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## **A Dimensional Analysis of the Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Effectiveness, Satisfaction, and Strain**

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*This paper examines the contribution of each of the four dimensions in Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) multidimensional conceptualization of psychological empowerment in predicting three expected outcomes of empowerment: effectiveness, work satisfaction, and job-related strain. The literature on the four dimensions of empowerment (i.e., meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) is reviewed and theoretical logic is developed linking the dimensions to specific outcomes. The expected relationships are tested on a sample of managers from diverse units of a manufacturing organization and then replicated on an independent sample of lower-level employees in a service organization using alternative measures of the outcome variables. The results, largely consistent across the two samples, suggest that different dimensions are related to different outcomes and that no single dimension predicts all three outcomes. These results indicate that employees need to experience each of the empowerment dimensions in order to achieve all of the hoped for outcomes of empowerment.*

### **Introduction**

In the past decade, business practitioners (Block, 1987; Byham, 1988; Ford & Fottler, 1995; Kizilos, 1990) and organizational researchers (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) have embraced notions of empowerment in the workplace. Yet, until recently, the literature has lacked consensus on a definition or operationalization of empowerment in the workplace. Thomas and

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Velthouse's (1990) multidimensional psychological conceptualization of empowerment has been widely accepted in the literature because it captures the diverse perspectives of different researchers. Spreitzer (1995a) operationalized this four-dimensional conceptualization and began the process of construct validation. The four dimensions have been found to contribute to an overall "gestalt" of empowerment which has been found to be stable over time and reliably measured (Spreitzer, 1995a). Further empirical research has found a general measure of empowerment to be predictably related to relevant personality and social structural antecedents and psychological and behavioral outcomes (Koerner, 1993; Spreitzer, 1995a; Spreitzer, 1996; Thomas & Tymon, 1994). Furthermore, empirical research has shown that empowerment mediates the relationship between organizational social structure and behavioral outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995b).

While this emerging body of research has made some important first steps in establishing the validity of the empowerment construct, a deeper understanding of its multidimensional nature is needed. We have little evidence of the relative value added of the multidimensional conceptualization of empowerment beyond more simple unidimensional conceptualizations. The previous research described above has examined how an overall empowerment composite relates to various outcomes, but we have little understanding regarding if and how each of the four dimensions contributes to the expected outcomes of empowerment. Do some dimensions by themselves adequately predict all of the hoped for outcomes of empowerment? Or, are certain dimensions important in achieving some outcomes but not others? This paper builds on and extends the emerging literature on empowerment by reviewing the literature and empirically examining the relationships between each of the four dimensions of empowerment and three key anticipated outcomes of empowerment in the workplace: effectiveness, work satisfaction, and job-related strain.<sup>1</sup> Because previous research has focused primarily on the more *behavioral* outcomes of empowerment, an additional contribution of the paper is the development of a theoretical and empirical linkage between empowerment and its more *affective* outcomes.

The paper begins by defining empowerment multidimensionally and then develops theoretical logic relating each dimension to the three key anticipated outcomes of psychological empowerment. The research design is then described, and the results are presented. Directions for future research are discussed as are implications for research and practice.

### Defining Empowerment

Notions of empowerment are derived from theories of participative management and employee involvement. Theories of participative management advocate that managers share decision making power with employees to enhance performance and work satisfaction (e.g., Cotton, 1993; Cotton, Vollrath, Lengnick-Hall & Jennings, 1988; Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Miller & Monge, 1986; Wagner, 1994). Theories of employee involvement emphasize cascading power, information, rewards, and training to the lowest level possible in the organizational hierarchy to increase worker discretion (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Lawler, 1992). Until

recently, many organizational scholars have defined empowerment unidimensionally as self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) or self-determination/autonomy (Burke, 1986; Liden, Wayne, Sparrowe & Bradway, 1993; Macher, 1988; Neilsen, 1986). Most recent conceptualizations of empowerment, however, are broader, defining empowerment as a constellation of experienced psychological states or cognitions (Spreitzer, 1992; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This more complex perspective on empowerment focuses on the individual experience of empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990); that is, what individuals need to experience or feel in order for such interventions to be effective rather than the specific management practices intended to "empower" employees (Spreitzer, 1996).

In the classic theoretical work on empowerment, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) conceptualized empowerment as the gestalt of four cognitions: a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. These dimensions are not predictors or outcomes of empowerment, but rather comprise its very essence. Meaning, or purpose, involves a fit between the needs of one's work role and one's values, beliefs, and behaviors (Brief & Nord, 1990). Competence, or self-efficacy, is a belief that one possesses the skills and abilities necessary to perform a job or task well (Gist, 1987) and is analogous to agency beliefs, personal mastery, or effort-performance expectancy (Bandura, 1977). Self-determination is the belief that one has autonomy or control over how one does his or her own work (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Wagner, 1995). Self-determination is consistent with notions of personal control (Greenberger & Strasser, 1991; Greenberger, Strasser, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989). Impact is the perception that one has influenced strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work to make a difference (Ashforth, 1989). Impact is different from self-determination; self-determination refers to individuals' sense of control over their own work, while impact refers to individuals' sense of control over organizational outcomes. Where self-determination implies job involvement, impact implies organizational involvement (Spreitzer, 1995a). Together, these four dimensions (self-determination, meaning, competence and impact) reflect a proactive, rather than passive, orientation to one's work role.

Though acknowledging that the four dimensions are key elements of the empowerment process, some have questioned whether three of the four dimensions are more appropriately conceptualized as antecedents (i.e., competence) or outcomes (i.e., impact or meaning) of empowerment rather than facets of empowerment itself (Liden & Tewksbury, 1995). While some of the empowerment dimensions do indeed reinforce each other (e.g., a greater sense of self-determination may reinforce greater meaning), the conceptual work on empowerment argues that each dimension adds a unique facet to an individual's experience of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1992; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). As described below, only together do the dimensions produce the proactive essence of employee empowerment.

