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By Whitney K. Woods

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Is approved by the final examining committee:

Elizabeth Boyd

Kevin Rand

Leslie-Ashburn Nardo

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Approved by Major Professor(s): Elizabeth Boyd

Approved by: Jane R. Williams 06/19/2014

Head of the Department Graduate Program

Date

MULTITASKING IN THE WORKPLACE: A PERSON-JOB FIT PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

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In today's workforce, multitasking on the job has become increasingly important. However, past research has characterized multitasking primarily as a counterproductive work strategy. Drawing from the theory of person-job (PJ) fit, in this study it is proposed that multitasking may not always result in performance decrements but rather that people's perceptions and experiences of multitasking may differ depending on individual differences. The theory of PJ fit suggests positive outcomes when there is a match between employee preferences, abilities and job characteristics. Using this framework, this study proposes the concept of multitasking fit and predicts that a match between multitasking preferences and multitasking job demands will result in positive work attitudes. Lastly, it is predicted that higher working memory will lead to higher job performance, especially in jobs requiring higher amounts of multitasking. This study found that PJ fit had generally positive effects on work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and strains. Due to measurement issues, the relationship between working memory and job performance could not be assessed. However, the results of this study relating to PJ fit suggest that perhaps multitasking is not always a bad strategy within the workplace and that its consequences may instead depend on the degree of fit between an individual and his or her working environment.



## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

It has become increasingly common for people to multitask in the workplace (Rubinstein, Meyer, & Evans, 2001). For example, due to interruptions from co-workers, telephone calls, or e-mail messages, employees are often forced to concentrate on more than one task or issue at a time or to switch among various tasks (Monsell, 2003). Further, downsizing and job enrichment have resulted in more tasks being assigned to each employee, which has also increased the prevalence of multitasking (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999). As a result, multitasking behavior and its implications for task performance have garnered attention recently in various fields of study such as cognitive psychology, (Wiley & Jarosz, 2012) computer sciences, (Salvucci, 2005) and industrial/organizational psychology (Oswald, Hambrick, & Jones, 2007).

While greater attention has been given to multitasking of late, the majority of previous research has tended to characterize multitasking as a harmful or counterproductive strategy (e.g., Wylie & Allport, 2000). This perspective has resulted in widespread recommendations that people avoid multitasking altogether in order to circumvent its supposed negative impact on performance. However, there are two major issues with this perspective. First, because multitasking is often unavoidable in today's workplace, avoidance is not necessarily a plausible strategy. Second, a generally negative attitude toward multitasking disregards the possibility that multitasking may not necessarily result in poorer performance across all situations and individuals.

The second point will be the major emphasis of this paper. That is, it will be argued that multitasking may not always result in performance decrements and that

people's perceptions and experiences of multitasking may instead differ depending on individual differences. Specifically, it will be argued that the extent to which an individual *fits* within a job requiring multitasking will determine whether the multitasking results in negative outcomes. Fit is a concept that has been shown to be related to many organizational outcomes (e.g., commitment, satisfaction; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). However, until now, researchers have not examined fit with regards to multitasking in the workplace.

Person-Job (PJ) fit is a match between a person and his or her job that occurs when the employee possesses the skills and abilities the job demands, while the job has qualities that are in accord with the employee's values and preferences (Kristof, 1996). Thus, while multitasking has primarily been discussed as harmful and inefficient for all employees, it is proposed here that it may actually be the case that the consequences of multitasking are a matter of fit; perhaps some employees perform poorly at multitasking, while others actually perform better in jobs that require multitasking.

In this paper, I will first briefly review the literature on multitasking. Although providing an exhaustive history of past research in the field is difficult due to the disjointed nature of multitasking research, the review will focus on a few key weaknesses of multitasking research relevant to the current discussion. Next, I will discuss the concept of PJ fit and subsequently explain how fit is related to multitasking within the workplace. Finally, I will introduce the term *multitasking fit* and propose potential employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes based on the degree of fit between employees and their jobs.

The goal of this study is thus to examine multitasking in the workplace through the lens of PJ fit. Because so many jobs require multitasking, this research will be relevant for many organizations in helping determine important predictors of successful employees. By focusing on the potentially positive outcomes of multitasking within the workplace, this study will broaden the consideration of multitasking within the workplace and help determine when multitasking is effective and beneficial, as well as when it is harmful and stressful. Further, because research has established that negative

consequences of poor fit exist such as high turnover intentions and job stress, this research will offer new information to organizations on the importance of considering multitasking fit during the selection process.

## 1.2 Background and Rationale

### Multitasking

Despite the attention given to multitasking recently, investigations of multitasking have possessed many weaknesses. For example, perhaps due to the atheoretical nature of the multitasking field, researchers have not been able to agree on an overall definition for multitasking behavior. In addition, there have also been problems with the research methodology utilized within the multitasking field. Specifically, researchers have relied almost solely on artificial laboratory tests while attempting to generalize their results to the workplace (e.g., Ishizaka, Marshall, & Conte, 2001). Relatedly, there has also been an overemphasis on attempting to show why and how multitasking is “bad” for performance (e.g., Monsell, 2003). In this section I will discuss each of these issues in turn, and suggest ways in which future research might better address the reality of multitasking in today’s workplace.

### Definitional Issues

Although there has been a great deal of multitasking research, a unified definition and theory has yet to arise. For example, one recent article defined multitasking as attentional shifts between multiple tasks (Buhner et al., 2006) whereas another defined multitasking as performing multiple tasks within a short frame of time (Pashler, 2000). Although little work has been done thus far to organize or integrate existing definitions, I propose that the existing definitions of multitasking could be potentially classified into two general categories. One category of definitions focuses on the brain processes involved in multitasking, such as *shifts in executive controls* (e.g.,

Burgess, Veitch, Costello, & Shallice, 2000) or *shifts in attention* (e.g., Rubinstein et al., 2001). For example, this type of definition focuses on working memory processes and how the cognitive structure of the person who is multitasking is affected by the shifts between tasks. The second category of multitasking definitions focuses primarily on the actual behavior of multitasking. Such definitions refer to multitasking as *dual-task performance* (e.g., Logan & Gordon, 2001) and *task switching* (e.g., Monsell, 2003). These definitions tend to focus on the tasks that are being performed, rather than on the brain functions involved in switching attention between tasks.

In the current study, multitasking will be characterized as a job demand. Accordingly, the most relevant way to define multitasking primarily includes the behavioral or task-related aspects of multitasking. Although as has been noted, little agreement has existed with respect to definitions of multitasking, a recent definition has been proposed which fits well with this perspective. Poposki and Oswald (2010) define multitasking as the process of relatively quickly switching one's attention between tasks, defined objectively (e.g., minutes spent on a report) and subjectively (e.g., the employee's perception of length of time spent on a report). As a result, this definition will be adopted here.

### Research Methodology

In addition to definitional issues, research exploring multitasking has also possessed problems with respect to operationalization. Specifically, in most multitasking research, artificial laboratory tasks have been used as proxies for real-life multitasking situations when the goal was to make conclusions about multitasking in the real world (e.g., Brunken, Steinbacher, Plass, & Leutner, 2002; Buhner et al., 2006; Ishizaka et al., 2001; Konig, Buhner, & Murling, 2005). For example, Gopher, Armony, and Greenspan (2000) instructed participants to monitor rows of numbers. Participants were then shown another row of numbers and instructed to determine whether the new row contained 1) more numbers than and 2) numbers of higher value than the first row. To measure multitasking ability, the researchers recorded the accuracy and speed at which

the participants compared the rows. While the participants were technically performing multiple tasks simultaneously (i.e., monitoring vs. comparing lists of digits), multitasking in the workplace setting is likely to be much more complex and involve a much wider variety of tasks. Further, interruptions from coworkers, customers, and other distractors are often not included in these laboratory settings, but are common components of multitasking in the workplace. Because these artificial tasks are so different from most daily work tasks, the results of these studies might not be generalizable to employees in the workplace.

#### Overemphasis on Negative Impact on Performance

Based on the results of multitasking studies using artificial tasks such as this as evidence, many researchers have concluded that performing multiple tasks is harmful to performance because multitasking distracts from individual tasks. As a result, many researchers have studied multitasking behavior in terms of its performance costs (e.g., Gopher et al., 2000; Monsell, 2003; Wylie & Allport, 2000). Specifically, this type of research has attempted to provide evidence suggesting that switching between tasks inhibits a person's ability to allot ample attention to one task. This is the case because it is proposed that the person must continuously initiate new cognitive schemas and stop attending to the previous task. That is, each time a person switches his or her attention to a new task, he or she must begin the process of understanding and planning for the new task (Gopher et al., 2000). According to this claim, multitasking detracts from the quality of performance in that less attention is given to each task than if a person was performing each task one at a time. This general attitude towards multitasking as a counterproductive technique of completing tasks is prevalent among past research.

Despite the pervasiveness of this negative attitude, there is reason to believe that it is potentially unjustified. It could be argued that multitasking in the "real world" is less detrimental to employee performance and well-being than what has been observed in the aforementioned studies for a few key reasons. Primarily, in lab studies, researchers typically defined high performance as a precise mastery and demonstration

of each specific skill. However, in the workplace, certain tasks might be more important than others at various times, thus making multitasking a useful strategy for *overall* performance. In addition, because multitasking allows employees to complete more tasks at once, if this type of performance is what is important in the workplace, multitasking will result in higher overall performance. Ultimately, the notion is that performance in the real workplace may not be best defined as performance on discrete tasks, but rather as a gestalt.

Furthermore, as was mentioned earlier, many employees no longer have the luxury of completing one task at a time without interruptions. Due to the changing nature of the workforce, many jobs are being downsized or restructured, and the nature of work is changing such that employees are often forced to perform more tasks than before and to become more flexible (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999). As a result of these rapid and continual changes, multitasking behavior has become an essential part of many jobs (Oswald et al., 2007).

Therefore, while past researchers have often characterized multitasking behaviors as problematic, I argue that it is more reasonable to consider consequences relating to multitasking behaviors depending on the employee and the circumstances. Admittedly, although employees may feel more productive while multitasking due to the heightened sense of accomplishment, Dzubak (2012) states that multitasking requires time to switch between tasks causing uncharted lost time. However, this perspective regards multitasking as less efficient than the employee believes but does not explain a *negative impact on performance* compared to focusing on one task at a time.

Specifically, I propose that while some people may view multitasking as stressful and overwhelming, others may view it as a normal part of life. I further propose that within the workplace, variations in preferences and abilities among employees would predict these differences in how the responsibility of multitasking on the job is experienced. The notion can be described under the framework of person-job fit.

## Person-Job Fit

Within every job in an organization, there is some amount of compatibility between the job's demands and the employee's skills or values. An individual's characteristics such as personality type and work skills can either coincide with or differ from the characteristics needed for the job. The concept of the degree of match between an employee and his or her job is called *person-job fit (PJ fit)*; Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). PJ fit is a narrow scope of fit among the broader concept of *person-environment fit (PE fit)*. Researchers have defined PE fit as the amount of compatibility between an employee and his or her overall environment, occurring when: "...(a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both" (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4-5). This multidimensional concept encompasses other types of "fit" such as PJ fit and person-organization fit (PO fit; Caplan, 1987; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

According to various researchers, PJ fit can be narrowed into two separate dimensions of fit: *demands-ability fit (D-A)* and *supplies-values fit (S-V)*; e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Demands-ability fit occurs when an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities match those needed by the job. For example, if a person with proficient computer science skills were hired as a software developer, there would be high D-A fit between the employee and his or her job.

The second conceptualization of PJ fit, S-V fit, occurs when a job can fulfill the needs, values, and preferences of the employee. For example, if a gregarious person were hired as a customer service manager who is constantly interacting with people, there would be high S-V fit between the employee and the job. PJ fit can be considered a type of *complementary* fit in that it describes a person fulfilling the needs of a job *and/or* a job fulfilling the needs of a person (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Thus, according to both narrower types of fit, PJ fit is a reciprocal phenomenon as it depends on both the person and the job to fully elicit fit. Therefore, when PJ fit exists—the person and the job coincide together well—researchers explain the condition as congruence within the job environment.

Researchers primarily quantify PJ fit among employees using two different measures: perceived fit and objective fit. Perceived fit can be contrasted from objective fit and is typically determined using self-report methods of data collection using employee perceptions of the degree to which he or she fits with his or her job (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, 2000). Perceived fit is considered a direct measure of fit as the assessment is coming directly from the focal employee. Conversely, objective fit is assessed indirectly using measures of skills, abilities, and preferences of the employee (i.e., predictors of fit) as well as separate measures of demands of the job. The two types of measures are then compared to determine if a match has occurred (French, Rogers, & Cobb, 1974).

Each of the fit measurement methods has its benefits. Specifically, because perceived fit is a direct assessment of the employee's perceptions, it is likely influenced by factors that are most salient to employees. As such, researchers have suggested this method is most closely linked with employee attitudes and behavioral outcomes (Caplan, 1987; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, objective fit assessments use separate measures from each aspect of the fit relationship (i.e., person characteristics and job characteristics). While this is a less proximal measure of fit compared to perceived fit, researchers suggest it is beneficial to measure the objective characteristics of the job and the person as they are likely driving the actual fit relationship (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Fit is among the most studied topics within the field of I/O psychology. This is likely due to its implications for employee outcomes such as satisfaction and organizational commitment (Gregarus & Diefendorff, 2009). Within the workplace, it is essential for employees to be able to fulfill the demands of the job in order to complete tasks. As a result, employees' level of D-A fit has implications on employee job performance within organizations. Furthermore, the S-V fit aspect of fit is especially important in determining employees' attitudes about their jobs. According to past findings, those employees who are compatible with their jobs experience more positive and less negative attitudes in general (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990).



