Abstract

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Using a self-report online survey, this study gathered information from a total of 607 participants. By integrating self-determination theory with organizational support theory this study investigated the psychological processes involved in the relationship between an employee and the organization. Testing of structural equations models revealed three primary findings; 1) perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between managerial autonomy support and psychological need satisfaction, 2) employee satisfaction of the need for autonomy was a key determinant of employee motivation and well-being, 3) of the two motivational mechanisms proposed by organizational support theory (felt obligation and organizational identification) organizational identification was more important in determining employee commitment. The three basic psychological needs outlined by self-determination theory and managerial autonomy support play important roles in the relationships between perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, and employee motives for actions. Findings underscore the importance of employee autonomy at work and support the idea that self-determination theory adds a unique perspective that helps to further expand our understanding of organizational behavior. Future researchers are encouraged to continue to investigate the different relationships and outcome variables of felt obligation and organizational identification.
An Investigation of Perceived Organizational Support from a Self-Determination Theory Perspective

by
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Steven Alex Ramirez was born on October 30th, 1988 in Houston Texas. He is the son of Juan and Christina Ramirez and brother to Daniel Ramirez.
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An Investigation of Perceived Organizational Support from a Self-Determination Theory Perspective

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) proposed that the provision of material rewards such as pay, rank in the organization, job enrichment, and influence over policy result in employee perceptions of organizational support. The authors defined perceived organizational support as the employee’s global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values an employee’s contributions and cares about his or her well-being. Since this first work, research concerning this concept has boomed. Studies have found that employee perceptions of organizational support lead to beneficial outcomes for employees such as positive mood at work (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001) and job satisfaction (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Furthermore, employees who experience organizational support exhibit positive behaviors and attitudes towards their organizations such as increased job performance (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), fewer withdrawal behaviors and intentions (Eisenberger et al. 2001), and increased affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001; Shore & Wayne, 1993).

Organizational support theory states that employee perceptions of support initiate two motivation mechanisms within employees that drive employee behavior; organizational identification and felt obligation to repay the organization. Figure 1 depicts the pattern of relationships described by organizational support theory. The support employees perceive satisfies their socioemotional needs which leads them to identify with the organization. Also,
employees accept the support from the organization and then feel obligated to repay the organization. Due to their feelings of identification and obligation to the organization employees then develop favorable attitudes such as affective commitment.

However, when viewed from a self-determination theory perspective the two motivational mechanisms of identification and obligation are qualitatively different and could possibly lead to different outcomes for employees and organizations. Figure 2 is the hypothesized model of this study that reflects this possibility. Consistent with organizational support theory, I predict that supported employees will feel an obligation to repay their organization. Also, I predict that organizational support will satisfy employee needs that lead to organizational identification. Somewhat different from organizational support theory, however, I also predict that there are different outcomes for employees based on whether they experience felt obligation or identification. Specifically, employees who feel obligated to repay their organization will be more likely to experience normative commitment and employees that identify with their organization will be more likely to experience stronger affective commitment. Finally, employees with different types of commitments will then seek out different activities in life that reflect qualitatively different states of well-being.

This study contributes to the literature in three major and unique ways. First, it integrates organizational support theory with Deci and Ryan’s (2000) self-determination theory and brings a new perspective to the psychological processes involved in the relationship between employee and organization. Second, this study examines simultaneously the two proposed motivational mechanisms underlying perceived organizational support; felt obligation and organizational identification. Finally, this study
examines the possible different outcomes that result due to the different employee motivational mechanisms.

**Perceived Organizational Support: Simultaneous Obligation and Identification**

Organizational support theory maintains that when employees perceive support from the organization they become affectively committed to it because they feel obligated to repay the organization for its benevolence (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Based on social exchange theory (Gouldner, 1960), when an organization provides employees with desirable resources such as favorable job conditions, employees feel obligated to reciprocate with behaviors and attitudes that benefit the organization. Examples include maintaining a positive mood at work, expressing a desire to remain with the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) reducing their absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986), and increasing the extent to which they perform conscientiously on the job. The organization may also benefit from employees that are inspired to “give back” to the organization by discovering innovative ways to improve performance on the behalf of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990). In support of this explanation, Eisenberger et al. (2001) found that when employees perceived support from their organization they tended to develop higher levels of affective commitment, have higher in-role performance, and exhibit fewer withdrawal behaviors all due to the employee’s felt obligation to repay the organization. The first hypothesis of this study aims to replicate the relationship between perceived organizational support and felt obligation found by previous research.