First, meaning serves as the "engine" of empowerment (i.e., the mechanism through which individuals get energized about work). If employees' hearts are not in their work—if work activity conflicts with their value systems—then they will not feel empowered (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Second, competence reflects

individuals' beliefs that they have what it takes to do their job well. Without a sense of confidence in their abilities, individuals will feel inadequate, and they will likewise lack a sense of empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Third, self-determination reflects whether individuals see themselves as the origin of their actions (DeCharms, 1968). If employees believe that they are just following the orders of someone up the hierarchy, if they feel little autonomy or freedom, they will also lack a sense of empowerment (Wagner, 1995). Finally, a sense of impact reflects whether individuals feel as though they are making a difference in their organization. Without a sense of progression toward a goal, a belief that their actions are influencing the system, employees will not feel empowered (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In this way, each dimension adds a unique element to the overall construct of empowerment. No unidimensional conceptualization of empowerment by itself would capture the full essence of the concept. Rather than being antecedents or outcomes of each other, the four dimensions represent different facets of the empowerment construct.

In support of the multidimensionality of the empowerment construct, Spreitzer (1995a) found that all four dimensions loaded onto a single second-order factor. While the self-determination dimension had the strongest loading on the second-order empowerment factor, the other dimensions' loadings were of substantial magnitude as well. Her results support the contention that the four dimensions of empowerment combine to form an overall "gestalt" of the experience of empowerment in the workplace. In the section below, we review the literature on the four dimensions of empowerment as they relate to the anticipated outcomes of empowerment.

### Literature Review

We first draw on the genesis of the empowerment movement to develop the logic for why the three outcomes examined in this research (effectiveness, work satisfaction, and job-related strain) are relevant to the study of empowerment. Initial attention to notions of empowerment came about during the quality of work life movement in organizations (e.g., Blau & Alba, 1982). A key focus of the quality of work life movement was on enhancing employee satisfaction, improving intrinsic motivation, and helping employees to feel good about their work and jobs. Thus, *work satisfaction* was one of the earliest anticipated outcomes of empowerment. More recent attention to employee empowerment has come as organizations struggle to compete in an increasingly competitive external environment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). As organizations are downsizing complete layers of management, they are expecting the remaining managers to perform the work of those who have been laid off (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1993). Organizations seeking to survive in such an environment have turned to empowerment as a means of getting employees to work to their full potential. Thus, *effectiveness* on the job is argued to be a second key anticipated outcome of employee empowerment. And third, the relaxed controls of the new paradigm and the constant change of the external environment require employees who can cope well with ambiguity, complexity, and change (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Because a

sense of empowerment helps individuals to experience greater personal control over their own work, they are more likely to be better able to manage any accompanying strain. Thus, *job-related strain* is argued to be a third key outcome that will be influenced by employee empowerment. In the sections below, we review the literature with respect to the relationships between the four dimensions of empowerment and effectiveness, work satisfaction, and job-related strain.

### *Meaning*

***Effectiveness and satisfaction.*** While theory suggests a relationship between meaning and work performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), most empirical research has shown a stronger link between meaning and work satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Thomas & Tymon, 1994). An important precondition of work satisfaction is the degree to which an individual finds work personally meaningful (Herzberg, 1966). In contrast, low levels of meaning have been linked to apathy at work and hence lower levels of work satisfaction (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Drawing on Locke's (1976) notion of personal value fulfillment, work satisfaction results from the perception that one's work fulfills or allows the fulfillment of one's desired work values. Such value fulfillment is consistent with the meaning dimension of empowerment. The link between meaning and satisfaction is also implicit in the transformational leadership literature. Here, researchers have argued that transformational leaders create a sense of meaning for employees through the use of a strong vision, and by energizing and aligning employees to the task at hand. Ultimately, this sense of meaning results in increased motivation and satisfaction (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Given that previous literature has linked meaning most closely with value fulfillment and satisfaction, we expect that the meaning dimension of empowerment would be primarily related to the more affective outcome of work satisfaction rather than to work effectiveness.

***Strain.*** The relationship between a sense of meaning and strain is equivocal. Thomas and Tymon (1994) found no significant relationship between meaning and stress. Yet, Staw (1984), in a review of the literature, found cases where subjects experiencing either very high or very low levels of meaning reported heightened strain levels. While unchallenging, monotonous work without meaning can be stressful (Gardell, 1976), high job demands combined with low decision latitude can also be stressful (Karasek, 1981). More specifically, individuals who see their jobs as personally meaningful are likely to be more personally invested in their work, resulting in more potential for strain on the job, particularly when things do not go as planned. On the other hand, individuals who do not find their work meaningful are less likely to be personally invested in their work and are apt to be less strained when things do not go as planned. Thus, the literature suggests that the meaning dimension of empowerment may have both positive and negative effects on job-related strain.

### *Competence*

***Effectiveness.*** Locke (1991) argues that self-efficacy has powerful direct effects on performance. More specifically, Gist and Mitchell (1992), in reviewing

the literature on self-efficacy, or the experience of personal competence, cite numerous empirical studies reporting a positive relationship between self-efficacy and a variety of work-related performance measures: sales and research productivity, learning, achievement, and adaptability. Locke, Frederick, Lee and Bobko (1984) found that self-efficacy was positively related to future task performance even when ability and past performance were controlled. Bandura (1977) has shown that self-efficacy is positively related to initiating behaviors, effort, and persistence—all aspects of motivation which influence job performance. His research also indicates that low self-efficacy leads to avoidance of all but routine tasks, resulting in low levels of performance (Bandura, 1986). Contrary to these earlier studies, however, Thomas and Tymon (1984) found no relationship between competence and work performance when impact, meaning, and choice were controlled. Thus, while the literature is not completely consistent, we expect that competence dimension of empowerment would be related to effectiveness.

**Satisfaction.** While only indirect support linking competence, or self-efficacy, with satisfaction has been found, it makes intuitive sense that those who feel more competent about their work are likely to feel more satisfied about their work. Self-efficacy has been argued to enhance intrinsic interest, due to satisfaction from previous successes and feelings of personal causation (Gist, 1987). Similarly, Harackiewicz, Sansone and Manderlink (1986) found feelings of competence to be related to intrinsic motivation. Thus, while the literature is sparse, we expect that the competence dimension of empowerment would also be related to work satisfaction.