Specifically, fit has been found to increase job attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational identification, coworker satisfaction, and supervisor satisfaction. Additionally, researchers note that fit decreases negative attitudes such as turnover intentions (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The influence of fit on job attitudes can be explained by theories of need fulfillment, which claim that attitudes are positively influenced by needs being met (Caplan, 1987; Harrison, 1978).

According to Locke (1976), people experience positive attitudes and are more satisfied with their job when their needs are being met than when their needs are not being met. Thus, this theory of needs would suggest that within the complementary nature of fit, people's attitudes would be positive when they are in jobs that match their preferences and values. That is, employees who are not compatible with their job, especially when the job is not in accordance with the employee's needs or values, will experience negative attitudes, which can be linked to many adverse outcomes within the workplace (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Therefore, in accordance with the concept of need fulfillment, one of the strongest predictors of fit is the match between employee preferences and the job characteristics.

As previously mentioned, multitasking has become common in today's changing workplace. As employees are presented with multiple tasks to complete in one block of time, it becomes very important to have the multitasking skills that match the demands of the job. Although past literature has focused on the potential negative impact of multitasking, the concept of fit would propose that multitasking has the potential to be a productive and enjoyable work strategy. Specifically, employees who prefer to multitask might fit better in jobs that require multitasking as a job demand. As such, multitasking as a job demand will now be applied to the concept of fit.

### 1.3 The Current Study: Multitasking Fit

Because multitasking in the workplace consists of switching between tasks and managing interruptions, employees who multitask might experience a variety of

affective reactions such as excitement, stress, or anxiety (Delbridge, 2000). While some employees might find the act of juggling multiple tasks stressful and exhausting, other employees might find it motivating and exciting. Based on principles of PJ fit, I propose that individual differences in how the responsibility of multitasking on the job is experienced are likely to be due to differences in preferences and skills among employees. More specifically, I propose the construct of *multitasking fit* to describe the degree of congruence between the amount of multitasking a job requires and the employee's preference or skill to multitask. Multitasking fit is essentially proposed as a subtype of PJ fit, specifically relevant to the amount of multitasking within jobs.

The concepts of S-V fit and D-A fit are both relevant within multitasking fit. According to the fit literature, multitasking could be classified as a *demand* in regards to D-A fit and as a *supply* in regards to S-V fit. Thus, to obtain high D-A fit, employees' abilities must be in accordance with what the job demands with regards to multitasking; to obtain S-V fit, employees' values must be in accordance with what the job supplies with regards to multitasking.

The concept of person-job fit would suggest that those who have abilities and preferences to multitask would experience a higher degree of fit within those jobs requiring multitasking. Conversely, within low multitasking jobs, fit would occur for employees who are not able to and do not prefer to multitask. Thus, in accordance with the PJ fit literature, employee perceptions of fit between their multitasking preferences and multitasking behavior on the job will likely elicit positive work attitudes. In the following section, I propose multitasking fit hypotheses based on research and theory on the PJ fit and multitasking literature.

#### S-V Fit

As discussed previously, S-V fit pertains to individual preferences and values being met by the job. As described by Locke (1976), when personal needs are met, people tend to experience positive attitudes. Thus, it can be expected that those employees whose preferences are being fulfilled in the workplace will be more likely to

experience positive emotions relating to their jobs than those employees whose preferences do not align with their job. Therefore, S-V fit should be correlated with attitudinal outcomes. In the case of multitasking, an attitude reflecting preference and value for multitasking is *polychronicity*.

Individual-level polychronicity describes a person's preference for multitasking rather than completing one task at a time (Bluedorn, Kalliath, Strube, & Martin, 1999; Slocombe & Bluedorn, 1999). Research has shown that those high in polychronicity not only prefer to multitask, but also enjoy multitasking and intend to multitask in the future (Poposki & Oswald, 2010). Importantly, while polychronicity predicts *frequency* and *enjoyment* of multitasking, it has not been found to correlate with multitasking *ability* (Konig et al., 2005; Konig, Oberacher, & Kleinmann, 2010; Oswald et al., 2007). For example, a highly polychronic person might fit well and experience positive attitudes in a job requiring multitasking, but that same person might not necessary perform multitasking well. Thus, it is predicted that:

Hypothesis 1a: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher perceptions of S-V fit (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will perceive higher S-V fit in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will perceive higher S-V fit in low multitasking jobs).

Hypothesis 1b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will not result in higher performance (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will not perform better than employees lower in polychronicity in high multitasking jobs and vice versa).

S-V fit means that aspects of the job are supplying the employee with what he or she values. Because polychronicity indicates an individual's preference for multitasking, individuals higher in polychronicity may thus view multitasking as an important aspect of a job because for these individuals, multitasking is valued and viewed as an efficient use of time. By contrast, individuals lower in polychronicity are more likely to view multitasking as distracting or stressful. According to theories of need fulfillment, when employees' values and needs are met on the job, they are more likely to experience

positive attitudes within the workplace (Locke, 1976). Past research and theory on multitasking and person-job fit indicate that job satisfaction, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, and job strain are attitudes that are likely to be related to S-V fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

As previously described, there are two primary ways to measure fit relationships: perceived fit and objective fit. Because both methods have benefits and limitations, I will be assessing fit using both methods in this study. Perceived fit is an important method as it is a direct measure of employees' perceptions of the salience of their fit and often relates closely with psychological and behavioral outcomes (Cable & Judge, 1996). However, compared to perceived fit, objective fit measurements are beneficial in that they more accurately assess the true person and job characteristics (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). As a result, there will be two hypotheses for each outcome variable: one hypothesis dealing with perceived fit and one hypothesis dealing with objective fit.

### Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be broadly defined as the extent to which an employee experiences positive attitudes or emotional states in regards to his or her job (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000; Schmit & Alscheid, 1995). In a meta-analysis, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) found a strong positive relationship between fit and job satisfaction, ( $\rho = .56, p > .001$ ). When an employee's preferences and skills match the demands of the job, the employee is likely performing tasks that are enjoyable, potentially attributing those positive emotions to the job itself. Additionally, employees are likely to feel satisfied when their needs are being met on the job as opposed to when job characteristics do not match employee preferences or needs. Thus, it is predicted that:

Hypothesis 2a: Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than will employees lower in perceived S-V fit.

Hypothesis 2b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher job satisfaction (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will have

higher job satisfaction in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will have higher job satisfaction in low multitasking jobs).

### Turnover Intentions

Past theorists have suggested that upon job dissatisfaction, many employees begin to consider quitting their job to relieve the dissatisfaction (Mobley, 1977). These thoughts of leaving one's job are commonly referred to as turnover intentions (Hom & Griffeth, 1991). According to meta-analytic results, turnover intentions are negatively associated with fit such that those employees high in fit tend to also report less intent to quit their jobs, ( $\rho = -.46, p < .001$ , Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Some researchers have found values to play an important role in the attitudes and intentions of employees such that jobs fostering value attainment tend to elicit positive attitudes and lower intentions to quit (e.g., George & Jones, 1996; de Ruyter & Bloemer, 1998). These findings suggest that when a job's characteristics allow employees be immersed in or work towards their values, employees are much more likely to stay in their job. Thus,

Hypothesis 3a: Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly lower levels of turnover intentions than will employees lower in multitasking fit.

Hypothesis 3b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in lower turnover intentions (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in low multitasking jobs).

### Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a concept referring to the extent to which an employee feels psychological and emotional attachment to his or her place of work (Becker & Kernan, 2003). Researchers have identified three main components of organizational commitment: acceptance and belief in an organization's values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization to help meet the organizational goals, and a strong desire to remain in the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, &

Boulian, 1974). Further, Meyer and Allen (1984) identified separate dimensions of organizational commitment characterized by different motives (e.g., monetary need, emotional attachment to values). While these motives influence employees' degree of commitment to their organization, affective commitment can be considered most indicative of employees' commitment to remain with the organization as it demonstrates an emotional desire rather than a deliberate decision (e.g., Bono & Judge, 2003).

The largest predictor of organization commitment is how well a person fits in his or her job and organization ( $\rho = .47, p < .001$ ; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Employees who feel that the organization is "on their side" are more likely to feel affectively committed to it. Thus, employees who value multitasking will likely feel more committed to an organization at which they can multitask.

Hypothesis 4a: Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly higher levels of affective organizational commitment than will employees lower in multitasking fit.

Hypothesis 4b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher levels of affective organizational commitment (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report higher affective organizational commitment in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report higher organizational commitment in low multitasking jobs).

### Job Strain

Strains are the reactions to stress within the workplace and can emerge as negative workplace outcomes such as burnout and anxiety as well as dangerous health outcomes such as heart disease and high blood pressure (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001). According to meta-analytic results, job strain is moderately negatively associated with fit such that those employees perceiving misfit tend to also report higher amount of job stress, ( $\rho = -.28, p < .001$ , Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This mismatch between

employees' preferences and their job characteristics likely induces stress because the employee is forced to fulfill tasks in ways that are not aligned with their values.

Hypothesis 5a: Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly fewer strains than will employees lower in multitasking fit.

Hypothesis 5b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in fewer job strains (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report fewer strains in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report fewer strains in low multitasking jobs).

#### D-A Fit

The second element of fit, D-A fit, describes a more objective match between the job requirements and an employee's ability to fulfill those requirements. Within any job, there is a certain set of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to complete the tasks within the job. Researchers studying *underemployment* (i.e., participation in jobs that are at lower levels of organizational hierarchies and do not fully utilize employee's skills; Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002), *overqualification* (i.e., situations in which an employees possess more education, experience, or skills than their jobs require, Johnson & Johnson, 1999) and *role overload* (i.e., situations in which an employee perceives there are too many responsibilities to complete with the available time, skills, or resources; Netemeyer, Burton, & Johnston, 1995) have suggested these mismatch situations can potentially impact job performance.

Unlike S-V fit, the relationship between D-A fit and outcomes is somewhat less clear. For example, perhaps the most common outcome of D-A fit that has been explored is performance. Although a lack of ability is expected to result in poorer performance in almost all cases, it is not necessarily always the case that an excess of resources will also result in poorer performance than when resources or supplies are at an "optimal" level (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). In fact, it has been proposed that there are three possible outcomes when abilities exceed demands. Excess abilities may increase, decrease, or have no effect on performance (see Figure 1). First, excess

abilities may not influence performance when the specific abilities do not relate directly to a specific job demand (curve B). For example, an employee's excessive computer skills may be useful for one particular job task, but may be useless for other job tasks, resulting in no effects on performance.

Second, excess abilities may decrease performance (curve A) by lowering the employee's motivation. Specifically, when employees are unable to utilize their valuable skills, they are likely to experience boredom and lowered self-esteem (Harrison, 1978). Excess abilities may also decrease performance when valuable skills go unused. As such, unused knowledge or skills may be forgotten, possibly making the employee vulnerable to task overload in the future if demands increase at any point.

Finally, excess abilities may increase performance by allowing the person to conserve personal resources (e.g., time, energy) to apply toward future demands (curve C). Further, excess abilities may increase performance if the abilities are specific to the job demand. For example, an employee with excessive technical skills will likely show increased job performance if technical job demands are low because the employee will be able to apply all of his or her skills to that specific demand.

In the case of multitasking fit, it is proposed that the relationship between abilities and performance will fit the third possible outcome of the D-A fit model (curve C). That is, excess abilities should predict increased performance in a linear fashion. The rationale for this prediction is presented below.

### Job Performance

Employee performance is an integral part of any organization as it is the primary determinant of whether or not that organization is successful. According to Schmidt and Hunter (1998), overall intelligence ( $g$ ) is significantly positively related to job performance. Further, as complexity of the job increases, the strength of the correlation between  $g$  and job performance increases as well. Although the relationship between  $g$



and multitasking performance has not been the focus of a great deal of research, attention has been focused on more specific facets of intelligence and their role in predicting performance at multitasking.

### Working Memory

Working memory capacity is the extent to which a person is able to actively maintain and manipulate task-relevant information over brief periods of time (Engle, 2002). Specifically, working memory is the portion of the memory system in which information is perceived, attended to, and retrieved (Baddeley, 1986). Researchers suggest that among the many dimensions of the working memory, an important aspect relating to multitasking is the ability to control attention when distractions are present (Engle, Kane, & Tuholski, 1999; Engle, 2002). Similarly to results regarding the relationship between intelligence and performance, higher amounts of working memory have been linked to increased performance on complex job tasks such as multitasking (Buhner et al., 2006).

As a result, it is predicted that those employees with adequate or excessive working memory will perform better overall than those employees with lower working memory. It is further predicted that this relationship will be stronger in jobs that require higher amounts of multitasking. Thus,

Hypothesis 6a: Employees higher in working memory will show higher levels of job performance than will employees lower in working memory.

Hypothesis 6b: The relationship between working memory and job performance will be stronger for employees in jobs requiring higher amounts of multitasking than for employees that are in jobs requiring lower amounts of multitasking.

## CHAPTER 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Participants

Participants were primarily undergraduate college students at IUPUI who worked at least 15 hours per week. Students of many ages and backgrounds are enrolled in IUPUI, which provided a sample of participants who worked in a wide range of job types. They ranged in age from 18 years old to 52 years old ( $M = 21.86$ ,  $SD = 5.76$ ). Forty percent of the participants were first-year college students, while 26 percent of them were second years. The remaining participants ranged in college tenure from three to seven years ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ). Seventy percent of the participants were female and 30 percent were male. A majority (75.6%) of the participants reported a household income of \$30,000 per year or less.

Participants were primarily recruited from the psychology participant pool, SONA, which means they participated in the mass screening survey tool. Using the results of this screening tool, I contacted and recruited students who had indicated on a survey that they work at least 15 hours per week at an organization. Additionally, recruitment flyers were posted to attract students who may not be in introductory psychology classes. Participants recruited through the psychology SONA system received class credit. To conduct the statistical analyses needed to test the hypotheses, samples of data from all parts of the multitasking spectrum (i.e., low to high) are necessary. To provide ample power to test the proposed hypotheses, I recruited 131 participants (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996).

