be positively related to creative performance. As demonstrated in Figure 5-3 and Table 5-6, the direct effect of fun at work on creative performance was not significant ( $\beta = .10$ ). However, the total (.34) and indirect (.24) effects of fun at work on creative performance were significant both at the  $p < .01$  level. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported such that fun at work positively predicted creative performance.

The next set of hypotheses made predictions regarding positive affect. Hypothesis 4 predicted that fun at work would be positively related to positive affect. The portion of the structural model relevant to this hypothesis regressed positive affect onto fun at work. As shown in Figures 5-1, 5-2, and 5-3, Hypothesis 4 was supported ( $\beta = 0.62$ ;  $p < .01$ ). These results suggest that fun at work is positively related to positive affect. Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 predicted that positive affect would be positively related to the three performance outcomes of task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and creative performance, respectively. The portion of the structural model relevant to these hypotheses regressed the three performance dimensions on positive affect. As can be seen from Figures 5-1, 5-2, and 5-3, only Hypothesis 5 was supported ( $\beta = .17$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Interestingly, positive affect positively predicted only task performance and was not significantly positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors or creative performance.

Hypotheses 8a, 8b, and 8c predicted that positive affect would mediate the relationship between fun at work and task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and creative performance, respectively. Sobel's (1982) test of mediation was conducted to examine positive

affect as a mediator of the fun at work and individual performance relationships. In the Sobel test, path coefficient estimates and their respective standard errors are used to calculate a Sobel value. The significance of the Sobel value indicates whether the indirect effect of the independent variable through the mediator is significant. The mediation test for positive affect was not significant for fun at work and task performance ( $Z = 1.68$ ), organizational citizenship behavior ( $Z = 0.62$ ) or creative performance ( $Z = 0.18$ ). Overall, these results do not support Hypothesis 8a, Hypothesis 8b, or Hypothesis 8c. Thus, positive affect did not mediate the relationship between fun at work and task performance, organizational citizenship behavior nor creative performance. The results from the Sobel test are reported in Table 5-7.

Table 5-7. Fun at Work and Performance: The Mediating Effect of Positive Affect

Relationship	B	SE <sub>B</sub>	Z
1. Fun at Work to Positive Affect	1.04**	.13	1.68
2. Positive Affect to Task Performance	.12	.07	
1. Fun at Work to Positive Affect	1.04**	.13	.62
2. Positive Affect to Organizational Citizenship Behavior	.05	.08	
1. Fun at Work to Positive Affect	1.04**	.13	.18
2. Positive Affect to Creative Performance	.02	.11	

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE<sub>B</sub> = standard error of B; Z = Sobel mediation test value. \*\* $p < .01$ .

The next group of hypotheses made predictions with respect to work engagement. Hypothesis 9 predicted that fun at work would be positively related to work engagement. The portion of the structural model relevant to this hypothesis regressed work engagement onto fun at work. As shown in Figures 5-1, 5-2, and 5-3, Hypothesis 9 was supported ( $\beta = .72$ ;  $p < .01$ ). These results suggest that fun at work is positively related to work engagement. Hypotheses 10, 11, and 12 predicted that work engagement would positively predict the three performance outcomes of task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and creative performance, respectively. The portion of the structural model relevant to these hypotheses regressed the three

performance dimensions on work engagement. As shown in Figure 5-1, 5-2, and 5-3, only Hypothesis 12 was supported ( $\beta = .32; p < .01$ ). These results indicated that work engagement positively predicted creative performance and was not significantly related to task performance or organizational citizenship behaviors.

As a final investigation of mediation, Hypotheses 13a, 13b, and 13c predicted that work engagement would mediate the relationship between fun at work and task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and creative performance, respectively. Both the total and indirect effects of fun at work on each of the three dimensions of performance were significant and provided evidence to suggest mediation. Again, Sobel's (1982) test of mediation was conducted as evidence for work engagement as a mediator of the fun at work and individual performance relationships. The results from the Sobel test are reported in Table 5-8.