**Strain.** More direct research has been found linking competence, or self-efficacy, to strain. Those individuals who feel more competent about their abilities are less likely to feel significant strain on the job. Gecas (1989) reported that self-efficacy is a significant factor affecting individual functioning and physical and psychological health. Similarly, Thomas and Tymon (1994) found that competence is related to lower levels of strain in a sample of managers. Thus, once again, while the literature is sparse, we expect that a sense of competence would be related to less job-related strain.

#### *Self-Determination*

In a comprehensive meta-analysis summarizing the relationship of perceived control (including participation and autonomy) with a range of outcomes, Spector (1986) found strong evidence of positive associations with job performance, work satisfaction, and stress. Based on 101 samples from 88 studies, he reported a consistent pattern of findings relating perceived control to heightened job performance and work satisfaction, and decreased physical symptoms and emotional distress. Additional literature supports a relationship between the self-determination dimension of empowerment and each of the three outcomes.

**Effectiveness.** Both cognitive and motivational explanations link self-determination with effectiveness. From a cognitive perspective, employees generally have more complete knowledge and information about their work than their bosses and are thus in a better position to plan and schedule work and to identify and resolve obstacles to achieving optimal job performance (Cooke, 1994).

Employees come to understand which behaviors and task strategies are most effective and how performance might be improved (Lawler, 1992). Thus, job performance can be enhanced when employees are given autonomy over how their work is to be accomplished (Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Miller & Monge, 1986).

Self-determination may also increase effectiveness through enhanced employee motivation. Using a framework of intrinsic motivation, Thomas and Tymon (1994) found that employees who had choice regarding how to do their own work were found to be higher performers than those with little work autonomy (Thomas & Tymon, 1994). Similarly, individuals who had more control over work-related decisions were found to be rated higher on job performance by their superiors than those with less control over their work (Liden et al. 1993). Research on participative decision making has shown that employees who had a "say" in the introduction of new work procedures were more committed to their implementation and motivated to do what was necessary to make them work (Locke & Schweiger, 1979). Effectiveness through enhanced motivation has been linked to job autonomy by researchers investigating job characteristics as well (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Turner & Lawrence, 1965). Recently, in an experimental study of the mediated effects of participation on performance, Latham, Winters and Locke (1994) found that subjects participating in developing task strategies and setting performance goals were more motivated. Thus, theory and research suggest that the self-determination dimension of empowerment would be related to job effectiveness.

**Satisfaction.** Self-determination is considered a key component of intrinsic motivation which in turn is a critical determinant of satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Individuals who have more autonomy on the job are likely to experience intrinsic rewards from work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and are less likely to feel alienated (Seligman, 1975) or withdrawn (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Some researchers have proposed self-determination as a psychological need. According to proponents of this view, meeting the need for self-determination results in work satisfaction (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Greenberger et al. 1989; Parker, 1993). In empirical work, both Liden et al. (1993) and Thomas and Tymon (1994) found higher levels of personal control related to work satisfaction. Thus, we expect that the self-determination dimension of empowerment would also be related to work satisfaction.

**Strain.** Researchers who have examined the antecedents of job-related strain have frequently cited autonomy as an important mechanism for reducing strain, particularly when it results in control over potential stressors (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987; Sutton & Kahn, 1987). It is not necessary for control over the stressors to be exercised in order to reduce strain, but it is necessary for the individual to believe that the control can be exercised at any time (Parker, 1993). The mere perception that, if desired, one can remove the stressors often reduces strain even in the absence of any tangible action (Sutton & Kahn, 1987). The perceived predictability of effort-outcome linkages has also been cited as a factor contributing to employee experiences of strain (Bandura, 1986); increasing predictability through enhanced personal control leads to reductions in experienced job strain

(McGrath, 1976; Sutton & Kahn, 1987). Thus, we expect that the self-determination dimension of empowerment would also be related to reduced job-related strain.

### *Impact*

Though the impact dimension of empowerment has received less attention in the literature than the other dimensions, theory suggests that it should be positively related to performance and satisfaction, and negatively related to job-related strain.

***Effectiveness.*** If individuals believe that they can have an impact on the system in which they are embedded, that they can influence organizational outcomes, then they will be more likely to actually have an impact on their system through their work, and thus will be seen as more effective (Ashforth, 1989). In contrast, individuals who do not believe that they can make a difference, will be less likely to try as hard in their work, and hence will often be seen as less effective. Individuals who can get their ideas heard by others and who can influence the direction of their work unit are likely to be seen as more effective than those who have little influence on the direction their work unit (Ashforth, 1990). Thus, based on prior theory, we expect that the impact dimension of empowerment would be related to effectiveness.

***Satisfaction and strain.*** Ashforth (1989; 1990) found that a lack of opportunity to have an impact on the organization was negatively related to work satisfaction. Abramson *et al.* (1978) discussed the effects of universal learned helplessness, or the lack of an opportunity to have an impact. In experimental work, they found that universal learned helplessness resulted in dampened ability to recognize opportunities, reduced motivation, and depressed affect (Abramson *et al.* 1978). Martinko and Gardner (1982) report from a review of previous research that universal learned helplessness was related to depression, anxiety, frustration, and hostility. Finally, Thomas and Tymon (1994) found that impact was strongly related to enhanced work satisfaction and reduced stress, but not related to work performance. As such, while research evidence is sparse, we would also expect that the impact dimension of empowerment would be related to work satisfaction and reduced strain.

### *Summary of the Literature Review*

Except for the meaning dimension which is expected to be primarily related to one outcome (i.e., work satisfaction), the review of the literature suggests that the other three dimensions of empowerment are likely to some degree to be related to each of the specified outcomes. Thus, the literature in its present state does not adequately develop the logic for differential relationships between the empowerment dimensions and outcomes. This absence of logic for differential relationships may be at least partially attributed to the fact that most available theory or research has examined one or at most two dimensions of the empowerment construct in relation to the outcomes, rather than all four simultaneously. As a result, when only a subset of dimensions are addressed, the logic for the distinct relationships between the specified dimensions and the outcomes may become



muddled with the unspecified dimensions (e.g., some of the logic for the self-determination dimension may actually more appropriately apply to the impact dimension). Likewise, in empirical research, when all four dimensions are not examined simultaneously, those dimensions that are included in the analyses may inadvertently be picking up the effects of the dimensions not included in the analysis given that the dimensions are all conceptually and empirically related to one another.