## 2.2 Procedure

Participants were given a study information sheet to read prior to participating in this study. Additionally, there was a form asking participants for the name and contact information of their direct supervisor. I informed participants prior to their study appointment to come prepared to supply their supervisors' contact information (i.e., email, cell phone number, job title, and organization name), as well as asked them to notify their supervisor of their involvement in the study. This information was to be used to contact each participant's work supervisor. Upon entering the computer lab, each participant completed the first survey containing measures of their job attitudes as well as amount of multitasking required in their job. Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants then completed the working memory tasks. All of the surveys and tasks were completed on the computer.

## 2.3 Measures

Two online surveys contained a total of ten separate measures. The first survey assessed amount of multitasking on the job, polychronicity, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, job strain, self-reported job performance, and perceptions of PJ fit. Additionally, two computer-based working memory tasks assessed employee working memory capacity. Due to technical difficulties, the results of the working memory tasks were not used in this study.

### Polychronicity

Polychronicity was assessed using the 14-item Multitasking Preference Inventory (MPI; Poposki & Oswald, 2010). A sample item from the MPI is: "I am much more engaged in what I am doing if I am able to switch between several different tasks." The responses for this measure were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). In their development and validation of this measure, the authors reported that it is highly reliable ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

### Multitasking

Because no measure of multitasking on the job exists, a measure will be created for this study based on previous measures of polychronicity and definitions of multitasking. This measure is included in its entirety in Appendix B. Alpha reliability for this measure was  $\alpha = .94$ .

### Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was assessed using a 5-item measure of global job satisfaction (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951). A sample item from this measure includes: "I find real enjoyment in my work." Participants used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to indicate the degree to which they are satisfied with their job. According to the original authors, this measure shows evidence of reliability ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

### Turnover Intentions

To measure employees' intentions to quit their jobs, I used a 3-item measure by Colarelli (1984). One item from this measure includes: "I frequently think of quitting my job." Responses on this measure were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The authors report the internal consistency of this measure as  $\alpha = .82$ .

### Organizational Commitment

Affective organizational commitment was assessed using an 8-item measure by Allen and Meyer (1990). This measure uses a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to assess commitment. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the original eight-item measure is .82 (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). A sample item from this measure is: "I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it."

### Job Strain

Job strain was assessed using a combined measure of the 18-item Physical Symptoms Inventory (PSI; Spector & Jex, 1998) and the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (Clark & Oswald, 1994). Employees indicated the extent to which they had recently experienced a number of physiological and psychological symptoms on a 4-point scale (1 = *More so than usual* to 4 = *Much less than usual*). This measure contained 15 items assessing physical and mental health symptoms that are specifically relevant to the workplace including eye strain, tiredness and fatigue, and loss of sleep over worry,  $\alpha = .88$ .

### Self-Rated Job Performance

Employees rated their own job performance on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) using the in-role behavior subscale of Williams and Anderson's (1991) job performance measure. Staufenbiel and Hartz (2000) report a Cronbach's alpha of .91 for this scale. Following past literature guiding the measurement of self-rated job performance, item stems asked participants to reflect on how their supervisor would rate them, (e.g., "My supervisor would state that..."). A sample item from this 7-item measure is: "I neglect aspects of the job I am obligated to perform" (reverse scored).

### Perceived PJ Fit

Employees indicated the degree to which they perceive they fit with their job using a combined version of measures by Cable and Judge (1996) and Saks and Ashforth (1997). An example of an item developed to tap the D-A component of PJ fit was: "My job performance is hurt by a lack of expertise on the job." An example of an item that assessed S-V fit was: "To what extent does the job fulfill your needs?" All items used a 5-point Likert-type response scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Alpha for this measure was acceptable,  $\alpha = .74$

### Working Memory Capacity

To measure working memory capacity (WMC), researchers typically use a combination of complex span tasks which force participants to attend to multiple types of different information at once (e.g., Engle, 2001). Accordingly, I planned to use two separate measures of working memory to assess participants' WMC: Operational Span task and *N*-Back task. These tasks have been used in previous studies and are designed to test how efficiently and accurately participants are able to attend to multiple types of stimuli during a short span of time (Hambrick & Oswald, 2005).

In the O-Span task, each trial includes a series of simple math problems, an answer that is either correct or incorrect, and a word in red. Each participant is awarded 1 point for each correctly recalled word, as well as each correctly judged answer to the math equations. In the *N*-Back task, a series of digits or shapes were presented on the screen. The participant was instructed to identify when he or she recognizes that the currently displayed digit or shape matches the digit or shape displayed two trials earlier. The participant's *N*-Back task score is the number of correctly identified digits or shapes. Each participant's final WMC was to be determined by adding each participant's O-Span and *N*-Back task scores together, resulting in a composite WMC score. Numerous researchers have found that performance on these seemingly simple tasks has predicted performance in much more complex tasks such as language comprehension and logical reasoning (e.g., Kane & Engle, 2003).

Due to administrative issues with the software used to capture results of the working memory capacity tests (i.e., Operational Span and *N*-Back), results for WMC could not be computed in this study. Essentially, the software used to measure WMC deposited results into a spreadsheet showing answers labeled by item numbers. However, to prevent selection biases, the items were presented in a random order for each participant. Unfortunately, the items were not hard-coded so there was no way to determine which response matched up with which item number. Thus, the results of the measure were meaningless.

### Supervisor-Rated Job Performance

To assess job performance from the supervisor's point of view, the plan was to instruct supervisors to rate employee job performance using the supervisor assessment form of the measure developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). However, because the WMC measure did not produce meaningful results, the hypothesis could not be tested and this measure was not collected.

#### 2.4 Statistical Design and Data Analysis

To evaluate the above hypotheses, I utilized a combination of linear regression, polynomial regression, and response surface modeling. Perceived fit hypotheses were evaluated using linear regression while objective fit hypotheses were evaluated using polynomial regression. Objective fit is a complex concept requiring not only the estimation of the congruence of two variables, but the effect of that congruence on a third variable. Essentially, fit can be conceptualized on a three-dimensional plane. In past research testing fit hypotheses, many researchers have assessed fit using difference scores (e.g., Van Vianen, 2000). However, the use of difference scores has shown various methodological problems such as low reliability and ambiguity regarding the nature of the relationships between variables (cf. Edwards & Parry, 1993). Edwards (2002) proposes that polynomial regression analysis techniques overcome some of the major methodological weaknesses of difference scores. Specifically, polynomial regression analyses allow researchers to plot the data on a three-dimensional surface rather than being restricted by a two-dimensional function. This three-dimensional surface modeling can reveal far more complex relationships between variables than an algebraic function line on a graph. For more detailed information about each hypothesis and the statistical test needed to test it, refer to Table 1.

## CHAPTER 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Preliminary Results

The following sections contain the results from the statistical analyses used to assess support for Hypotheses 1 – 5. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for study variables can be found in Table 2. The hypotheses are constructed such that each main hypothesis focuses on an outcome variable (e.g., job satisfaction), and then contains two sub-hypotheses regarding that outcome variable that require different statistical analyses. For ease of presentation, the results will be organized by statistical analysis type. The first section will describe the results of the linear regressions (Hypotheses 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a), while the second section will describe the results of the polynomial regressions (Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b, 5b).

### 3.2 Linear Regressions

Linear regression is a statistical test used to assess the linear relationship between two variables. A series of linear regressions were performed to test all hypotheses involving linear relationships between perceived fit and outcomes. This type of analysis was used when the hypothesis involved only two variables. Because none of the potential control variables significantly related to the outcome variables, controls were excluded from the analyses.

Hypothesis 2a stated that employees higher in perceived overall fit would report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than would employees lower in perceived overall fit. According to the results of the linear regression analysis, reported levels of overall fit significantly predicted levels of job satisfaction ( $F(1, 30) = 72.32, r^2 = .36,$



$\beta = .59, p > .01$ ). This suggests that the more fit an employee perceives with his/her job, the more satisfied he or she is and vice versa.

Hypothesis 3a stated that employees higher in perceived overall fit would report significantly lower levels of turnover intentions than would employees lower in perceived overall fit. In accordance with predictions, overall fit did predict lower turnover intentions for employees. That is, there was a significant negative relationship between the variables such that higher levels perceived fit predicted lower levels of turnover intentions ( $F(1, 122) = 55.65, r^2 = .32, \beta = -.56, p > .01$ ).

Hypothesis 4a stated that, as has been found in previous research, higher levels of perceived overall fit would predict higher levels of affective organizational commitment. According to the results of the linear regression, this hypothesis was also supported ( $F(1, 130) = 33.51, r^2 = .20, \beta = .45, p > .01$ ).

Hypothesis 5a predicted that overall fit would relate to fewer strains. However, contrary to what was predicted, overall fit did not predict fewer strains in employees. Specifically, the results of the linear regression suggested that fit had no relationship with reports of strains ( $F(1, 130) = .25, r^2 = .002, \beta = .04, p > .05$ ). Thus, this hypothesis was not supported.

Overall, with the exception of Hypothesis 5a, the linear regression hypotheses involving the relationship between perceptions of fit and outcomes were supported. Thus, there is some evidence that perceived fit relates to these important outcomes similar to the evidence found in previous PJ fit research.

### 3.3 Polynomial Regressions

#### Test of the Squared Difference Model

Polynomial regression is a type of statistical test used to assess the nature of the nonlinear relationship between variables. While there are many types of polynomial regression tests, the squared difference model is of most interest for the

hypotheses in this paper. Specifically, the squared difference model should be most appropriate to use when the nonlinear relationship between variables is quadratic, as opposed to cubic. In the case of fit, the squared difference model is argued to be a more suitable alternative to difference scores. As such, the first step in testing a polynomial regression model is to determine that 1) the relationship of interest is quadratic rather than cubic, and 2) performing polynomial regression analyses will be better than simply computing a difference score. The second condition is not strictly necessary in order to confirm that the analysis is appropriate; it simply provides additional evidence that analyzing the data in polynomial regression is better than analyzing it using difference scores. Regardless of the results of this test, the polynomial regression analysis and surface modeling technique are superior to difference score analysis because the tests give far more information about the nature of the variables' relationships.

The confirmatory test consists of running three separate analyses using regression. The first analysis estimates the variance in the outcome explained by the constrained model (a representation of the difference score model). The second test estimates the variance in the outcome explained by a cubic model. The third and final analysis estimates the variance in the outcome explained by a quadratic model without the constraints implied by a difference score. After obtaining each model's statistics, the  $R^2$  values from each test are compared. To meet the first condition (showing that the model is quadratic rather than cubic), the cubic model should not show a significantly higher  $R^2$  value than the unconstrained model. To meet the second condition (showing that polynomial regression is better than a difference score) the unconstrained model should show a significantly higher  $R^2$  value than the constrained model. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 3 for each hypothesis. Overall, the results of the tests show that three of the six hypotheses met the first condition. That is, there was statistical evidence for half of dependent variables that a quadratic model was appropriate. While the analyses for organizational commitment and strains showed that a cubic model might be more appropriate than a quadratic model, the

quadratic model still significantly better explained the relationships than the constrained (i.e., difference score) model. Given that exploring a cubic model requires more sophisticated techniques (e.g., analyzing and graphing in four-dimensional space) for the present study a quadratic model will still be used. All six of the hypotheses met the second condition of the confirmatory test. Thus, it is reasonable to go forward with response surface modeling in all cases.

### Response Surface Analysis

The second step in assessing support for the relevant hypotheses was to perform both a visual inspection of the individual response surfaces produced by the polynomial regression equations and a statistical test of a number of their features. First, the three-dimensional surface graphs of the fit relationships were produced using the coefficients from the unconstrained model. Second, to perform a statistical test of these features, I used the response surface methodology procedures outlined by Edwards (2002; 2007). Specifically, support for a fit hypothesis would mean that the surface would be curved (upward for positive outcomes, downward for negative outcomes) along the misfit line and flat along the fit line. Of these two, finding evidence that the surface is curved along the misfit line is the key. Evidence that the surface is flat along the fit line only provides additional evidence that the relationship is not more complex than a simple fit relationship. Thus, Step 1 of the analysis is establishing curve along the misfit line. Once that condition is met, Step 2 is establishing that the surface is flat along the fit line.

According to Edwards, if the surface is curved upward along the misfit line,  $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$  will be positive (if the surface is curved downward,  $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$  will be negative). If the surface is flat along the fit line,  $b_1 + b_2$  and  $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$  will both equal 0. To perform these tests, 10,000 bootstrap resamples of the data were estimated and used the resulting estimates to construct bias-corrected confidence intervals. Because each hypothesis contains a separate dependent variable, I must produce separate response surfaces to assess support for each hypothesis.

For each graph, the solid line on the floor of the graphs represents the  $X=Y$ , or the line of fit. The data on the plane directly above this line represents the level of the dependent variable when preferred multitasking was equal to actual multitasking. The dashed line on the floor of the graphs represents  $X=-Y$ , or the line of misfit. The data directly above this line represents the level of the dependent variable when preferred multitasking and actual multitasking were opposite. The data to the left of the line of perfect fit represents employees for whom preferences exceeded actual levels of multitasking (i.e., these employees want more multitasking in their jobs than they have). The data to the right of the line of perfect fit represents employees for whom actual multitasking exceeded preferred multitasking (i.e., employees have more multitasking demands than they want).

#### Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1a stated that congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands would result in higher perceptions of multitasking fit. The results of the polynomial regression analysis suggest that the shape of the surface along the  $X=-Y$  line was flat ( $b_3-b_4+b_5 = .18$ , CI:  $-0.19 < x < 0.46$ ). The shape along the  $Y=X$  line was also flat ( $b_3+b_4+b_5 = .06$ , CI:  $-0.21 < x < 0.31$ ). The fact that the shape along the misfit line was flat and not curved renders the fit hypothesis unsupported.