Table 5-8. Fun at Work and Performance: The Mediating Effect of Work Engagement

Relationship	B	SE <sub>B</sub>	Z
1. Fun at Work to Work Engagement	1.12**	.12	.33
2. Work Engagement to Task Performance	.03	.09	
1. Fun at Work to Work Engagement	1.12**	.12	1.26
2. Work Engagement to Organizational Citizenship Behavior	.14	.11	
1. Fun at Work to Work Engagement	1.12**	.12	2.73**
2. Work Engagement to Creative Performance	.40**	.14	

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE<sub>B</sub> = standard error of B; Z = Sobel mediation test value. \*\* $p < .01$ .

The only relationship with evidence to suggest mediation by work engagement is that of fun at work to creative performance. In this case, work engagement mediates the relationship between the two variables ( $Z = 2.73, p < .01$ ). Work engagement did not mediate the relationship between fun at work and task performance ( $Z = .33$ ) or organizational citizenship behavior ( $Z = 1.26$ ). Overall, these results support Hypothesis 13c and do not support Hypotheses 13a or

Hypothesis 13b. Specifically, work engagement mediated the relationship between fun at work and creative performance but not task performance nor organizational citizenship behavior.

Taken together, the results from these analyses suggest that fun at work has varying effects on the different elements of individual performance. Furthermore, the affective and cognitive mechanisms (e.g., positive affect and work engagement, respectively) also demonstrate unique relationships with fun at work and the individual performance outcomes. A more detailed discussion of these results follows in the next section.

## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

The idea that fun at work is positively related to individual performance is often assumed in the literature (e.g., Abramis, 1989; Caudron, 1992; Hudson, 2001) but has not been thoroughly investigated. On the basis of such anecdotal claims, the purpose of this study was to provide empirical evidence and information about the nature of fun at work relative to job performance. As a result, the current study suggests that fun at work positively predicts dimensions of job performance and also that positive affect and work engagement demonstrate unique relationships with fun at work and the individual performance outcomes. In addition, one of the main contributions of this study is a better understanding of the structure of the measurement of fun at work. Extensive analyses revealed that fun at work can be positioned as a higher-order construct consisting of socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun. The findings of this study provide interesting insight into multiple constructs related to workplace fun and future areas of inquiries to be addressed. As such, the following discussion is organized into the subsequent sections: (1) Fun at Work and Performance, (2) Practical Implications, (3) Limitations, and (4) Future Research.

### **Fun at Work and Performance**

Having fun at work may be seen as a positive event (Cooper, 2005) which thereby creates a positive environment which promotes performance (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Supporting such a notion that a fun working environment facilitates employee productivity (Van Oech, 1982), these results suggest that fun at work enhances job performance. While fun at work impacted employee job performance overall, it was most strongly related to the contextual performance outcome of organizational citizenship behavior. Although both of the direct effects of fun at work on the other two performance dimensions (organizational citizenship behavior and

creative performance) were not significant, all of the indirect effects (through positive affect and work engagement) and total effects were positive and significant. This suggests that other mechanisms may account for the relationship between fun at work and individual job performance.

Of the three performance outcomes, organizational citizenship behavior was the only one significantly and directly related to fun at work. This is interesting because it logically follows that socializing and celebrating with coworkers increase the chance that employees get to know each other better. Accordingly, these individuals would be more likely to engage in such a social exchange such as helping a coworker. Furthermore, as previously found by McDowell (2005), fun at work resulted in increased affective commitment, an emotional attachment to one's organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Individuals with affective commitment to an organization are more likely to work toward the benefit of their organization and are more likely to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors (Johnson & Chang, 2006). Thus, these findings seem plausible such that workplace fun enhances organizational citizenship behavior.

Positive affect and work engagement were positioned in the study as affective and cognitive outcomes of fun at work, respectively. First, as expected, experiencing fun at work resulted in employees with higher levels of positive affect. This finding seems reasonable such that activities like socializing and celebrating with coworkers could put people in a good mood. In addition, these findings are consistent with Gable and colleagues (2004) who found that communicating and sharing positive events with others resulted in greater individual positive affect. Second, also as predicted, fun at work and work engagement were positively related. These findings support the notion that workplace fun may function as a job resource (Demerouti et al., 2001) for individuals whereby they are able to "recharge" and stay focused at work.