Due to the lack of strong theory from the available literature, differential relationships are not specified *a priori* but rather left to an empirical test. If differential relationships between the four dimensions and the outcomes emerge, we will discuss the theoretical implications in the discussion section of the paper. In the research design described below, we discuss how we will formally examine the relationships amongst the four dimensions of empowerment and three key outcomes: effectiveness, work satisfaction, and strain.

### Research Design

#### *Samples and Procedures*

Data from two separate samples was collected for this study. Though used in prior research (Spreitzer, 1995a; 1995b; 1996), this data is used to examine a very different set of research questions (i.e., here we analyze the individual dimensions of empowerment as opposed to an overall construct of empowerment, and we explore these dimensions in relation to two affective outcomes, in contrast to the more behavioral outcomes that have been previously examined). Because the primary sample differs from the secondary sample on numerous dimensions (including organizational level, demographics, and type of organization), if the findings from the primary sample are found to be generalizable to the secondary sample, we can be particularly confident of our results. While we would not expect complete agreement given the differences in composition and differences in specific outcome measures used in the two samples, we would expect similar patterns to emerge.

**Primary Sample.** The primary sample was composed of mid-level employees from a *Fortune 500* industrial organization. Because Thomas and Tyman (1994) argue that psychological empowerment is likely to have its most profound influence in contexts that are less structured and more ambiguous, a middle managerial sample was chosen for the primary sample. Middle managers are interesting theoretically because their work varies from relatively structured to unstructured in a variety of contexts (Johnson & Frohman, 1989). Middle managers have access to more resources and information than lower level managers but less control over resources and information than upper level managers (e.g., Izraeli, 1975).

Survey data were collected from 393 middle managers who represent diverse units of the organization. The middle managers represented all functional areas, divisions, and company locations. The respondents were approximately 93% male, 85% Caucasian, and had a mean age of 45.9 years, a mean company tenure of 13 years, and a mean position tenure of three years. The respondents were

assured of confidentiality. Surveys were returned directly to the researchers for processing, and only aggregate results were reported back to the organization.

The data was collected at the beginning of a management development program. In one-week intervals spaced over a three-year period, all middle managers in the company participated in the program. Due to limited resources, the data for this study was collected only from the managers who participated in the program during the last part of 1991 and early 1992. As a check for selection bias (i.e., that the managers in this study's sample did not differ significantly from the group of managers who had completed the program but were not in the sample), mean difference tests across these two groups on managerial effectiveness and demographic variables were conducted. No significant differences were found.

This mode of data collection afforded a number of advantages. First, because the data was collected at the beginning of the program, the response rate was 100 percent. Second, performance data could be collected from the middle managers' subordinates to minimize common method variance. And third, because all middle managers participated in the program at some time over the three year period and because the date of their participation was randomly determined, selection bias was minimized. Selection bias can result when using data collected in conjunction with a training program as participants are usually selected for a specific reason (e.g., high potential or low performance).

**Secondary Sample.** A second sample of lower-level employees from an insurance company was used to assess the generalizability of the findings on the work satisfaction and strain outcomes in the primary sample (no comparable measure of individual effectiveness was available for this sample). Respondents were provided time on the job to complete the questionnaire and were assured of data confidentiality as the instruments were returned directly to the authors. The final sample included 128 employees who had been selected by a stratified random sampling technique, reflecting a 95 percent response rate. The sample was stratified by team membership and function within the team. These employees were largely non-managerial (83%), female (84%), and high school graduates (54%), with a mean age of 40 years and an average company tenure of 15 years. Thus, the demographic composition of this sample is very different from the primary sample.

### *Measures*

**Empowerment.** The four dimensions of empowerment were measured with multiple items; a complete listing of the items is provided in Spreitzer (1995a). Three items per dimension were employed, each using a seven-point Likert response format.<sup>2</sup> While additional items per dimension would be desirable, the three item measure has been shown to be stable and reliable. Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of each dimension. Sample items include "The work I do is meaningful" (meaning), "I am confident about my ability to do my job" (competence), "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job" (self-determination), and "My impact on what happens in my department is large" (impact). For both samples, these measures achieved appropriate levels of reliabil-

ity (i.e.,  $\alpha > .70$ ). In earlier work using the two samples, Spreitzer (1995a) demonstrated good discriminant validity among the four dimensions and established convergent validity in that the four dimensions contributed to an overall construct of empowerment in a second order confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL 7 (primary sample: AGFI = .93; RMSR = .04; NCFI = .97; secondary sample: AGFI = .87; RMSR = .07; NCFI = .98). All second-order loadings were significant indicating that each dimension provided important information in creating the overall empowerment construct. A scale for each dimension was created by taking the mean of the appropriate items.

**Effectiveness.** Given the diverse jobs represented, no common objective measure of effectiveness (such as appraisal data) was available. Therefore, a measure of perceived effectiveness (Denison, Hooijberg & Quinn, 1995) was used. Similar to Tsui's (1984) measure of reputational effectiveness, it assesses performance standards, overall success, comparison to peers, and performance as a role model. The five items employed a five-point Likert scale response format where higher levels indicate a higher level of effectiveness. The scale achieved an acceptable level of reliability in this sample ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ).

To avoid common method bias in evaluating performance (Felson, 1981; Frone, Adams, Rice & Instone-Noonan, 1986) and to provide the added benefit of enhanced reliability due to the availability of multiple respondents, subordinate assessments of managerial effectiveness were collected. Hogan, Curphy, and Hogan (1994) advocated the efficacy of subordinate evaluations of their managers because subordinates tend to work more closely with the middle manager than would his or her superior. In any event, Tsui (1984) found that superior assessments of managerial performance were highly consistent with subordinate assessments in a comparable sample of middle managers. Each of the middle managers selected a set of between four and seven subordinates who knew the manager well. An average of four subordinates responded for each middle manager (a low of zero subordinates and a high of seven subordinates). To ensure adequate reliability, cases were dropped from the sample if at least two of the middle manager's subordinates did not respond. The resulting sample size after dropping these cases and deleting cases with missing data was 344 respondents. The demographics of the subordinates who responded about the participating manager were not available because of concerns about anonymity, but based on organizational demographics at that particular level of the organization, the subordinates were slightly more diverse with respect to race and gender than the target sample of middle managers.