While a simple fit relationship for Hypothesis 1a was not supported, part of the benefit of performing response surface analyses is the ability to detect more complexity and detail than a simple support vs. lack of support for the hypothesis. Specifically, an exploration of the surface for H1a indicates that those employees whose desired multitasking is higher than their actual multitasking report higher perceptions of overall fit in their jobs. That is, the two types of misfit (high-low vs. low-high) appeared to differ (see Figure 2). Specifically, those employees who experienced the misfit type of high desired, low actual multitasking perceived more overall fit than those employees who experienced the misfit type of low desire, high actual. This insinuates that employees who do not like to multitask but are put in situations with

higher multitasking demands may experience more stress than employees who like to multitask but are put in situations that do not require as much. That is, this may suggest that the presence of *unwanted* multitasking in the workplace induces more negative feelings than the absence of *wanted* multitasking, thus underwhelmed employees may experience more positive outcomes than overwhelmed.

Hypothesis 1b stated that congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will not result in higher performance. That is, there should be no performance differences between employees higher and employees lower in fit. In other words, fit should have no impact on performance. The results of the polynomial regression analysis show that the shape of the surface along the  $X=-Y$  line (i.e., dashed line) was flat ( $b_3-b_4+b_5 = 0.12$ , CI:  $-0.04 < x < 0.30$ ). The shape along the  $Y=X$  line (i.e., solid line) was also flat ( $b_3+b_4+b_5 = 0.10$ , CI:  $-0.08 < x < 0.28$ ). Because these results imply there is not a fit relationship between level of polychronicity and performance, Hypothesis 1b was supported. Visually, the surface seems to match these statistical results in that the graph is almost a completely flat, horizontal plane (see Figure 3). This flat plane indicates that the nature of the relationship between multitasking fit and job performance may be linear rather than quadratic, if any relationship exists at all.

Hypothesis 2b states that congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands (i.e., multitasking fit) will result in higher job satisfaction. The results of the polynomial regression analysis suggest that the shape of the surface along the  $X=-Y$  line was flat ( $b_3-b_4+b_5 = -0.27$ , CI:  $-0.55 < x < 0.06$ ). The shape along the  $Y=X$  line was also flat ( $b_3+b_4+b_5 = .02$ , CI:  $-0.30 < x < 0.29$ ). Because all conditions of the polynomial regression significance test were not met, Hypothesis 2b was not supported. However, visual analysis of the surface suggests there seems to be a complex fit relationship of sorts (see Figure 4). Because the surface on the left side of the line of fit is higher (i.e., the left side of the graph), it implies that those employees who have less multitasking on the job than they desire are more satisfied than those employees who have more multitasking on the job than they desire. Similarly to the results for Hypothesis 1a, this might suggest that employees are more satisfied when they are under-stimulated than

when they are over-stimulated. In fact, the points at which actual multitasking and desired multitasking match (i.e., the back right point and the front left point) seem to be nearly level with the point at which desired multitasking is higher than actual (i.e., the back, left point).

Hypothesis 3b stated that multitasking fit would result in lower turnover intentions. The results of the polynomial regression analysis suggest that the shape of the surface along the  $X=-Y$  line was flat ( $b_3-b_4+b_5 = -0.06$ , CI:  $-0.55 < x < 0.43$ ). The shape along the  $Y=X$  line was also flat ( $b_3+b_4+b_5 = -0.29$ , CI:  $-0.70 < x < 0.11$ ). Because all conditions of the polynomial regression analysis were not met, Hypothesis 3b was not supported. However, visual analysis of the surface indicates that the relationship between multitasking fit and turnover intentions is complex (see Figure 5). It appears that the surface has the basic shape of a fit relationship, but that the surface is rotated clockwise. Additionally, it appears that parts of the surface are shaped as we predicted (e.g., the would-be line of misfit is slightly curved upward), while other parts of the surface are not at all (e.g., the overall shape of the surface is curved downward). In general, the shape of the surface suggests that turnover intentions are highest for employees who have more multitasking demands in their jobs than they desire.

Hypothesis 4b states that multitasking fit will predict higher levels of organizational commitment. The results of the polynomial regression analysis suggest that the shape of the surface along the  $X=-Y$  line was curved downward ( $b_3-b_4+b_5 = -0.39$ , CI:  $-0.72 < x < -0.80$ ). The shape along the  $Y=X$  line was flat ( $b_3+b_4+b_5 = -0.10$ , CI:  $-0.37 < x < 0.15$ ). Because all conditions of the polynomial regression analysis were met, Hypothesis 4b was supported. This suggests that a fit relationship exists between multitasking fit and organizational commitment. Visual analysis of the surface indicates that while a fit relationship exists, it seems that left and right sides of the line of fit are not equal (see Figure 6). That is, the nature of the misfit relationships are different from one another. This implies that employees with more multitasking on the job than desired are more likely to report lower levels of organizational commitment than employees with less multitasking on the job than desired.

Hypothesis 5b states that a higher degree of multitasking fit will result in fewer strains. The results of the polynomial regression analysis suggest that the shape of the surface along the  $X=-Y$  line was curved downward ( $b_3-b_4+b_5 = -0.51$ , CI:  $-0.80 < x < -0.14$ ). The shape along the  $Y=X$  line was flat ( $b_3+b_4+b_5 = 0.03$ , CI:  $-0.17 < x < 0.25$ ). While the line of misfit should be curved to support a fit relationship, the surface for this hypothesis test should be curved upward rather than downward. Thus, Hypothesis 5b was not supported. Visual analysis of the surface indicates that the nature of the relationship between multitasking fit and strains is quite complex (see Figure 7). First, it appears that strains are fewer when desired multitasking and actual multitasking demands match, one primary characteristic of a fit relationship. However, the overall surface is saddle shaped, indicating the absence of a fit relationship. Saddle shaped surfaces typically indicate that the relationship between the variables is not quadratic, and thus cannot be properly explained using the analyses used in this paper. This would suggest that strains could not be predicted using the fit relationship between polychronicity and actual multitasking. Also, it is possible that there was not a large enough range in the data to plot this surface accurately. According to the descriptive statistics of the strain measure, most employees rated their strain levels similarly to one another ( $M=3.57$ ,  $SD=0.62$ ). This is a problem because without a full range of data, accurate estimations cannot be made. For a full list of hypotheses and results, reference Table 4.

## CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine multitasking in the workplace through the lens of PJ fit. The term *multitasking fit* was proposed as a subtype of PJ fit, to represent the degree to which individuals fit within positions requiring multitasking, and hypotheses relating to multitasking fit were tested in a sample of college students. In this section I will first review the results of this study and how they relate to the literatures in PJ fit and multitasking. I will then discuss the limitations of this study and potential avenues for future research. I will then present research and practical implications of the findings, followed by some overall conclusions.

### 4.1 Summary of Results

This paper proposed two primary types of hypotheses. The first type of hypothesis proposed outcomes by comparing *perceptions of multitasking fit* with workplace outcomes and was analyzed using linear regression (i.e., with self-reported multitasking fit ratings as the predictor and ratings of satisfaction, turnover intentions, etc. as criteria). These hypotheses are marked as *subset a*. The second type of hypothesis proposed outcomes by comparing *objective fit* with workplace outcomes and was analyzed using polynomial regression (i.e., objective multitasking fit was analyzed by comparing preferences with reports of actual workplace behaviors, and then regressed on ratings of satisfaction, turnover intentions, etc.). These hypotheses are marked as *subset b*.

Overall, the results from subset a were supportive of the proposed hypotheses. These findings suggest that employees who perceive fit with regard to the degree of multitasking they desire and perform tend to have more positive



workplace outcomes such as organizational commitment. The one exception to this was Hypothesis 5a, where it was found that perceptions of fit did not predict the amount of strains experienced. However, due to the fact that respondents reported relatively low levels of strain overall ( $M=3.57$ ,  $SD=0.74$ ), this relationship may have simply been attenuated. In addition, it is also possible that multitasking simply doesn't relate to the broad, overall strain measure that was used. This finding is consistent with other research focusing on the relationship between multitasking and strain (e.g., Paridon & Kaufmann, 2010). To remedy these issues, future research should use a strain measure that is specific to the types of strain (e.g., weariness, anxiety) that may be experienced as a result of multitasking. This way, researchers might be able to determine the specific effects rather than the general effects of multitasking on strain, thus providing more meaningful recommendations for the workplace.

While most of the subset a hypotheses proposed in this paper were supported, the subset b hypotheses rendered only one statically significant result (i.e., Hypothesis 4b: fit predicts organizational commitment). Overall this pattern is not surprising, as PJ fit researchers have found *perceived fit* to have stronger relationships with workplace outcomes than *objective fit* (Caplan, 1987; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In addition, even though fit was not supported for these hypotheses, more complex relationships were detected. That is, for fit to be supported, outcomes must be best when supplies and demands match, and worst both when there is an oversupply and an undersupply of multitasking. However, because the response surface graphs allow for an investigation of the nature of the relationship between misfit and outcomes, a more complex relationship seems to have appeared.

That is, the findings do suggest that fit between multitasking demands and preferences produces the most positive outcomes in the workplace (e.g., higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions). This is consistent with the majority of the person-job fit literature that suggests that employees who are compatible with

their jobs experience more positive and less negative attitudes in general (e.g., Cable & Edwards, 2004; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Edwards & Cooper, 1990). However, different types of misfit (where supplies exceed demands or where demands exceed supplies) appeared to have different implications for outcomes.

Specifically, there appears to be a pattern such that the employees who were underwhelmed by multitasking demands tended to be better off than the employees who were overwhelmed. Researchers who classify PJ fit as a type of complementary fit claim that a job and a person should complement one another (e.g., Cable & Edwards, 2004). These researchers conclude that when complementary fit is present, both the needs of the job and the person are being perfectly fulfilled. However, if there is a misfit, either the job or the person will be unfulfilled to some extent. Thus, if an employee is overwhelmed (i.e., actual multitasking is high and preferred is low), it could be argued that neither the job's nor the person's needs are likely being met—the employee wishes to have fewer tasks, while the job is requiring more. In this scenario, the employee must endure some elevated level of stress in order for the job to be complete. However, if the employee is underwhelmed (i.e., actual multitasking is low and preferred is high), it is likely that he or she is able to fully complete his or her tasks day-to-day without elevated levels of stress, as completing many tasks is preferred. Thus, the job's needs are being completely fulfilled and the person's needs are being partially fulfilled. Compared to the previous scenario, it is more likely that the underwhelmed employee is considered a high performer (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Furthermore, the findings in this study might suggest that positive workplace outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) are direct results of job efficacy and locus of control (e.g., Judge & Bono, 2001).

Because most PJ fit researchers have used basic statistical tests such as linear regressions or difference score testing to assess fit relationships rather than polynomial regression and surface modeling, this finding is relatively unique within the PJ fit literature (e.g., French et al., 1974; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). That is,

while past studies have focused on the difference between *fit* and *misfit*, few have examined the levels or types of misfit itself and the direction of the differences (Edwards & Shipp, 2007).

Overall, the results of this study indicate that how much multitasking employees prefer versus how much multitasking they perform may be one of the considerations factoring in to overall ratings of satisfaction and commitment. This is an important finding, because most past studies of satisfaction and commitment have overlooked this possibility, and multitasking is on the rise within organizations.

#### 4.2 Study Limitations

This study possessed a number of limitations. First, it was limited in how it assessed the amount of multitasking on the job. More specifically, the measure of multitasking was self-reported and not standardized across workplaces. Additionally, it was difficult to measure the impact of variations in multitasking demands on employee preference and performance. While multitasking is extremely high in some jobs (e.g., nursing, air traffic controller) and extremely low in others (e.g., machinist, assembly line work), most jobs probably fall somewhere in the middle, with daily levels of multitasking that fluctuate a great deal (e.g., Fleeson, 2004). Due to the fact that multitasking requirements were assessed on an overall basis, these variations could not be assessed in this study. It would thus be beneficial to assess multitasking preferences and multitasking demands over time, measuring each variable at numerous time points.

A second limitation to this study was that there was no validated measure of multitasking on the job at the time of data collection. As such, this study's measure of objective fit was derived from the subjective definitions of the amount of multitasking required for each individual job. This subjective measure of multitasking could have skewed study results, as there is no specific standard or benchmark for multitasking amount. However, an established measure of multitasking preference (polychronicity) by Poposki & Oswald (2010) was used to develop the measure used

in this study, using its core wording but replacing *preference for multitasking* with *actual multitasking on the job*. Although both are closely related to multitasking, the measure likely possessed adequate psychometric properties, as measuring preferences versus actual demands could potentially be very different subject matter. Further, this measure was not able to account for the variations in multitasking demands throughout the day, month, or year. This limited assessment of actual multitasking demands on the job may have contributed to a type II error. In the future, researchers should use a validated measure of multitasking demands, and assess demands at various times throughout the study's duration.

Another limitation to this study was the sample population that was used. Although the college students used can be considered working adults, their schoolwork is probably more important to them at this point than their paid work. Conversely, "regular" employees (i.e., not college students) most likely consider their job to be one of their primary focuses in their lives. As such, the lessened importance of work within students' lives may have attenuated relationships. Thus, the college student sample used might inhibit the generalizability of this study in that the sample is slightly different than the target population of full-time employees.

In addition, there were a number of measurement issues present in this study. Specifically, there were issues with the following measures that may have negatively impacted study results: multitasking demands, strain, and WMC. As previously mentioned, multitasking demands should be measured differently in the future, using a validated and objective measure. Next, the strain measure was created for this study by combining two well-established strain measures to create one strain assessment score (i.e., PSI and GHQ). While these measures have been validated, they still contain highly personal questions regarding physical symptoms of strain. Because of the sensitivity of the questions, it is very possible that respondents under-reported symptoms, attenuating the apparent relationship between strain and PJ fit. It would be advantageous to measure strain using fewer sensitive or

personal questions. Further, measuring actual physical vital signs would offer the most accurate assessment of strains above and beyond self-reported measures.