Results for the affective and cognitive influences on performance were somewhat mixed. With respect to affective influences, positive affect positively predicted task performance as expected. Despite the abundance of research suggesting otherwise, positive affect was not significantly related to organizational citizenship behavior or creative performance. This is not to say these relationships do not exist, rather that support for these relationships was not found in this study. Replication of this study with another sample may hold different results for positive affect and job performance that are more consistent with previous findings.

In terms of cognitive influences on performance, this study was one of the first to examine and reveal a significant positive direct effect of work engagement on creative performance. The results of this study are consistent with Kahn's (1990) suggestion that creativity is self-expression that results from personal engagement. However, no support was found for the relationship between work engagement and task performance or organizational citizenship behavior. Interestingly, the two previous studies to investigate this relationship (i.e., Rich, 2007; Sonnentag, 2003) found a positive relationship between the two. Perhaps the sample in the present study did not represent a much variation in or a high degree of work engagement. That is not to say that certain jobs do not require engagement, but the other two studies that examined this relationship included individuals in one profession (i.e., fire department workers) or employees in a single organization usually in a type of job that required high engagement.

In regards to the mediation hypotheses, the only significant mediation route was from fun at work to creative performance through work engagement. Employees who have fun at work may become more engaged in their work and therefore exhibit greater creative performance. Mediation of fun at work with the three performance outcomes by positive affect was not significant. Although fun at work seems to impact overall performance, perhaps other

mechanisms are at play in the model. This notion is returned to in greater detail in a subsequent discussion regarding future research.

### **Practical Implications**

One of the main contributions of this study is that of an established measurement model of workplace fun. Given that the fun at work construct almost always predicted better than the individual dimensions of fun at work in this study, researchers investigating the relationships of workplace fun will obtain higher validity in using the workplace fun dimensions as a set. This is not to imply that the dimensions of fun at work (i.e., socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun) should not be used alone in other studies, but rather that the second-order fun at work factor that emerged provides increased validity for the measurement of fun at work. Because previous research has used various conceptualizations of workplace fun, this implication is particularly important for future study.

Another implication that warrants discussion is that of the significance of having fun at work. Specifically, given that fun at work appears to have important consequences for individuals' job performance, practical questions arise: Does having fun at work really matter? That is, are there actually positive individual outcomes that result from having fun in the workplace? In light of the evidence presented in this study, the answer is yes, fun at work really does matter. In the present study, people having fun at work not only reported being in better moods and more engaged but also demonstrated positive performance outcomes. Research by Karl and colleagues has begun to examine individual differences including appropriateness, salience, and consequences of having fun at work (Karl et al., 2005). Their findings suggest that individuals at the same organization may perhaps respond differently to workplace fun activities such as socializing and celebrating, for example. Hence, one clear implication of the results of this study is that organizations might be well served in enhancing opportunities for having fun at

work, particularly to those individuals who respond to fun at work as appropriate and salient. In turn, these opportunities may make way for higher-performing employees.

### **Limitations**

While this study provided valuable insight into the relationship between fun at work, positive affect, work engagement, and job performance, there are also some limitations that provide opportunities for further research. One limitation is that this study utilized a convenience sample of 205 students with an average age of 22. Despite the fact that the participants in the sample were employed at numerous positions across multiple industries, this study may have only captured a small segment of society. Thus, these results may not truly represent the perceptions of the general working population. To address this concern, additional research is necessary in order to better represent the working population and to extend the generalizability of these findings.

Another limitation of this study is that a comprehensive construct validity examination of the fun at work factor should investigate its relationships with other variables in the form of a nomological network. Such an analysis was not conducted in this study, and as such, only partial evidence was provided for the validity of this construct. However, the results of the present investigation provide the most comprehensive empirical evidence to date on the fun at work construct and its relationship with individual performance. Despite the fact that this study did not provide unequivocal evidence in support of the fun at work construct and related outcomes, it did provide a case for the viability of fun at work as a concept worthy to consider in future research. Replication and extension of studies of workplace fun should not only enhance the validity of these findings but also provide grounds for establishing a nomological network for fun at work.