**Work satisfaction.** We sought a general measure of satisfaction with work. In the primary sample, as it is inappropriate to create a composite measure of the different components of the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson & Paul, 1989), we used the work satisfaction facet of the JDI (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969). Adapted for use in the Lifestyle Analysis Questionnaire (Eddington, 1990), this scale was comprised of 16 self-assessed questions which used a five-point Likert scale anchored on one end by "always" and the other end by "never". The measure asked "How often would you use each of the words/phrases to describe your work" and included items such as "fascinating,"

"routine," and "challenging." Items were recoded so that high scores were indicative of more satisfaction. The work satisfaction scale was found to achieve good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) in this study.

For the second sample, a measure of work satisfaction was taken from Camman, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1983). It had three items including "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." The scale achieved good internal reliability ( $\alpha = .83$ ). It was coded so that high scores were indicative of work satisfaction.

**Job-Related Strain.** For the primary sample, strain symptoms were measured with the Langner (1962) scale. It is an index reflecting three forms of strain symptoms: depression (6 items), anxiety (5 items), and somatic symptoms (6 items). The measure asks, "During the past 12 months, how often have you:" and is anchored on one end by "always" and on the other end by "never." Sample items include "felt nothing turns out the way you want it to?" (depression), "been bothered by nervousness (irritable, fidgety, tense)?" (anxiety), and "been troubled by headaches or pains in the head?" (somatic symptoms). All items were coded so that high scores were indicative of higher strain. The means of the three components were used to create an overall index of strain symptoms. The reliability of this measure was adequate ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ).

For the second sample, a measure of stress reported in Cook, Hepworth, Wall and Warr (1981) was used. We would expect that job stress would be closely related to job strain as strain is defined as the psycho-physiological outcomes of stress. This measure had four items including "I almost never feel stressed at work." The reliability of this measure was adequate ( $\alpha = .81$ ) and was coded such that high levels indicate more stress.

### *Analyses*

A set of standardized OLS regressions were conducted to examine the relationships between the four dimensions of empowerment and effectiveness, work satisfaction, and job-related strain. We remind the reader that different measures of work satisfaction and strain were used in the analysis of the secondary sample and that no measure of effectiveness was available for the secondary sample. As such, rather than providing formal cross-validation, we are providing replication with an independent sample using alternative measures. Separate regressions were run for each of the two samples. In addition, in the analysis of each work outcome, the additional variance explained by each dimension above and beyond the other three dimensions of empowerment was calculated to assess its value added in predicting that outcome.

Age, education, and gender were included as control variables in all of the regressions because they are likely to be related to the constructs included in the model. Kanter (1977) has argued that women may feel less empowered in organizations because of their token status. Older middle managers may feel less empowered because they tend to be perceived as plateaued in the organization (Ettington, 1992). Individuals with higher levels of education are likely to feel more empowered, particularly with respect to the competence dimension of empowerment. These demographic measures were included to "actively try to

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations<sup>a,b</sup>**  
Primary Sample

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	1.96	.19	n/ac									
2. Age	4.69	1.38	.17	n/a								
3. Education	5.90	1.56	-.12	-.16	n/a							
4. Meaning	5.99	.73	.04	.02	.06	(.87)						
5. Competence	5.75	.80	-.01	.18	.09	.40	(.79)					
6. Self-Determ	5.60	.76	-.10	-.01	.09	.44	.46	(.81)				
7. Impact	5.63	.80	-.03	.00	-.01	.50	.40	.59	(.88)			
8. Effectiveness	3.86	.54	-.09	-.01	-.02	.09	.21	.12	.19	(.93)		
9. Satisfaction	3.59	.42	.03	.05	.07	.35	.18	.25	.20	-.04	(.90)	
10. Strain	2.00	.45	.01	-.02	-.08	-.04	-.27	-.17	-.16	-.10	-.32	(.72)

Notes: Correlations above .11 are significant at the .05 probability level, above .14 at the .01 level.

a. Meaning, Competence, Self-Determination, and Impact are measured on 7-point Likert Scales. Performance, satisfaction, and strain are measured on 5-point Likert scales. Strain is measured with 41 yes/no questions with each yes response worth 2 points and each no response worth 1 point. Gender is measured with two categories (1 = female, 2 = male). Age and education are measured with eight categories.

b. Cronbach alpha reliabilities are reported in the diagonals.

c. n/a indicates that Cronbach alpha reliabilities cannot be calculated for single item measures including gender, age, and education.

**Table 2.** Regression Analysis: Multiple Dimensions of Empowerment Related To Three Outcomes Primary Sample

Independent Variable	Work Effectiveness		Work Satisfaction		Job Strain	
	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$ <sup>a</sup>	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Gender (Male)	-.09		.02		-.02	
Age (Older)	-.05		.05		.01	
Education (Higher)	-.06		.06		-.07	
<i>Empowerment Dimensions</i>						
Meaning	-.05	.00	.29***	.06***	.14*	.01*
Competence	.20**	.03**	.00	.00	-.26***	.05***
Self-determination	-.04	.00	.14*	.01*	-.05	.00
Impact	.17*	.02*	-.03	.00	-.09	.00
R <sup>2</sup>	.08		.14		.09	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.06		.12		.07	
F	3.90***		7.60***		4.85***	

Notes: a. Beta coefficients are reported. The change in R<sup>2</sup> indicates the incremental variance in each work outcome beyond that explained by the other three dimensions in a hierarchical regression analysis.

\*p<.05.

\*\*p<.01.

\*\*\*p<.001, two-tailed tests of significance.

conceptualize and measure those variables that may serve as potential confounds" (Mitchell, 1985: 196).

## Results

### *Primary Sample*

Descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables in the framework are presented in Table 1. Though multicollinearity is typically not problematic until correlations exceed 0.75 (Ashford & Tsui, 1992), we examined the extent of multicollinearity among the dimensions of empowerment. We calculated the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) for the equation (Neter, Wasserman, & Kutner, 1985). None of the VIF values exceeded 2.0 indicating that multicollinearity does not significantly affect the results (Myers, 1990). According to Myers, VIF values exceeding 10 are indicative of possible bias due to multicollinearity. The results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 2. Each of the regression equations for the primary sample achieves a significant F-value. The findings with regard to the four dimensions of empowerment are described below.