The last measure issue was regarding the assessment of working memory capacity. This variable was thought to predict job performance, especially when demands-ability fit was high. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties with the administration of the measure, working memory capacity could not be captured. This prevented Hypotheses 6 and 7 to be substantiated.

In the future, researchers should be sure to use technology that is robust enough to capture results correctly. Because participant's WMC was not accurately measured, the relationship between WMC and job performance could not be assessed, causing the job performance measure to be unimportant. As such, only self-rated job performance was captured in this study.

#### 4.3 Implications

With the changes in how our world conducts business, employees are more often than ever forced to complete multiple tasks on the job (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1990). Because of this, the results of this study are relevant for many organizations. Specifically, understanding when multitasking is most effective and when it may be detrimental can help determine important predictors of successful employees. Rather than focusing solely on job-related skills and education during the selection process, talent acquisition teams could use multitasking preference measures and compare the results to the actual multitasking demands of the job for more efficient and accurate job placement. Further, organizational development teams could use the results of this study to refine the organization's talent pipeline and to assist employees develop career paths and personal development plans based on actual preferences rather than general best practices.

By gaining a better understanding of when multitasking is effective and beneficial, organizations can restructure departmental job roles and responsibilities, assigning highly complex jobs to those employees who prefer more multitasking and

vice versa. Further, because research has established that negative consequences of poor fit exist such as high turnover intentions and job stress, this study offers new, more useful information to organizations on the importance of considering multitasking fit and learning to manage it within the workplace. More specifically, organizations can offer more targeted training and development opportunities for employees to manage the effects of multitasking misfit.

However, while multitasking may not be bad for everyone, it is important to consider the negative impacts on employees as the workplace continues to become more technologically advanced, requiring more reliance on multitasking. In particular, since overwhelmed employees seem to be especially negatively affected by multitasking's effects, organizations should consider ways to monitor the amount of multitasking that is required on the job. In addition, understanding other potential outcomes beyond those studied in this manuscript will benefit organizations even more. For example, multitasking has been suggested to hinder creativity (Shellenbarger, 2013) and memorization (Abrams, 2013)—two important competencies required by many job. If overwhelmed employees are not only experiencing negative attitudes, but also behavioral deficits, allowing too much multitasking might result in organizational level problems. By managing workloads and providing appropriate tools, employers can better protect employees from becoming burnt out, among other negative effects.

In terms of research implications, the new conceptualization of multitasking in the workplace could provide a fresh perspective for determining what type of worker would be best fit in certain job roles. Specifically, with increasingly complex business operations, it is important for researchers to begin considering multitasking demands obligatory rather than optional or industry-specific. Because there will always be variations in employees' preference to multitask, it is important to uncover the nature of the PJ fit outcomes and when misfit is most detrimental. By assuming multitasking demands are present in work environments, researchers will

not waste time studying uncommon circumstances. Thus, more accurate and complex relationships can be discovered and generalized across companies.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This study provided a new perspective on multitasking in that it has disregarded the past claims that multitasking is “bad” for people. Rather, this study considered the extent to which employee characteristics may influence the outcomes of multitasking behavior. Because some people view multitasking as stressful while others view it as a normal part of life, the fact that many jobs require multitasking means that it has the potential to impact important job-relevant outcomes. Overall, this study was consistent with previous research that states PJ fit leads to more positive workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction (e.g., Gregarus & Diefendorff, 2009). However, this study revealed a more complex relationship within the misfit dimension of PJ fit. That is, employees show notable difference in workplace outcomes depending on the type of misfit they are experiencing (i.e., high actual-low desired vs. low actual-high desired). In general, “underwhelmed” employees (i.e., low actual-high desired) report more positive outcomes than “overwhelmed” employees (i.e., high actual-low desired). This study implies that misfit between employee preferences and job demands should be analyzed and treated differently, depending on the type of misfit at hand.

## LIST OF REFERENCES



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## TABLES

Table 1 List of Hypotheses and Method of Statistical Analysis

<b>Hypothesis Number</b>	<b>Hypothesis Statement</b>	<b>Method of Statistical Analysis</b>	<b>Indication of Statistical Effect</b>
Hypothesis 1a	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher perceptions of S-V fit (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will perceive higher S-V fit in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will perceive higher S-V fit in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial regression/ response surface modeling	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line
Hypothesis 1b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will not result in higher performance (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will not perform better than employees lower in polychronicity in high multitasking jobs and vice versa).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Lack of support for the squared difference model; surface not curved downward along misfit line; surface not flat along fit line
<b>Higher S-V fit leads to higher satisfaction</b>			
Hypothesis 2a	<i>Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than will employees lower in perceived S-V fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in job satisfaction can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.
Hypothesis 2b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher job satisfaction (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will have higher job satisfaction in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will have higher job satisfaction in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line
<b>Higher S-V fit leads to lower turnover intentions</b>			
Hypothesis 3a	<i>Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly lower levels of turnover intentions than will employees lower in multitasking fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in turnover intentions can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.
Hypothesis 3b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in lower turnover intentions (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved upward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line

Table 1 Continued

<b>Higher S-V fit leads to higher levels of organizational commitment</b>			
Hypothesis 4a	<i>Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly higher levels of organizational commitment than will employees lower in multitasking fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in organizational commitment can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.
Hypothesis 4b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher levels of organizational commitment (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report higher organizational commitment in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report higher organizational commitment in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line
<b>Higher S-V fit leads to lower levels of physical strains</b>			
Hypothesis 5a	<i>Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly fewer strains than will employees lower in multitasking fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in levels of strains can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.
Hypothesis 5b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in fewer job strains (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report fewer strains in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report fewer strains in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line
<b>Higher levels of working memory leads to higher performance</b>			
Hypothesis 6a	<i>Employees higher in working memory will show higher levels of job performance than will employees lower in working memory.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in job performance can be explained by variance in working memory capacity.
Hypothesis 6b	<i>The relationship between working memory and job performance will be stronger for employees in jobs requiring higher amounts of multitasking than for employees that are in jobs requiring lower amounts of multitasking.</i>	Linear Regression	

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for Study Variables

Measures	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Multitasking	131	3.47	0.83							
2 Polychronicity	131	2.83	0.64	<b>0.19*</b>						
3 Job Satisfaction	131	3.39	0.77	-0.013	<b>0.252*</b>					
4 Turnover Intentions	123	3.15	1.1	<b>-0.231*</b>	<b>-0.181*</b>	<b>-0.707*</b>				
5 Organizational Commitment	131	3.01	0.7	-0.036	0.083	<b>0.682*</b>	<b>-0.533*</b>			
6 Job Performance (Self-Rated)	131	4.44	0.47	-0.01	-0.046	0.16	-0.109	0.105		
7 Person-Job Fit	131	3.23	0.71	-0.141	<b>0.19*</b>	<b>0.599*</b>	<b>-0.561*</b>	<b>0.454*</b>	<b>0.247*</b>	
8 Strain	131	0.003	0.52	0.112	0.112	<b>0.193*</b>	-0.093	0.149	0.116	0.044

Note: \* indicates significance at the  $p < .05$  level, two-tailed test

Table 3 Support for the Squared Difference Model

	Constrained	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	Unconstrained	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	Cubic	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	DR <sup>2</sup>	Fit Line Flat	Misfit Line Curved
H1a	F(1, 131) = 4.73, p < .05	.05	F(1, 131) = 2.95, p < .05	.07	F(1, 131) = 1.96, p < .05	.06	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
H1b	F(1, 131) = .14, p = .87	.01	F(1, 131) = 1.58, p = .17	.02	F(1, 131) = 1.41, p = .19	.03	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE
H2b	F(1, 131) = 4.62, p < .05	.07	F(1, 131) = 2.86, p < .05	.10	F(1, 131) = 1.77, p < .05	.11	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE
H3b	F(1, 123) = 7.13, p < .01	.11	F(1, 123) = 3.46, p < .01	.13	F(1, 123) = 2.324, p < .05	.17	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
H4b	F(1, 131) = .632, p = .53	.01	F(1, 131) = 2.15, p = .06	.08	F(1, 131) = 2.14, p > .05	.14	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
H5b	F(1, 131) = 3.48, p < .05	.05	F(1, 131) = 2.57, p < .05	.09	F(1, 131) = 2.73, p > .01	.17	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE (Wrong Direction)



Table 4 List of Hypotheses and Method of Statistical Analysis with Results

Hypothesis Number	Hypothesis Statement	Method of Statistical Analysis	Indication of Statistical Effect	Support
Hypothesis 1a	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher perceptions of S-V fit (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will perceive higher S-V fit in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will perceive higher S-V fit in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial regression/ response surface modeling	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line	No
Hypothesis 1b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will not result in higher performance (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will not perform better than employees lower in polychronicity in high multitasking jobs and vice versa).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Lack of support for the squared difference model; surface not curved downward along misfit line; surface not flat along fit line	Yes
<b>Higher S-V fit leads to higher satisfaction</b>				
Hypothesis 2a	<i>Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than will employees lower in perceived S-V fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in job satisfaction can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.	Yes
Hypothesis 2b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher job satisfaction (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will have higher job satisfaction in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will have higher job satisfaction in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line	No

Table 4 Continued

<b>Higher S-V fit leads to lower turnover intentions</b>				
Hypothesis 3a	<i>Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly lower levels of turnover intentions than will employees lower in multitasking fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in turnover intentions can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.	Yes
Hypothesis 3b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in lower turnover intentions (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved upward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line	No
<b>Higher S-V fit leads to higher levels of organizational commitment</b>				
Hypothesis 4a	<i>Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly higher levels of organizational commitment than will employees lower in multitasking fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in organizational commitment can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.	Yes
Hypothesis 4b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher levels of organizational commitment (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report higher organizational commitment in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report higher organizational commitment in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line	Yes

Table 4 Continued

<b>Higher S-V fit leads to lower levels of physical strains</b>				
Hypothesis 5a	<i>Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly fewer strains than will employees lower in multitasking fit.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in levels of strains can be explained by variance in perceptions of S-V fit.	No
Hypothesis 5b	<i>Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in fewer job strains (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report fewer strains in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report fewer strains in low multitasking jobs).</i>	Polynomial Regression	Support for the squared difference model; surface curved downward along misfit line; surface flat along fit line	No
<b>Higher levels of working memory leads to higher performance</b>				
Hypothesis 6a	<i>Employees higher in working memory will show higher levels of job performance than will employees lower in working memory.</i>	Linear Regression	A significant $R^2$ , indicating that significant proportion of the variance in job performance can be explained by variance in working memory capacity.	No
Hypothesis 6b	<i>The relationship between working memory and job performance will be stronger for employees in jobs requiring higher amounts of multitasking than for employees that are in jobs requiring lower amounts of multitasking.</i>	Linear Regression		No

## FIGURES

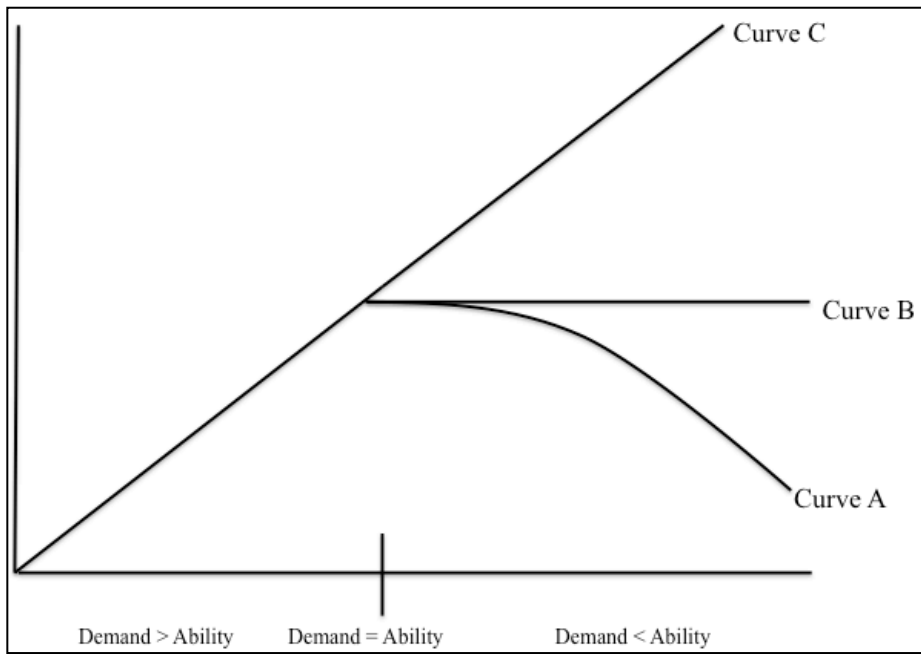


Figure 1 Three possible outcomes of demands-ability fit.