A final limitation of the study was the high correlation between positive affect and work engagement ( $r = .74$ ). These results are consistent with the current state of the literature which seems somewhat undecided on the fate of work engagement. On one hand, some researchers position employee engagement as a general concept that encompasses many aspects of one's work situation. For example, proposing a framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement, Macey and Schneider (2008) discussed the possibility of engagement as inclusive of positive affect. After multiple illustrations of how the measurement of positive affect and engagement feature similar items, the authors suggested that positive affect with respect to the job and work setting "occupies a central position in the conceptualization and measurement of state engagement" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 12). On the other hand, some researchers feel that if the engagement concept is unique, then it should be role specific (c.f., Saks, 2008). For instance, individual employee engagement is likely to vary in different job, group, and organizational roles, resulting in a variety of different implications (Saks, 2006, 2008). Accordingly, Saks (2008) maintained that work engagement is still valuable as both a predictor and a consequence. Consistent with this sentiment, interesting results emerged for work engagement in this study. However, these results do not answer the question of whether or not work engagement and positive affect are separate factors. Consequently, further inquiry is necessary to evaluate the contribution of employee engagement.

### **Future Research**

Despite these limitations, the study results point to a number of suggestions for future research. First and foremost, replication and extension are necessary in the examination of the workplace fun and performance relationship to fully understand the implications of this research. Perhaps other mechanisms are at play in the model and can be uncovered by further analysis. Doing so would increase the generalizability of these findings as well as open up other areas of

inquiry. Karl and colleagues (2007) have begun to look at dispositional differences in attitudes towards fun at work. Their findings suggest that individuals who score high on extraversion and agreeableness are more likely to have a positive attitude towards fun at work. Similarly, research that investigates dispositional predictors of the fun at work dimensions of socializing, celebrating, personal freedoms, and global fun would immensely sharpen the growing literature on workplace fun.

Other additions to the workplace fun and performance model would be helpful such as moderators of the relationship, particularly individual differences. For example, because self-monitoring embodies the notion to engage in certain impression management techniques (Day, Schleicher, Unckless, & Hiller, 2002; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), perhaps high self-monitors that engage in workplace fun have greater payoffs in terms of rated performance. In addition, perhaps similar results would emerge for individuals scoring high on core-self evaluations. Originally introduced by Judge, Locke, and Durham (1997) core self-evaluations are bottom-line evaluations that individuals hold about their capabilities, competence, and worthiness. Individuals with high levels of core self-evaluations demonstrate a positive self concept which may complement a fun working atmosphere and result in greater performance outcomes. In any case, the arena of research on workplace fun would be broadened by the examination and inclusion of moderators of the fun at work and individual performance relationship.

Due to the overwhelming notion by the popular press that workplace fun leads to positive outcomes, another area for research could be the “bad side” of fun at work. Since so much anecdotal evidence claims that fun at work leads to positive outcomes, few people have really even discussed the down side of fun. Therefore, an additional area that warrants future research includes the potential harmful effects of workplace fun. Consistent with Fineman (2006) who

suggested that there may be a dark side to positivity in organizations, perhaps fun at work may lead to counterproductive behaviors or withdrawal due to the extra psychological efforts involved. For example, some individuals may feel that “forced fun” is an insult and they then try to get back at the organization or their supervisor by engaging in harmful behaviors or even completely withdrawing from work. Furthermore, workplace fun may be seen as a stressor for some, but as a welcome relief for others. These effects may be dependent upon an individual’s perceptions of appropriateness and salience of fun at work; therefore, investigating moderators of the “bad side” of workplace fun would be important additions to this research.