**Meaning.** As expected, the meaning dimension was found to be positively related to work satisfaction ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ). In addition, the meaning dimension explained significant variance above and beyond the other three dimensions in predicting work satisfaction ( $R^2 = .06, p < .001$ ). The lack of a relationship between the meaning dimension and effectiveness ( $\beta = -.05, n.s.$ ) is consistent with previous research suggesting no relationship. While theory on the relationship between meaning and strain was equivocal in previous research, the meaning dimension was found to be related to more job related strain ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ). A sense of meaning explained modest, though significant, variance beyond the other three dimensions in the job-related strain equation ( $R^2 = .01, p < .05$ ). These findings suggest that the principal contribution of the meaning dimension to the multi-dimensional perspective of empowerment is in the affective domain rather than the performance domain.

**Competence.** Consistent with prior research, a sense of competence was found to be related to higher levels of effectiveness on the job ( $\beta = .20, p < .001$ ) and to lower levels of strain ( $\beta = -.26, p < .001$ ). A sense of competence explained moderate additional variance beyond the other three dimensions of empowerment in predicting effectiveness ( $R^2 = .03, p < .01$ ) and job-related strain ( $R^2 = .05, p < .001$ ). There was no support, however, for the relationship between competence and work satisfaction ( $\beta = .00, n.s.$ ). These findings suggest that the competence dimension has strong performance implications and buffers the dysfunctional aspects of job-strain, but has little effect on feelings of work satisfaction.

**Self-determination.** Consistent with prior research, self-determination was found to be related to work satisfaction ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ). The self-determination variable explained a small amount of variance above and beyond the other three dimensions ( $R^2 = .01, p < .05$ ). No significant relationships were found linking a sense of self-determination with effectiveness ( $\beta = -.04, n.s.$ ) or strain ( $\beta = -.05, n.s.$ ). Thus, contrary to expectations, after controlling for the other dimensions of

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations<sup>a,b</sup>**

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	1.84	.37	n/ac								
2. Age	39.66	8.57	.16	n/a							
3. Education	3.69	.95	.56	-.02	n/a						
4. Meaning	6.13	.71	.08	.09	.04	(.85)					
5. Competence	6.12	.61	.09	.12	.06	.37	(.84)				
6. Self-Determ	5.20	.87	-.06	-.04	-.12	.37	.32	(.80)			
7. Impact	4.28	1.51	.34	.15	.24	.42	.15	.28	(.85)		
8. Satisfaction	5.64	.90	-.05	.06	.02	.60	.37	.33	.32	(.83)	
9. Stress	4.96	1.14	-.03	-.03	.07	-.02	-.19	-.06	-.10	-.31	(.81)

Notes: Correlations above .29 are significant at the .05 probability level, above .36 at the .01 level.

a. Meaning, Competence, Self-Determination, and Impact are measured on 7-point Likert Scales. Work satisfaction and stress are measured on 7-point Likert scales. Gender is measured with two categories (1 = female, 2 = male). Age is measured in number of years. Education is measured on a 6-point scale anchored on one end by "elementary school" and the other by "some graduate school".

b. Cronbach alpha reliabilities are reported in the diagonals.

c. n/a indicates that Cronbach alpha reliabilities cannot be calculated for single item measures including gender, age, and education.



empowerment, the self-determination dimension of empowerment was found to contribute to only the affective domain.

**Impact.** Finally, with regard to the impact dimension, consistent with prior research, a sense of impact was found to be related to effectiveness ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The impact dimension explained significant additional variance beyond the other three dimensions of empowerment in predicting effectiveness ( $R^2 = .02$ ,  $p < .05$ ). No support was found for the relationships between impact and work satisfaction ( $\beta = -.03$ , n.s.) or lower strain ( $\beta = -.09$ , n.s.). Thus, after controlling for the other three dimensions, the impact dimension contributes to the multidimensional perspective on empowerment largely in the performance domain.

#### Secondary Sample

While we would not expect identical results given the substantive differences in the composition of the two samples and the fact that different measures of work satisfaction and job strain were used in the secondary sample, we would have increased confidence in our results if we observed a similar pattern of results. Our confidence in the results obtained in the primary sample is enhanced by the largely consistent pattern in the secondary sample. Since no measure of effectiveness was available for the secondary sample, results can only be generalized

**Table 4.** Regression Analysis: Multiple Dimensions of Empowerment Related to Three Outcomes Secondary Sample

Independent Variable	Work Satisfaction		Job Strain	
	$\beta$	DR2	$\beta$	DR2
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Gender (Male)	-.18*		-.04	
Age (Older)	.01		.01	
Education (Higher)	.06		.14	
<i>Empowerment Dimensions</i>				
Meaning	.46***	.14***	.11	.01
Competence	.17*	.02*	-.04	.03
Self-determination	.08	.01	.01	.01
Impact	.14	.00	.14	.00
R <sup>2</sup>	.42		.06	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.39		.01	
F	12.17***		1.00	

Notes: a. Beta coefficients are reported. The change in R<sup>2</sup> indicates the incremental variance in each work outcome beyond that explained by the other three dimensions in a hierarchical regression analysis.

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed tests of significance.

across the two samples for the work satisfaction and stress outcomes. Descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables in the framework are presented in Table 3. The results from the regression analyses are presented in Table 4. The findings with regard to the dimensions of empowerment are described below.

**Work Satisfaction.** The results for the work satisfaction outcome are partially consistent with those from the primary sample. Consistent with the primary sample, the meaning dimension was by far the strongest predictor ( $\beta = .46, p < .001$ ) and explained significant variance above and beyond the other three dimensions ( $R^2 = .14, p < .001$ ). However, while in the primary sample the self-determination dimension also predicted work satisfaction, in the secondary sample, the competence dimension predicted work satisfaction ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ). Thus, the results from the secondary sample confirm the meaning finding in the primary sample but also provide support for influence of the competence dimension. Thus, the pattern is similar in that two dimensions predict work satisfaction in each sample, the strongest being the meaning dimension in both samples.