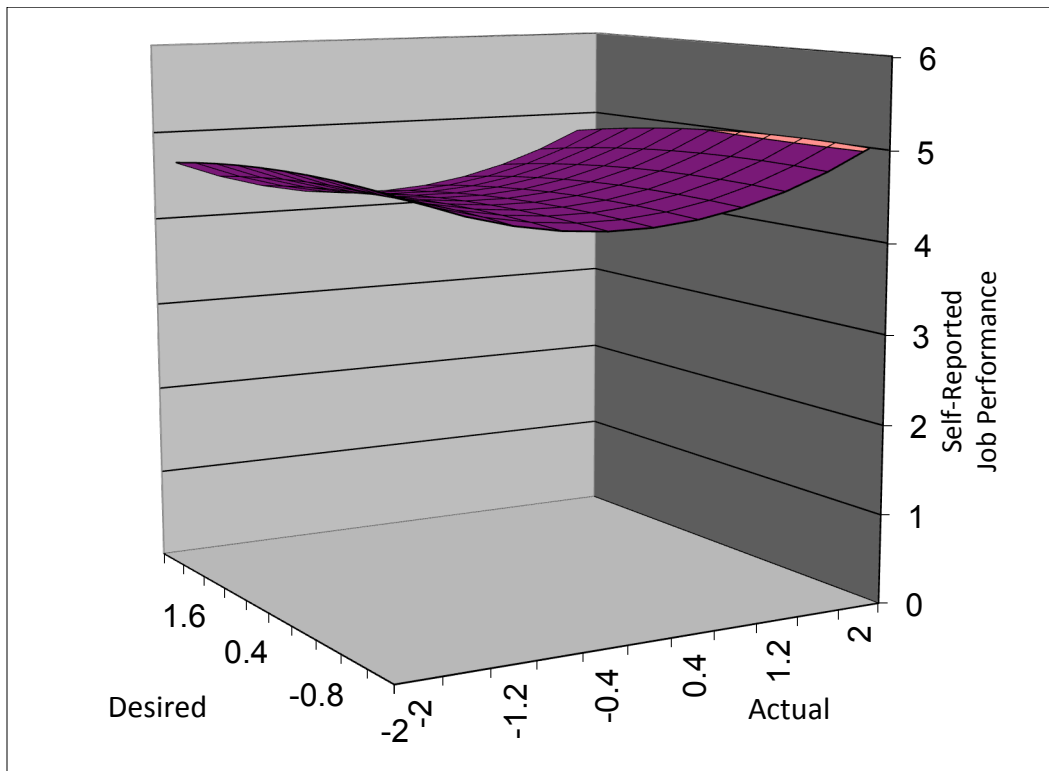


Figure 2 Surface model showing the relationship between actual and desired multitasking predicting job performance.

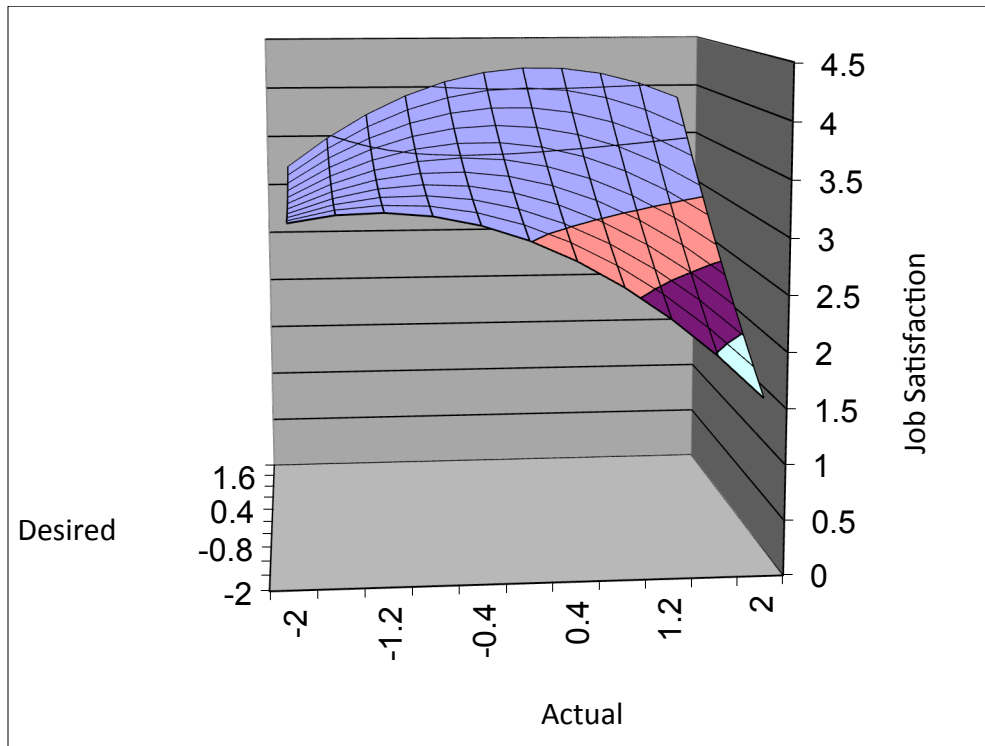


Figure 3 Surface model showing the relationship between actual and desired multitasking predicting job satisfaction.

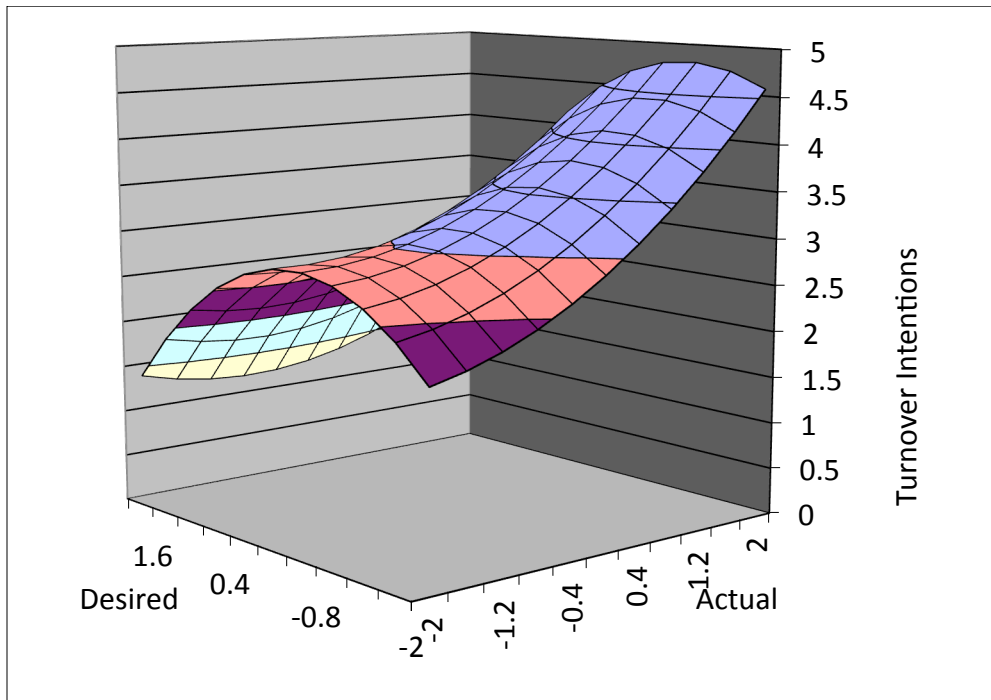


Figure 4 Surface model showing the relationship between actual and desired multitasking predicting turnover intentions.



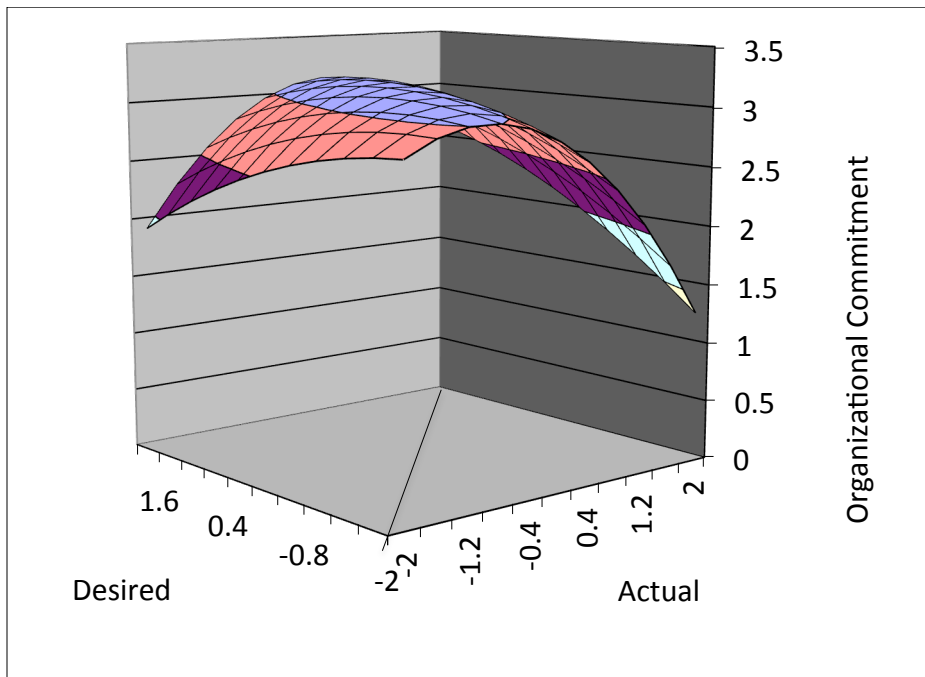


Figure 5 Surface model showing the relationship between actual and desired multitasking predicting affective organizational commitment.

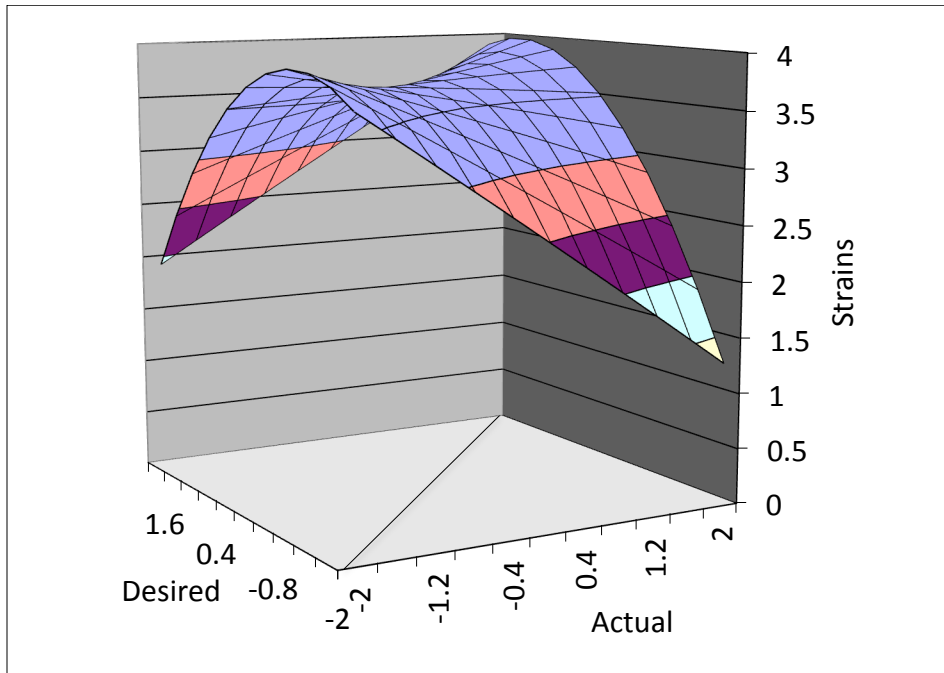


Figure 6 Surface model showing the relationship between actual and desired multitasking predicting strains.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A Proposal Introduction

It has become increasingly common for people to multitask in the workplace (Rubinstein, Meyer, & Evans, 2001). For example, due to interruptions from co-workers, telephone calls, or e-mail messages, employees are often forced to concentrate on more than one task or issue at a time or to switch among various tasks (Monsell, 2003). Further, downsizing and job enrichment have resulted in more tasks being assigned to each employee, which has also increased the prevalence of multitasking (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999). As a result, multitasking behavior and its implications for task performance have garnered attention recently in various fields of study such as cognitive psychology, (Buhner, Konig, Pick, & Krumm, 2006) computer sciences, (Salvucci, 2005) and industrial/organizational psychology (Oswald, Hambrick, & Jones, 2007).

While greater attention has been given to multitasking of late, the majority of previous research has tended to characterize multitasking as a harmful or counterproductive strategy (e.g., Wylie & Allport, 2000). This perspective has resulted in widespread recommendations that people avoid multitasking altogether in order to circumvent its supposed negative impact on performance. However, there are two major issues with this perspective. First, because multitasking is often unavoidable in today's workplace, avoidance is not necessarily a plausible strategy. Second, a generally negative attitude toward multitasking disregards the possibility that multitasking may not necessarily result in poorer performance across all situations and individuals.

The second point will be the major emphasis of this paper. That is, it will be argued that multitasking may not always result in performance decrements and that people's perceptions and experiences of multitasking may instead differ depending on individual differences. Specifically, it will be argued that the extent to which an individual *fits* within a job requiring multitasking will determine whether the multitasking results in negative outcomes. Fit is a concept that has been shown to be

related to many organizational outcomes (e.g., commitment, satisfaction; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). However, until now, researchers have not examined fit with regards to multitasking in the workplace.

Person-Job (PJ) fit is a match between a person and his or her job that occurs when the employee possesses the skills and abilities the job demands, while the job has qualities that are in accord with the employee's values and preferences (Kristof, 1996). Thus, while multitasking has primarily been discussed as harmful and inefficient for all employees, it is proposed here that it may actually be the case that the consequences of multitasking are a matter of fit; perhaps some employees perform poorly at multitasking, while others actually perform better in jobs that require multitasking.

In this paper, I will first briefly review the literature on multitasking. Although providing an exhaustive history of past research in the field is difficult due to the disjointed nature of multitasking research, the review will focus on a few key weaknesses of multitasking research relevant to the current discussion. Next, I will discuss the concept of PJ fit and subsequently explain how fit is related to multitasking within the workplace. Finally, I will introduce the term *multitasking fit* and propose potential employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes based on the degree of fit between employees and their jobs.