Another area of research that is basically unexplored is workplace fun and corresponding individual emotional reactions. Williams and Alliger (1994) noted that feelings about work can occur at different levels; accordingly, analyses in which emotions and moods are assessed momentarily (i.e., an experience-sampling methodology) may be useful for such study. Again, some people may have a preference for inclusion of fun in the workplace and others would not. Thus, examining both positive and negative moods and emotions and their respective relationship with having fun at work could provide insight on how fun at work actually impacts a person’s daily affective reactions. Interestingly, Brief and Weiss (2002) noted, “Perhaps the most glaring example of the narrowness of organizational research is the overemphasis of the study of mood at the expense of discrete emotions” (p. 297). By studying the effects of fun at work on individual’s emotional reactions, particularly in the form of positive and negative emotions, researchers could respond to such a concern.

Finally, building on the suggestion of Karl et al. (2007), research on workplace fun would benefit from incorporating customer reactions to workplace fun. It is not enough to only examine the performance outcomes of workplace fun, but also to consider effects workplace fun may

have on the customer. On one hand, research on emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994) suggests that employees who experience emotions “infect” coworkers, customers, and clients with their emotional states. Therefore, if fun at work causes employees to feel excited, for example, then it is likely that the service encounter (Gutek, Bhappu, & Liao-Troth, 1999) will be affected accordingly. On the other hand, employees having fun at work may not be taken as seriously by the customer, or even may be seen as not devoting enough attention to the customer. Consistent with Karl et al. (2007), this issue may be particularly pertinent in certain environments, such as health care. In either case, exploring the relationship of workplace fun at customer reactions will broaden the understanding of the concept of fun at work.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the results of this study provide evidence to suggest that fun at work directly and indirectly affects job performance. Specifically, fun at work was positively and directly related to organizational citizenship behavior and positively and indirectly related to task performance and creative performance. Affective and cognitive mechanisms are also at play in the overall process. Individuals reporting greater levels of fun at work were also more likely to be in a better mood and also more engaged in their work. Additionally, individuals having fun at work were also more likely to be more engaged in their work, and thus exhibit greater creative performance. Therefore, the notion that a fun working environment results in greater employee productivity may indeed be true and seems worthy of further investigation.

APPENDIX A  
EMPLOYEE SURVEY ITEMS

**FUN AT WORK SCALE (MCDOWELL, 2005)**

Fun at work means engaging in activities not specifically related to the job that are enjoyable, amusing, or playful, and that enhance organizational performance. Keeping the above definition in mind, please rate the degree to which each of the following items occurs in your workplace using the following rating scale.

<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Almost Always</i>
1	2	3	4	5

*Socializing with coworkers*

1. Socializing with coworkers at work
2. Socializing with coworkers outside of work
3. Camaraderie/friendships at work
4. Sharing each other's stories
5. Joking with coworkers
6. Sharing food with coworkers

*Celebrating at work*

1. Celebrations at work
2. Company provided refreshments
3. Office parties
4. Observing birthdays and other events
5. Throwing parties to recognize accomplishments
6. Festivities during holidays and other special times

*Personal freedoms*

1. Relaxed dress code
2. Personal music is allowed
3. Taking breaks from work
4. Going out to lunch with coworkers
5. Autonomy/freedom at work
6. Playing around at work

Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements about your workplace using the following rating scale.

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

*Global fun at work*

1. This is a fun place to work
2. My direct supervisor seems to value fun
3. My company has a fun atmosphere
4. Most people here have fun at work
5. The overall climate of my company is fun
6. My supervisor encourages fun at work

**POSITIVE AFFECT NEGATIVE AFFECT SCALE (WATSON & CLARK, 1999)**

This scale consists of a number of words and phrases that describe different feelings and emotions. Indicate to what extent you feel each in general, that is, on the average at work. Use the following scale to record your answers. (PA = positive affect, NA = negative affect)

<i>Very slightly</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Very strongly</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1. Interested (PA1)		11. Irritable (NA6)		
2. Distressed (NA1)		12. Alert (PA6)		
3. Excited (PA2)		13. Ashamed (NA7)		
4. Upset (NA2)		14. Inspired (PA7)		
5. Strong (PA3)		15. Nervous (NA8)		
6. Guilty (NA3)		16. Determined (PA8)		
7. Scared (NA4)		17. Attentive (PA9)		
8. Hostile (NA5)		18. Jittery (NA9)		
9. Enthusiastic (PA4)		19. Active (PA10)		
10. Proud (PA5)		20. Afraid (NA10)		