**Job Stress.** It is important to note that a measure of stress was used in the secondary sample, rather than the strain measure used in the primary sample. The fact that the overall regression equation for the stress outcomes did not achieve significance is not problematic, because we are trying to replicate a specific result with an established theoretical basis (Bobko & Russell, 1994). Except for the meaning dimension which was not found to be significantly related to the stress outcome, the pattern of results is similar to the primary sample. The competence dimension was found to be the only dimension related to strain ( $\beta = -.21, p < .05$ ) and explained a significant amount of increased variance ( $R^2 = .03, p < .05$ ). As in the primary sample, a higher level of competence was found to reduce stress. As in the primary sample, the self-determination and impact dimensions were not found to be significantly related to the stress outcome. As such, the findings are somewhat consistent with the primary sample.

### Discussion

Recent theoretical efforts at developing a valid definition of empowerment in the organizational studies literature (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) have suggested that defining empowerment unidimensionally is inadequate. The findings of this research suggest that the unidimensional perspective on empowerment will only explain a subset of variance in the anticipated outcomes of empowerment. This implies that it is only through the combined experience of empowerment on all four dimensions that each of the anticipated outcomes of empowerment can be achieved. Though at least one dimension of empowerment was found to be related to each of the outcome variables, no single dimension of empowerment was found to be related to all of the work outcomes examined. This pattern of results is robust in that it was found in both samples.

This differential pattern of results regarding the relationships between the empowerment dimensions and outcomes contrasts with the prior literature which generally did not specify differential patterns among the dimensions of empowerment and the outcomes. Because most prior research specified only one or

perhaps two dimensions of empowerment in relation to different outcomes, these analyses provide a more accurate assessment of how the four dimensions relate to the different outcomes. In this way, these findings begin to provide a substantive understanding of which empowerment dimensions really contribute to which outcomes. As such, *post hoc* explanations of the differential relationships between the four dimensions of empowerment and each outcome are provided below.

First, a sense of competence and impact were found to be related to *effectiveness*. Managers who saw themselves as having the requisite skills and abilities to make an impact in their work environment and who felt they were able to make a difference by their actions, were seen as high performers by their subordinates. In contrast, subordinate assessments of performance were less influenced by feelings of meaning or self-determination. These results suggest that subordinates care about whether their manager is competent and can have impact on the system; whether their manager has a sense of meaning or can operate autonomously matters little. Because the effectiveness measure was only available in the primary sample, future research must assess the generalizability of this finding to other contexts.

Second, in contrast to the results from the analysis of the effectiveness outcome, *work satisfaction* was most powerfully associated with the meaning dimension of empowerment. The critical nature of meaning for work satisfaction was found in both samples. Thus, the most powerful predictor of work satisfaction was found to be *different* from the key predictors of work effectiveness. Of less importance for work satisfaction were the self-determination dimension (in the primary sample) and the competence dimension (in the secondary sample). The impact dimension had no effect on work satisfaction in either sample.

We were surprised to find that the self-determination dimension was related to *only* this one outcome variable and *only* in the primary sample. This is particularly surprising given that the self-determination dimension is considered to be the *key* dimension of empowerment in much of the practitioner literature on empowerment (Byham, 1988; Macher, 1988) and earlier academic work on empowerment (Burke, 1986; Neilsen, 1986). Prior empirical research also found the self-determination dimension to have the strongest loading on a second order empowerment factor (Spreitzer, 1995a).

From a substantive standpoint, the marginal influence of the self-determination dimension may indicate that having autonomy to do your own thing is less important than having a sense of meaning (passion), competence (efficacy), and impact (making a difference) in the workplace. The increased focus on teams and cooperation in contemporary organizations may lessen the degree of autonomy many individuals experience in the workplace and thus may lessen its potential for influence on the outcome variables. From a methodological standpoint, the measure of self-determination used in this study (three items in the primary sample and only two in the secondary sample) is more specific and narrow than the measures used in prior research. For example, measures of personal control by Greenberger and Strasser (1991) and Greenberg *et al.* (1989) include the degree of one's desire for personal control as well as the degree of personal control experi-

enced. Thus, future research should use more encompassing measures of the self-determination in order to reconcile these contradictory findings.

And third, a sense of meaning (only in the primary sample) and a sense of competence (in both samples) were found to be related to *job-related strain* (or stress in the secondary sample). Contrary to expectations, job-related strain was not found to be related to either self-determination or impact, in either sample. As expected, a sense of competence was found to be negatively related to strain. Greater competence on the job is associated with less strain. These results suggest that those possessing the requisite skills may be buffered from experiencing job-related strain.

The finding indicating that the meaning dimension is associated with higher levels of strain must be interpreted with caution because prior literature has found the relationship to be equivocal and because the finding appeared in only the primary sample. Taken literally, this finding suggests that a greater sense of meaning is associated with increased strain. It suggests that individuals who experience a strong sense of meaning develop strong emotional attachments to their work, giving much of themselves on their jobs. Their self-identity and self-concept is likely to be intertwined with their work (Lawler, 1992). These individuals would have more at stake in their work because they take their work more personally. Consequently, it is likely that because of this strong bond to their work, individuals with a strong sense of meaning would experience more strain on the job. Thus, while a sense of meaning may lead to increased satisfaction on the job, it may also result in additional strain. If this interpretation is accurate it implies that job-related strain must be managed, for individuals who feel a strong sense of meaning in their work by simultaneously fostering an increased sense of competence.

An alternative interpretation is that the meaning dimension could be operating as a suppressor effect in the strain regression equation. Meaning is highly correlated with the competence dimension ( $r = .40$ ) but not with the strain outcomes ( $r = .04$ ). As such, its positive beta coefficient ( $\beta = .14$ ) in Table 2 is consistent with the presence of a suppressor effect. Meaning may be significant in the regression equation because it suppresses variance in competence that is irrelevant in predicting strain.