The goal of this study is thus to examine multitasking in the workplace through the lens of PJ fit. Because so many jobs require multitasking, this research will be relevant for many organizations in helping determine important predictors of successful employees. By focusing on the potentially positive outcomes of multitasking within the workplace, this study will broaden the consideration of multitasking within the workplace and help determine when multitasking is effective and beneficial, as well as when it is harmful and stressful. Further, because research has established that negative consequences of poor fit exist such as high turnover intentions and job stress, this research will offer new information to organizations on the importance of considering multitasking fit during the selection process.

## Multitasking

Despite the attention given to multitasking recently, investigations of multitasking have possessed many weaknesses. For example, perhaps due to the atheoretical nature of the multitasking field, researchers have not been able to agree on an overall definition for multitasking behavior. In addition, there have also been problems with the research methodology utilized within the multitasking field. Specifically, researchers have relied almost solely on artificial laboratory tests while attempting to generalize their results to the workplace (e.g., Ishizaka, Marshall, & Conte, 2001). Relatedly, there has also been an overemphasis on attempting to show why and how multitasking is “bad” for performance (e.g., Monsell, 2003). In this section I will discuss each of these issues in turn, and suggest ways in which future research might better address the reality of multitasking in today’s workplace.

### Definitional Issues

Although there has been a great deal of multitasking research, a unified definition and theory has yet to arise. For example, one recent article defined multitasking as attentional shifts between multiple tasks (Buhner et al., 2006) whereas another defined multitasking as performing multiple tasks within a short frame of time (Pashler, 2000). Although little work has been done thus far to organize or integrate existing definitions, I propose that the existing definitions of multitasking could be potentially classified into two general categories. One category of definitions focuses on the brain processes involved in multitasking, such as *shifts in executive controls* (e.g., Burgess, Veitch, Costello, & Shallice, 2000) or *shifts in attention* (e.g., Rubinstein et al., 2001). For example, this type of definition focuses on working memory processes and how the cognitive structure of the person who is multitasking is affected by the shifts between tasks. The second category of multitasking definitions focuses primarily on the actual behavior of multitasking. Such definitions refer to multitasking as *dual-task performance* (e.g., Logan & Gordon, 2001) and *task switching* (e.g., Monsell, 2003). These definitions tend to focus on the tasks that are being performed, rather than on the brain functions involved in switching attention between tasks.

In the current study, multitasking will be characterized as a job demand. Accordingly, the most relevant way to define multitasking primarily includes the behavioral or task-related aspects of multitasking. Although as has been noted, little agreement has existed with respect to definitions of multitasking, a recent definition has been proposed which fits well with this perspective. Poposki and Oswald (2010) define multitasking as the process of relatively quickly switching one's attention between tasks, defined objectively (e.g., minutes spent on a report) and subjectively (e.g., the employee's perception of length of time spent on a report). As a result, this definition will be adopted here.

### **Research Methodology**

In addition to definitional issues, research exploring multitasking has also possessed problems with respect to operationalization. Specifically, in most multitasking research, artificial laboratory tasks have been used as proxies for real-life multitasking situations when the goal was to make conclusions about multitasking in the real world (e.g., Brunken, Steinbacher, Plass, & Leutner, 2002; Buhner et al., 2006; Ishizaka et al., 2001; Konig, Buhner, & Murling, 2005). For example, Gopher, Armony, and Greenspan (2000) instructed participants to monitor rows of numbers. Participants were then shown another row of numbers and instructed to determine whether the new row contained 1) more numbers than and 2) numbers of higher value than the first row. To measure multitasking ability, the researchers recorded the accuracy and speed at which the participants compared the rows. While the participants were technically performing multiple tasks simultaneously (e.g., monitoring vs. comparing lists of digits) multitasking in the workplace setting is likely to be much more complex and involve a much wider variety of tasks. Further, interruptions from coworkers, customers, and other distractors are often not included in these laboratory settings, but are common components of multitasking in the workplace. Because these artificial tasks are so different from most daily work tasks, the results of these studies might not be generalizable to employees in the workplace.

### **Overemphasis on Negative Impact on Performance**

Based on the results of multitasking studies using artificial tasks such as this as evidence, many researchers have concluded that performing multiple tasks is harmful to performance because multitasking distracts from individual tasks. As a result, many researchers have studied multitasking behavior in terms of its performance costs (e.g., Gopher et al., 2000; Monsell, 2003; Wylie & Allport, 2000). Specifically, this type of research has attempted to provide evidence suggesting that switching between tasks inhibits a person's ability to allot ample attention to one task. This is the case because it is proposed that the person must continuously initiate new cognitive schemas and stop attending to the previous task. That is, each time a person switches his or her attention to a new task, he or she must begin the process of understanding and planning for the new task (Gopher et al., 2000). According to this claim, multitasking detracts from the quality of performance in that less attention is given to each task than if a person was performing each task one at a time. This general attitude towards multitasking as a counterproductive technique of completing tasks is prevalent among past research.

Despite the pervasiveness of this negative attitude, there is reason to believe that it is potentially unjustified. It could be argued that multitasking in the "real world" is less detrimental to employee performance and well-being than what has been observed in the aforementioned studies for a few key reasons. Primarily, in lab studies, researchers typically defined high performance as a precise mastery and demonstration of each specific skill. However, in the workplace, certain tasks might be more important than others at various times, thus making multitasking a useful strategy for *overall* performance. In addition, because multitasking allows employees to complete more tasks at once, if this type of performance is what is important in the workplace, multitasking will result in higher overall performance. Ultimately, the notion is that performance in the real workplace may not be best defined as performance on discrete tasks, but rather as a gestalt.

Furthermore, as was mentioned earlier, many employees no longer have the luxury of completing one task at a time without interruptions. Due to the changing



nature of the workforce, many jobs are being downsized or restructured, and the nature of work is changing such that employees are often forced to perform more tasks than before and to become more flexible (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999). As a result of these rapid and continual changes, multitasking behavior has become an essential part of many jobs (Oswald et al., 2007).

Therefore, while past researchers have often characterized multitasking behaviors as problematic, I argue that it is more reasonable to consider consequences relating to multitasking behaviors depending on the employee and the circumstances. Specifically, I propose that while some people may view multitasking as stressful and overwhelming, others may view it as a normal part of life. I further propose that within the workplace, variations in preferences and abilities among employees would predict these differences in how the responsibility of multitasking on the job is experienced. The notion can be described under the framework of person-job fit.

#### Person-Job Fit

Within every job in an organization, there is some amount of compatibility between the job's demands and the employee's skills or values. An individual's characteristics such as personality type and work skills can either coincide with or differ from the characteristics needed for the job. The concept of the degree of match between an employee and his or her job is called *person-job fit (PJ fit)*; Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). Person-job fit is a narrow scope of fit among the broader concept of *person-environment fit (PE fit)*. Researchers have defined PE fit as the amount of compatibility between an employee and his or her overall environment, occurring when: "...(a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both" (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4-5). This multidimensional concept encompasses other types of "fit" such as PJ fit and person-organization fit (PO fit; Caplan, 1987; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

According to various researchers, PJ fit can be narrowed into two separate dimensions of fit: *demands-ability fit (D-A)* and *supplies-values fit (S-V)*; e.g., Kristof-

Brown et al., 2005; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Demands-ability fit occurs when an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities match those needed by the job. For example, if a person with proficient computer programming skills were hired as a software developer, there would be high D-A fit between the employee and his or her job.

The second conceptualization of PJ fit, S-V fit, occurs when a job can fulfill the needs, values, and preferences of the employee. For example, if a gregarious person were hired as a customer service manager who is constantly interacting with people, there would be high S-V fit between the employee and the job. Person-job fit can be considered a type of *complementary* fit in that it describes a person fulfilling the needs of a job *and/or* a job fulfilling the needs of a person (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Thus, according to both narrower types of fit, PJ fit is a reciprocal phenomenon as it depends on both the person and the job to fully elicit fit. Therefore, when PJ fit exists—the person and the job coincide together well—researchers explain the condition as congruence within the job environment.

Researchers primarily quantify PJ fit among employees using two different measures: perceived fit and objective fit. Perceived fit can be contrasted from objective fit and is typically determined using self-report methods of data collection using employee perceptions of the degree to which he or she fits with his or her job (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, 2000). Perceived fit is considered a direct measure of fit as the assessment is coming directly from the focal employee. Conversely, objective fit is assessed indirectly using measures of skills, abilities, and preferences of the employee (i.e., predictors of fit) as well as separate measures of demands of the job. The two types of measures are then compared to determine if a match has occurred (French, Rogers, & Cobb, 1974).

Each of the fit measurement methods has its benefits. Specifically, because perceived fit is a direct assessment of the employee's perceptions, it is likely influenced by factors that are most salient to employees. As such, researchers have suggested this method is most closely linked with employee attitudes and behavioral outcomes (Caplan, 1987; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, objective fit

assessments use separate measures from each aspect of the fit relationship (i.e., person characteristics and job characteristics). While this is a less proximal measure of fit compared to perceived fit, researchers suggest it is beneficial to measure the objective characteristics of the job and the person as they are likely driving the actual fit relationship (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Fit is among the most studied topics within the field of I/O psychology. This is likely due to its implications for employee outcomes such as satisfaction and organizational commitment (Gregarus & Diefendorff, 2009). Within the workplace, it is essential for employees to be able to fulfill the demands of the job in order to complete tasks. As a result, employees' level of D-A fit has implications on employee job performance within organizations. Furthermore, the S-V fit aspect of fit is especially important in determining employees' attitudes about their jobs. According to past findings, those employees who are compatible with their jobs experience more positive and less negative attitudes in general (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990).

Specifically, fit has been found to increase job attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational identification, coworker satisfaction, and supervisor satisfaction. Additionally, researchers note that fit decreases negative attitudes such as turnover intentions (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The influence of fit on job attitudes can be explained by theories of need fulfillment, which claim that attitudes are positively influenced by needs being met (Caplan, 1987; Harrison, 1978).

According to Locke (1976), people experience positive attitudes and are more satisfied with their job when their needs are being met than when their needs are not being met. Thus, this theory of needs would suggest that within the complementary nature of fit, people's attitudes would be positive when they are in jobs that match their preferences and values. That is, employees who are not compatible with their job, especially when the job is not in accordance with the employee's needs or values, will experience negative attitudes, which can be linked to many adverse outcomes within the workplace (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Therefore, in accordance with the concept of

need fulfillment, one of the strongest predictors of fit is the match between employee preferences and the job characteristics.

As previously mentioned, multitasking has become common in today's changing workplace. As employees are presented with multiple tasks to complete in one block of time, it becomes very important to have the multitasking skills that match the demands of the job. Although past literature has focused on the potential negative impact of multitasking, the concept of fit would propose that multitasking has the potential to be a productive and enjoyable work strategy. Specifically, employees who prefer to multitask might fit better in jobs that require multitasking as a job demand. As such, multitasking as a job demand will now be applied to the concept of fit.

### **The Current Study: Multitasking Fit**

Because multitasking in the workplace consists of switching between tasks and managing interruptions, employees who multitask might experience a variety of affective reactions such as excitement, stress, or anxiety (Delbridge, 2000). While some employees might find the act of juggling multiple tasks stressful and exhausting, other employees might find it motivating and exciting. Based on principles of PJ fit, I propose that individual differences in how the responsibility of multitasking on the job is experienced are likely to be due to differences in preferences and skills among employees. More specifically, I propose the construct of *multitasking fit* to describe the degree of congruence between the amount of multitasking a job requires and the employee's preference or skill to multitask. Multitasking fit is essentially proposed as a subtype of PJ fit, specifically relevant to the amount of multitasking within jobs.

The concepts of S-V fit and D-A fit are both relevant within multitasking fit. According to the fit literature, multitasking could be classified as a *demand* in regards to D-A fit and as a *supply* in regards to S-V fit. Thus, to obtain high D-A fit, employees' abilities must be in accordance with what the job demands with regards to multitasking; to obtain S-V fit, employees' values must be in accordance with what the job supplies with regards to multitasking.

The concept of person-job fit would suggest that those who have abilities and

preferences to multitask would experience a higher degree of fit within those jobs requiring multitasking. Conversely, within low multitasking jobs, fit would occur for employees who are not able to and do not prefer to multitask. Thus, in accordance with the PJ fit literature, employee perceptions of fit between their multitasking preferences and multitasking behavior on the job will likely elicit positive work attitudes. In the following section, I propose multitasking fit hypotheses based on research and theory on the PJ fit and multitasking literature.

### **S-V Fit**

As discussed previously, S-V fit pertains to individual preferences and values being met by the job. As described by Locke (1976), when personal needs are met, people tend to experience positive attitudes. Thus, it can be expected that those employees whose preferences are being fulfilled in the workplace will be more likely to experience positive emotions relating to their jobs than those employees whose preferences do not align with their job. Therefore, S-V fit should be correlated with attitudinal outcomes. In the case of multitasking, an attitude reflecting preference and value for multitasking is *polychronicity*.