**WORK ENGAGEMENT (SCHAUFELI & BAKKER, 2003)**

The following statements refer to your behavior at work. Please use the following rating scale to indicate your level of agreement with each item. (VI = vigor, DE = dedication, AB = absorption)

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1. At my work I feel bursting with energy (VI1)				
2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose (DE1)				
3. Time flies when I am working (AB1)				
4. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous (VI2)				
5. I am enthusiastic about my job (DE2)				
6. When I am working, I forget about everything else around me (AB2)				
7. My job inspires me (DE3)				
8. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work (VI3)				
9. I feel happy when I am working intensely (AB3)				
10. I am proud of the work that I do (DE4)				
11. I am immersed in my work (AB4)				
12. I can continue working for very long periods at a time (VI4)				
13. To me, my job is challenging (DE5)				
14. I get carried away when I am working (AB5)				
15. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally (VI5)				
16. It is difficult to detach myself from my job (AB6)				
17. At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well (VI6)				

APPENDIX B  
SUPERVISOR SURVEY ITEMS

Using the rating scale below, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your employee's behavior on the job. (\*=REVERSE CODED)

<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Moderately</i> <i>Often</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

**TASK PERFORMANCE (WILLIAMS & ANDERSON, 1991)**

1. Adequately completes assigned duties
2. Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description
3. Performs tasks that are expected of him/her
4. Meets formal requirements of the job
5. Engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance
6. Neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform\*
7. Fails to perform essential duties\*

**CREATIVE PERFORMANCE (adapted from GEORGE & ZHOU, 2002)**

1. Suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives
2. Comes up with new and practical ideas to improve performance
3. Is a good source of creative ideas
4. Exhibits creativity on the job when given the opportunity to do so
5. Often has new and innovative ideas
6. Comes up with creative solutions to problems

**ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR (adapted from LEE & ALLEN, 2002)**

1. Willingly gives his/her time to help others who have work-related problems
2. Shows genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations
3. Gives up time to help others who have work or nonwork problems
4. Assists others with their duties
5. Keeps up with the developments of the organization
6. Defends the organization when other employees criticize it
7. Shows pride when representing the organization in public
8. Expresses loyalty toward the organization

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Erin Rae Fluegge, fun-haver extraordinaire, started her first job at Pioneer Market in Jackson, MO when she was 15 years old. With several of her high school friends as co-workers, she soon learned the value of having fun at work. Whether they were sorting peaches, cleaning geraniums, building orange pyramids, or bagging sweet corn, the gang at Pioneer knew how to have a good time and still be productive. Little did Erin know that her experience as a teenager at Pioneer would later inspire her research on workplace fun.

Several years passed, and Erin had fun in college while she performed as the Feature Twirler for the Golden Eagles Marching Band at Southeast Missouri State University. Also while at the university, Erin obtained her Bachelor of General Studies in 2002. Next, she graduated with her Masters in Business Administration at the Harrison College of Business from Southeast in 2004. During her time in the MBA program at Southeast, Erin had fun teaching intermediate algebra in the Department of Mathematics for two years.

Somewhere between polynomials and imaginary numbers, Erin decided that she loved teaching and wanted to pursue a PhD. When Erin married her husband, Rob Woolf, in the summer of 2004, they decided to move to Florida to continue Erin's education. Her main prerequisite for a graduate program was to see palm trees in front of the business building. At the University of Florida, Erin had a lot of fun with her co-workers and friends while working on her PhD (and it was nice to have several palm trees right outside her office window).

Finally, in 2008, after eleven fun and exciting years of college, Erin is going back home to teach organizational behavior courses in the Department of Management at her alma mater, Southeast Missouri State University. On the weekends back in Missouri, Erin plans to occasionally stop by Pioneer Market to find some good deals on plants and produce and to make sure those kids are still having fun.