A second alternative interpretation of the meaning-strain relationship, given the equivocal prior research, is that the relationship between the two constructs may be curvilinear. In other words, while very low levels of meaning may create strain because individuals feel little personal connection to their work, very high levels of meaning may also create strain because individuals become almost obsessed with their work. We tested the possibility of a curvilinear relationship between meaning and strain by including an additional predictor variable in the regression analyses—the meaning variable squared. In the primary sample, the lack of significance of either meaning term indicated no curvilinear effect (see Table 5). In the secondary sample, however, meaning was found to have a slight curvilinear effect on the stress outcome. While the competence dimension was still found to be negatively related to stress, the original meaning variable was found to be marginally and negatively related to stress ( $\beta = -1.58$ ,  $p < .08$ , two-

**Table 5.** Analysis of a Potential Curvilinear Effect Between Meaning and Strain/Stress in Both Samples

Independent Variables	Job Strain (Primary Sample)	Job Stress (Secondary Sample)
	$\beta$	$\beta$
<i>Control Variables</i>		
Gender (Male)	-.05	-.02
Age (Older)	.02	.00
Education (Higher)	-.06	.13
<i>Empowerment Dimensions</i>		
Meaning	.55	-1.58+
Competence	-.25*	-.28**
Self-determination	-.05	-.02
Impact	-.13+	-.18+
Meaning Squared	-.40	1.76+
R <sup>2</sup>	.10	.09
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.08	.02
F	4.66***	1.35

Notes: a. Beta coefficients are reported.

+  $p < .10$ .

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed tests of significance.

tailed test), and the meaning variable squared was found to be marginally and positively related to stress ( $\beta = 1.76$ ,  $p < .06$ , two-tailed test). In plotting the curve of the regression equation for the meaning variables, the minimum point is found to take place at a meaning level of approximately 5.0. This suggests that increases in meaning below the value of 5.0 marginally decrease levels of stress, while increases in meaning above 5.0 marginally increase levels of stress. However, for the majority of the sample (given the mean of the meaning scale is about 6.0), stress increases as meaning increases. Once again, because the curvilinear result was found in only one sample, it must be interpreted with caution. Clearly, the meaning-strain relationship is complex, and additional research is necessary to clarify its true nature.

In sum, the empowerment dimensions are differentially related to the different outcomes. Two dimensions made their contribution primarily in the affective domain (i.e., meaning and self-determination), one dimension made its contribution primarily to the performance domain (i.e., impact), and one dimension contributed to both the affective and performance domains (i.e., competence).

These results provide support for a multidimensional conceptualization of empowerment, as no dimension by itself predicts all three outcome variables. Each dimension contributes to a different set of outcomes.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Though this examination of individual outcomes builds on and extends prior research on empowerment, it suggests a number of questions for future research. First, this research limited its focus to a key set of anticipated outcomes of empowerment. Though these outcomes are considered the three key criteria for evaluating individuals in work settings (Edwards, 1992), future research must examine the relationship of empowerment to other outcomes including behavioral outcomes, such as creativity and organizational citizenship, and to organizational outcomes, such as absenteeism, quality, or customer satisfaction (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). More sophisticated analyses, such as structural equations modeling, that examine the different dependent variables simultaneously, are also warranted.

Second, because of the cross-sectional design of the research, we cannot assess true causality, but rather associations between the variables of interest. It may be that the direction of causality is reversed; effectiveness, work satisfaction, or job-related strain may actually influence an individual's sense of empowerment rather the reverse. Future research must assess the employees' experience of empowerment at one point in time and then their effectiveness, work satisfaction, and strain at a later point in time.

Third, a relatively small amount of variance is explained in the dependent variables. It may be that more encompassing measures, such as Greenberger et al.'s (1989) measure of personal control, may explain more variance in the outcomes than the three-item measure of self-determination we employ. It may also be that the outcome variables examined in this paper are too general in focus. It may be that innovative or creative elements of managerial effectiveness may be more strongly related to empowerment than effectiveness in general. Future research must identify more specific outcome variables which relate to empowerment. For example, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) suggest that empowerment is related to the specific behaviors of initiative, resiliency, and flexibility.

### Conclusion

In summary, the four dimensions of empowerment together are modest, yet differential, predictors of the different anticipated outcomes of empowerment (effectiveness, work satisfaction, and job-related strain). While some dimensions contribute to the affective domain of empowerment, others contribute primarily to the performance domain of empowerment. No single dimension of empowerment is related to all three outcomes. These results demonstrate the importance of a multidimensional perspective on empowerment in achieving all of the anticipated outcomes of empowerment. Confidence in our findings is enhanced by the fact the results found in the primary sample are consistent with those in the secondary sample, a sample which is very different than the primary sample on organization

level, demographics, and organization type. In this way, this research goes beyond current research on construct validation of the empowerment construct by exploring the value added of its multidimensional conceptualization.

These findings have implications for both research and management practice. From a research perspective, multidimensional conceptualizations of empowerment must be employed when studying the nomological network of empowerment. Narrow definitions of empowerment are likely to provide limited explanatory power across a range of outcomes and are prone to omitted variable biases and misleading conclusions.

From a more applied perspective, practitioners that focus exclusively on a single dimension in their efforts to empower employees, are likely to have, at best, limited success. Some dimensions make their contribution in the affective domain while others make their primary contribution in the performance domain. According to Liden and Tewksbury, "a piecemeal approach to empowerment sends mixed signals throughout the organization and runs a high risk of failing to accomplish the intended outcomes" (1995: 13). The findings reported in our research indicate that organizations must create more complex empowerment interventions; in addition to providing decision making autonomy to facilitate self-determination, organizations must create a supportive organizational culture, design jobs that are meaningful to employees, provide training and development to enhance feelings of competence, and allow employees to have impact in their work unit through involvement in strategic goal setting and shared governance (Liden & Arad, 1995; Spreitzer, 1996).

This research makes some first steps in exploring the relationship between empowerment and individual outcomes. The hope is that by clarifying these relationships, more organizational scholars will embark on substantive research addressing the dynamics of empowerment in the workplace. Furthermore, the hope is that these research findings will provide guidance to business practitioners as they endeavor to achieve the outcomes of empowerment promised in the more applied literature.

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### Notes

1. By strain, we refer to the psycho-physiological outcomes of job stress which include anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms (Eddington, 1990).
2. However, only two self-determination items could be collected from the secondary sample.

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