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**RELATIONSHIPS AMONG  
WORK ADJUSTMENT VARIABLES**

A thesis in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology  
at Massey University

**Monica Jessie Skinner**  
(née Montague-Brown)

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of  
Jessie Penrose Montague-Brown  
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## ABSTRACT

In the context of changing patterns of work and a growing trend for individuals to occupy more than one position during their working life, knowledge about the factors affecting work adjustment becomes increasingly important to employee and employer alike. The present research investigated the application of aspects of a dominant but relatively unchallenged psychological theory of work adjustment (and its instrumentation) of Dawis and Lofquist (1984). The aspects of particular interest in this area of Occupational, Industrial/Organisational and Vocational Psychology, were the effect of work need correspondence (as moderated by satisfactoriness) on job satisfaction and tenure and the use of the adjustment styles of active, reactive, perseverance and flexibility.

A critical evaluation of the theory raised concerns about possible omissions of important variables, about inconsistencies (such as having the key variables of job satisfaction and satisfactoriness act mutually as moderators yet be relatively independent of each other) and about the apparent failure of an orthogonal model to represent the relationships among work need factors accurately. The underlying factor structure of work needs was explored using confirmatory factor analytic techniques and the linear structural relations model (LISREL). Dawis and Lofquist's work need factor analyses were reworked in an empirical study and as part of a meta-analysis. The work adjustment theory was expanded to take account of relationships among constructs with a more cognitive component (such as subjective well-being, self-efficacy and locus of control), among social constructs (such as social support and social reference group influences) and among non-work variables (such as satisfaction with quality of life domains). Vocational issues such as the relationship between occupational fantasy and actual position taken up were explored.

The study was of a two-stage longitudinal design with questionnaires administered to a relatively homogeneous group of 377 volunteers from a range of academic disciplines in a New Zealand university towards the last third of their final year of study, prior to graduation and to the 288 remaining in the study sample a year later, the majority of whom were in work. Data about the characteristics of the respondent group including information about their parents and individual work expectations were gathered at stage one. Stage two repeated measures of self-efficacy, locus of control and subjective well-being and sought information to evaluate aspects of work adjustment theory, non-work factors and the work/non-work

relationship. The psychological instruments in addition to those of work adjustment theory used were Holland's (1965) Vocational Preference Instrument, The Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (Hansen, 1985) and the measures used by Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976) of happiness, subjective well-being and personal competence.

The criticisms of the theory appeared valid and the expanded model outlined fitted the data better than the original of Dawis and Lofquist with the additional variables performing as well or better in the prediction of tenure. Job satisfaction was found to be a better predictor of work adjustment than expected tenure. Job attachment explained more of the variance in the work adjustment model than did expected length of tenure itself. Although correspondence between work needs and work reinforcers usually occurred, only certain work needs when reinforced affected job satisfaction. The factor structure of work needs was found to be hierarchical with two second order factors. One second order factor was interpreted as being intrinsic and involving personal development and growth aspects while the other was more extrinsic in nature involving the work setting, management and working conditions. Just as the first level factors correlated so did the second order factors to produce a single, general work need factor. Not all work needs may need to be reinforced for job satisfaction to occur and perhaps as few as five need to be measured. Adjustment style did not moderate correspondence between all work needs and their reinforcers. The social reference group and the degree of social support were found to be an important influence on the subjective well-being of respondents. When taken together a greater amount of variance in subjective well-being was accounted for by leisure satisfaction and social support than by job satisfaction. Perceived job satisfactoriness was a better predictor of tenure than job satisfaction. Non-work factors and the relative importance of work and job/lifestyle compatibility were found to be of importance to work adjustment. The implications of the apparent limitations of Dawis and Lofquist's theory of work adjustment are discussed along with the effect of the emergence of a different work need factor structure on the theory's instrumentation.

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