Individual-level polychronicity describes a person's preference for multitasking rather than completing one task at a time (Bluedorn, Kalliath, Strube, & Martin, 1999; Slocombe & Bluedorn, 1999). Research has shown that those high in polychronicity not only prefer to multitask, but also enjoy multitasking and intend to multitask in the future (Poposki & Oswald, 2010). Importantly, while polychronicity predicts *frequency* and *enjoyment* of multitasking, it has not been found to correlate with multitasking *ability* (Konig et al., 2005; Konig, Oberacher, & Kleinmann, 2010; Oswald et al., 2007). For example, a highly polychronic person might fit well and experience positive attitudes in a job requiring multitasking, but that same person might not necessary perform multitasking well. Thus, it is predicted that:

*H1a: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher perceptions of S-V fit (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will perceive higher S-V fit in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will perceive*

*higher S-V fit in low multitasking jobs).*

*H1b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will not result in higher performance (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will not perform better than employees lower in polychronicity in high multitasking jobs and vice versa).*

S-V fit means that aspects of the job are supplying the employee with what he or she values. Because polychronicity indicates an individual's preference for multitasking, individuals higher in polychronicity may thus view multitasking as an important aspect of a job because for these individuals, multitasking is valued and viewed as an efficient use of time. By contrast, individuals lower in polychronicity are more likely to view multitasking as distracting or stressful. According to theories of need fulfillment, when employees' values and needs are met on the job, they are more likely to experience positive attitudes within the workplace (Locke, 1976). Past research and theory on multitasking and person-job fit indicate that job satisfaction, turnover intentions, organizational commitment, and job strain are attitudes that are likely to be related to S-V fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

As previously described, there are two primary ways to measure fit relationships: perceived fit and objective fit. Because both methods have benefits and limitations, I will be assessing fit using both methods in this study. Perceived fit is an important method as it is a direct measure of employees' perceptions of the salience of their fit and often relates closely with psychological and behavioral outcomes (Cable & Judge, 1996). However, compared to perceived fit, objective fit measurements are beneficial in that they more accurately assess the true person and job characteristics (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). As a result, there will be two hypotheses for each outcome variable: one hypothesis dealing with perceived fit and one hypothesis dealing with objective fit.

**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction can be broadly defined as the extent to which an employee experiences positive attitudes or emotional states in regards to his or her job (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000; Schmit & Alscheid, 1995). In a meta-analysis, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) found a strong positive relationship between fit and job satisfaction, ( $\rho = .56, p > .001$ ). When an employee's preferences and skills match the demands of

the job, the employee is likely performing tasks that are enjoyable, potentially attributing those positive emotions to the job itself. Additionally, employees are likely to feel satisfied when their needs are being met on the job as opposed to when job characteristics do not match employee preferences or needs. Thus, it is predicted that:

*H2a: Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than will employees lower in perceived S-V fit.*

*H2b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher job satisfaction (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will have higher job satisfaction in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will have higher job satisfaction in low multitasking jobs).*

**Turnover intentions.** Past theorists have suggested that upon job dissatisfaction, many employees begin to consider quitting their job to relieve the dissatisfaction (Mobley, 1977). These thoughts of leaving one's job are commonly referred to as turnover intentions (Hom & Griffeth, 1991). According to meta-analytic results, turnover intentions are negatively associated with fit such that those employees high in fit tend to also report less intent to quit their jobs, ( $\rho = -.46, p < .001$ , Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Some researchers have found values to play an important role in the attitudes and intentions of employees such that jobs fostering value attainment tend to elicit positive attitudes and lower intentions to quit (e.g., George & Jones, 1996; de Ruyter & Bloemer, 1998). These findings suggest that when a job's characteristics allow employees be immersed in or work towards their values, employees are much more likely to stay in their job. Thus,

*H3a: Employees higher in perceived S-V fit will report significantly lower levels of turnover intentions than will employees lower in multitasking fit.*

*H3b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in lower turnover intentions (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report lower turnover intentions in low multitasking jobs).*

**Organizational commitment.** Organizational commitment is a concept referring

to the extent to which an employee feels psychological and emotional attachment to his or her place of work (Becker & Kernan, 2003). Researchers have identified three main components of organizational commitment: acceptance and belief in an organization's values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization to help meet the organizational goals, and a strong desire to remain in the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Further, Meyer and Allen (1984) identified separate dimensions of organizational commitment characterized by different motives (e.g., monetary need, emotional attachment to values). While these motives influence employees' degree of commitment to their organization, affective commitment can be considered most indicative of employees' commitment to remain with the organization as it demonstrates an emotional desire rather than a deliberate decision (e.g., Bono & Judge, 2003).

The largest predictor of organization commitment is how well a person fits in his or her job and organization ( $\rho = .47, p < .001$ ; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Employees who feel that the organization is "on their side" are more likely to feel affectively committed to it. Thus, employees who value multitasking will likely feel more committed to an organization at which they can multitask.

*H4a: Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly higher levels of affective organizational commitment than will employees lower in multitasking fit.*

*H4b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in higher levels of affective organizational commitment (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report higher affective organizational commitment in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report higher organizational commitment in low multitasking jobs).*

**Job strain.** Strains are the reactions to stress within the workplace and can emerge as negative workplace outcomes such as burnout and anxiety as well as dangerous health outcomes such as heart disease and high blood pressure (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001). According to meta-analytic results, job strain is moderately negatively associated with fit such that those employees perceiving misfit tend to also



report higher amount of job stress, ( $\rho = -.28, p < .001$ , Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This mismatch between employees' preferences and their job characteristics likely induces stress because the employee is forced to fulfill tasks in ways that are not aligned with their values.

*H5a: Employees higher in S-V multitasking fit will report significantly fewer strains than will employees lower in multitasking fit.*

*H5b: Congruence between polychronicity and multitasking demands will result in fewer job strains (i.e., employees higher in polychronicity will report fewer strains in high multitasking jobs and employees lower in polychronicity will report fewer strains in low multitasking jobs).*

#### **D-A Fit**

The second element of fit, D-A fit, describes a more objective match between the job requirements and an employee's ability to fulfill those requirements. Within any job, there is a certain set of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to complete the tasks within the job. Researchers studying *underemployment* (i.e., participation in jobs that are at lower levels of organizational hierarchies and do not fully utilize employee's skills; Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002), *overqualification* (i.e., situations in which an employees possess more education, experience, or skills than their jobs require, Johnson & Johnson, 1999) and *role overload* (i.e., situations in which an employee perceives there are too many responsibilities to complete with the available time, skills, or resources; Netemeyer, Burton, & Johnston, 1995) have suggested these mismatch situations can potentially impact job performance.

Unlike S-V fit, the relationship between D-A fit and outcomes is somewhat less clear. For example, perhaps the most common outcome of D-A fit that has been explored is performance. Although a lack of ability is expected to result in poorer performance in almost all cases, it is not necessarily always the case that an excess of resources will also result in poorer performance than when resources or supplies are at an "optimal" level (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998). In fact, it has been proposed

that there are three possible outcomes when abilities exceed demands. Excess abilities may increase, decrease, or have no effect on performance (see Figure 1). First, excess abilities may not influence performance when the specific abilities do not relate directly to a specific job demand (curve B). For example, an employee's excessive computer skills may be useful for one particular job task, but may be useless for other job tasks, resulting in no effects on performance.

Second, excess abilities may decrease performance (curve A) by lowering the employee's motivation. Specifically, when employees are unable to utilize their valuable skills, they are likely to experience boredom and lowered self-esteem (Harrison, 1978). Excess abilities may also decrease performance when valuable skills go unused. As such, unused knowledge or skills may be forgotten, possibly making the employee vulnerable to task overload in the future if demands increase at any point.

Finally, excess abilities may increase performance by allowing the person to conserve personal resources (e.g., time, energy) to apply toward future demands (curve C). Further, excess abilities may increase performance if the abilities are specific to the job demand. For example, an employee with excessive technical skills will likely show increased job performance if technical job demands are low because the employee will be able to apply all of his or her skills to that specific demand.

In the case of multitasking fit, it is proposed that the relationship between abilities and performance will fit the third possible outcome of the D-A fit model (curve C). That is, excess abilities should predict increased performance in a linear fashion. The rationale for this prediction is presented below.

**Job performance.** Employee performance is an integral part of any organization as it is the primary determinant of whether or not that organization is successful. According to Schmidt and Hunter (1998), overall intelligence ( $g$ ) is significantly positively related to job performance. Further, as complexity of the job increases, the strength of the correlation between  $g$  and job performance increases as well. Although the relationship between  $g$  and multitasking performance has not been the focus of a great

deal of research, attention has been focused on more specific facets of intelligence and their role in predicting performance at multitasking.

**Working memory.** Working memory capacity is the extent to which a person is able to actively maintain and manipulate task-relevant information over brief periods of time (Engle, 2002). Specifically, working memory is the portion of the memory system in which information is perceived, attended to, and retrieved (Baddeley, 1986). Researchers suggest that among the many dimensions of the working memory, an important aspect relating to multitasking is the ability to control attention when distractions are present (Engle, Kane, & Tuholski, 1999; Engle, 2002). Similarly to results regarding the relationship between intelligence and performance, higher amounts of working memory have been linked to increased performance on complex job tasks such as multitasking (Buhner et al., 2006).

As a result, it is predicted that those employees with adequate or excessive working memory will perform better overall than those employees with lower working memory. It is further predicted that this relationship will be stronger in jobs that require higher amounts of multitasking. Thus,

*H6a: Employees higher in working memory will show higher levels of job performance than will employees lower in working memory.*

*H6b: The relationship between working memory and job performance will be stronger for employees in jobs requiring higher amounts of multitasking than for employees that are in jobs requiring lower amounts of multitasking.*

Appendix B: Measures

## Multitasking

Rate the following questions using this scale based on your experience at work.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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1. When I'm at work, I work on several projects at once, rather than completing one project and then switching to another.
2. I work in a job where I am constantly shifting from one task to another.
3. At work, my supervisor typically assigns me more than one project at a time.
4. At work, I have to switch back and forth between them rather than do one at a time.
5. I can finish one task completely before focusing on anything else when I'm at work. (R)
6. When I'm at work, I am able to finish one task completely before focusing on another task. (R)
7. I do not have to shift my attention between multiple tasks while I'm at work. (R)
8. Because of the nature of my job, I must switch back and forth between several tasks rather than concentrating my efforts on just one.
9. I work in an environment where I can finish one task before starting the next. (R)
10. At work, I don't have to stop in the middle of a task to work on something else. (R)
11. When I have a task to complete, my job demands me to break it up by switching to other tasks intermittently.
12. I am frequently interrupted by coworkers or other tasks when working on a task.

## Polychronicity (Poposki &amp; Oswald, 2010)

Rate the following questions using this scale based on your experience at work.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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1. I prefer to work on several projects in a day, rather than completing one project and then switching to another.
2. I would like to work in a job where I was constantly shifting from one task to another, like a receptionist or an air traffic controller.
3. I lose interest in what I am doing if I have to focus on the same task for long periods of time, without thinking about or doing something else.
4. When doing a number of assignments, I like to switch back and forth between them rather than do one at a time.
5. I like to finish one task completely before focusing on anything else. (R)
6. It makes me uncomfortable when I am not able to finish one task completely before focusing on another task. (R)
7. I am much more engaged in what I am doing if I am able to switch between several different tasks.
8. I do not like having to shift my attention between multiple tasks. (R)
9. I would rather switch back and forth between several projects than concentrate my efforts on just one.
10. I would prefer to work in an environment where I can finish one task before starting the next. (R)
11. I don't like when I have to stop in the middle of a task to work on something else. (R)
12. When I have a task to complete, I like to break it up by switching to other tasks intermittently.
13. I have a "one-track" mind. (R)
14. I prefer not to be interrupted when working on a task. (R)

## Job Satisfaction (Brayfield &amp; Rothe, 1951)

Rate the following questions using this scale based on your experience at work.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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1. I feel fairly satisfied with my present job.
2. Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.
3. Each day at work seems like it will never end (R).
4. I find real enjoyment in my work.
5. I consider my job to be rather unpleasant (R).

## Turnover Intentions (Colarelli, 1984)

Rate the following questions using this scale based on your experience at work.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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1. I frequently think of quitting my job.
2. I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months.
3. If I get another job that pay as well, I will quit this job.

## Organizational Commitment (Allen &amp; Meyer, 1990)

Rate the following questions using this scale based on your experience at work.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
4. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one (R).
5. I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organization (R).
6. I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization (R).
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
8. I do not feel a *strong* sense of belonging to *my* organization (R).



## Job Strain

Physical Symptoms Inventory (Spector & Jex, 1998)

Over the past month, how often have you experienced each of the following symptoms?	Not at all	Once or Twice	Once or twice per week	Most days	Every day
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Upset stomach or nausea

Trouble sleeping

Headache

Acid indigestion or heartburn

Eye strain

Diarrhea

Stomach cramps (not menstrual)

Constipation

Ringing in the ears

Loss of appetite

Dizziness

Tiredness or fatigue

General Health Questionnaire (Clark & Oswald, 1994)

Have you recently?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less than usual	Much less than usual
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1. Been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing?
2. Lost much sleep over worry?
3. Felt that you are playing a useful part in things?
4. Felt capable of making decisions about things?
5. Felt constantly under strain?
6. Felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?

7. Been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?
8. Been able to face up to your problems?
9. Been feeling unhappy and depressed?
10. Been losing confidence in yourself?
11. Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?
12. Been feelings reasonably happy all things considered?

### Job Performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991)

Express the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your employee.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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#### Supervisor:

1. The employee adequately completes assigned duties.
2. The employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.
3. The employee performs tasks that are expected of him/her.
4. The employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.
5. The employee engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance evaluation.
6. The employee neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform (R).
7. The employee fails to perform essential duties (R).

Express the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about yourself at work.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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#### Employee Self-Ratings:

1. I adequately complete assigned duties.
2. I fulfill responsibilities specified in the job description.
3. I perform tasks that are expected of me.
4. I meet formal performance requirements of the job.
5. I engage in activities that will directly affect my performance evaluation.
6. I neglect aspects of the job I am obligated to perform (R).
7. I fail to perform essential duties (R).

### Perceived Person-Job Fit

Rate the following questions using this scale based on your experience at work.	1 - Not at all	2	3 - Neutral	4	5 - To a large extent
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### Supplies-Values Fit (Saks & Ashforth, 1997)

1. To what extent do your knowledge, skills, and abilities match the requirements of the job?
2. To what extent does the job fulfill your needs?
3. To what extent is the job a good match for you?
4. To what extent does the job enable you to do the kind of work you want to do?

Rate the following questions using this scale based on your experience at work.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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### Demands-Ability Fit (Cable & Judge, 1996)

1. My job performance is hurt by a lack of expertise on the job.
2. I possess the skills and abilities to perform my job.