*Hypothesis 1*: Employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be positively related to the extent that employees feel obligated to repay the organization.
Organizational support theory also proposes that employees identify with their organization as a result of the support they receive. Organizational identification occurs when employees incorporate aspects of their organization with their self-concept (Riketta, 2005). This occurs because favorable job conditions fulfill the socioemotional needs of employees. “In meeting socioemotional needs, perceived organizational support increases the attractiveness of the organization, resulting in greater organizational identification” (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011, p. 171). Friends and family fulfill the socioemotional needs of individuals in interpersonal relationships (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Willis, 1985). Organizational support can fulfill employee socioemotional needs at work by showing employees that they are cared for by their organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

Hill (1987) described three different socioemotional needs: the need for esteem which encompasses people’s desire for praise and recognition, the need for affiliation which includes people’s desire to receive affection and cognitive stimulation, and finally the need for emotional support which comprises people’s desire for consolation and sympathy when experiencing distress. Armeli et al. (1998) hypothesized that perceived organizational support would have a stronger relationship with job performance (operationalized by the number of DUI arrests and speeding citations issued by police officers) among police officers who required greater fulfillment of their socioemotional needs. Therefore, employees who required greater socioemotional need fulfillment would be more receptive to organizational support and in turn perform better on the job when supported. The results showed that the association between perceived organizational support and the number of DUI arrests made
and speeding tickets issued increased in individuals who felt their needs for esteem, affiliation, and emotional support were addressed at work.

**Integrating Self-Determination Theory with Organizational Support Theory**

Separate from the socioemotional needs defined by Hill (1987), self-determination theory outlines three different psychological needs termed competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Ryan and Deci (2000) defined a psychological need as an energizing state that when satisfactorily addressed yields in a person the desire to seek conditions conducive to health and well-being. The need for autonomy energizes people to engage in behaviors according to their own initiatives (deCharms, 1968). The need for competence energizes people to engage in behaviors that allow them to feel masterful in their environments (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006). Finally, the need for relatedness energizes people to engage in behaviors that allow them feel connected, understood, and appreciated by others around them (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006). Each of these needs carry unique features necessary for optimal human motivation and daily emotional well-being (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000).

Referring back to the socioemotional needs of esteem, affiliation, and emotional support described by Hill (1987), it is evident that there are some conceptual parallels between Hill’s socioemotional needs and self-determination theory’s basic psychological needs. I argue here that the need for relatedness overlaps somewhat with both of the needs for affiliation and emotional support and that the need for competence matches well with the need for esteem.
Hypothesis 2: Employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be positively related to their perceptions of the extent to which their need for competence is satisfied.

Hypothesis 3: Employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be positively related to their perceptions of the extent to which their need for relatedness is satisfied.

None of Hill’s socioemotional needs appear to overlap with the basic psychological need of autonomy, but based on the findings of previous research, I predict that a positive relationship exists between perceived organizational support and the extent to which one’s work addresses the need for autonomy. Eisenberger, Rhoades, and Cameron (1999) found a significant positive correlation between perceived autonomy and perceived organizational support, and I predict a similar relationship.

Hypothesis 4: Employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be positively related to their perceptions of the extent to which their need for autonomy is satisfied.

Further Satisfying Basic Psychological Needs with Autonomy Support

One way to further address employee psychological needs is for managers to create and maintain a work environment that supports employee basic psychological needs. To do so, managers must perform four specific behaviors: provide workers with meaningful rationales behind the performance of work tasks, provide workers with choices for how to perform those tasks, acknowledge the workers’ feelings during the performance of work tasks, and provide workers with timely feedback upon the completion of tasks (Baard, Deci,
& Ryan, 2004; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick & Leone, 1994; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Parfyonova, 2010).

As Hypotheses 2-4 state, I predict that employees who perceive that their organizations support them will also perceive that their organizations are addressing their basic psychological needs. Moreover, I predict that employees who perceive that their managers are supportive will perceive their organization as extremely supportive and will report elevated levels of psychological need satisfaction. The dotted arrows in Figure 2 display the following hypotheses and the predicted interactive effects between perceived organizational support and autonomy support on the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs.

**Hypothesis 5:** I predict an interaction effect between perceived organizational support and managerial autonomy support on employee need satisfaction. Specifically, when employees perceive higher levels of managerial autonomy support, perceived organizational support will have a stronger positive relationship with

- a. Competence satisfaction
- b. Relatedness satisfaction
- c. Autonomy satisfaction

**Separate Motivational Pathways**

Self-determination theory states that the level to which employees internalize and integrate work behavior into their own self-concept is dependent upon the extent to which they satisfy their basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). “Internalization refers to people’s taking in a value or regulation, and integration refers to the further transformation of
that regulation into their own so that, subsequently, it will emanate from their sense of self” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). The more employees internalize their work, the more likely it is that they will integrate work into their self-concept. Riketta (2005) explains that organizational identification results when an employee integrates different aspects of an organization into his or her self-concept. Based on this explanation, we can infer that employees who experience greater satisfaction of their basic psychological needs at work will be more likely to integrate different aspects of their work with their self-concept and subsequently arrive at a state of identification.

**Hypothesis 6**: The satisfaction of the need for competence will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification.

**Hypothesis 7**: The satisfaction of the need for relatedness will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification.

**Hypothesis 8**: The satisfaction of the need for autonomy will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification.

When employees integrate the work they perform for their organization with their own self-concept, they also develop an increasingly intrinsic orientation towards their work. Gagné and Deci (2005) proposed that employees with an intrinsic orientation towards work achieve favorable outcomes such as increased persistence, effective job performance, positive work-related attitudes, and organizational citizenship behaviors. The positive outcomes derived from intrinsically motivated employees, however, are not solely limited to
the organization. Gagné and Deci (2005) also contend that employees with intrinsic orientations toward work should also experience increased job satisfaction and enhanced psychological adjustment and well-being. Having an intrinsic orientation towards work means that employees are more likely to believe that they are the originators of their own behaviors and working because they have an inherent desire to do so.

On the other hand, when psychological needs go unaddressed at work, employees are less likely to integrate work behaviors with their own self-concept and therefore are less likely to identify with the organization. Consequently, employees who are unable to identify with the organization are more likely to develop an extrinsic orientation towards work behaviors rather than an intrinsic orientation. Employees who hold an extrinsic work orientation are more likely to experience less job satisfaction, lower job vitality, and greater intention to leave the organization (Vansteenkiste, Neyrinck, Niemiec, Soenens, De Witte, & Van den Broeck, 2007). Employees with an extrinsic orientation do not feel like they are initiators of their behavior at work and often perform their work because they feel obligated to do so (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

It is at this point that the two different motivational mechanisms proposed by organizational support theory differ from one another. Employees who feel obligated to repay their organization perform work tasks because they feel they must in order to reciprocate the support provided by the organization. This is reflective of an extrinsic orientation towards their work. On the other hand, employees who identify with their organization perform work tasks as initiators of their own behavior, which is reflective of an
intrinsic orientation towards their work. Depending on which motivational orientation employees experience, different outcome variables follow.

**Different Motivational Bases Lead to Different Commitments**

Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) defined commitment as “a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets.” (p. 301). The authors described three different types of commitment; affective, normative, and continuance. Each type of commitment arises from a different base, which in turn forms a different motivation for performance. Affective commitment develops when individuals identify with the organization and want to remain with the organization. Normative commitment on the other hand comes from a sense of obligation to continue a course of action or remain with the organization.

Although researchers have shown that felt obligation has mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and affective commitment in the past (Eisenberger et al., 2001), I believe that identification rather than obligation should mediate this relationship. I predict that employees who identify with their organization should experience more affective commitment and employees who feel obligated to repay their organization should experience more normative commitment. I make these predictions according to the different motivational bases from which the two different commitments develop.

As discussed earlier, employees who identify strongly with their organizations are more likely to develop a more intrinsic orientation towards work that produces a more innate desire to do their work. The base from which affective commitment forms involves personal involvement and identification with the target of commitment which match very closely to
the identification motivational base. On the other hand, the base from which normative commitment forms centers on one’s sense of obligation to an organization which matches more closely with an obligation motivational base. Wayne, Coyle-Shapiro, Eisenberger, Rousseau, and Shore (2009) wrote “Normative commitment as recently formulated by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), has moved away from the heavy emphasis on obligation to remain with the organization and to a more diverse set of obligations to the organization. Thus, normative commitment has grown more similar to organizational support theory’s concept of felt obligation to help the organization reach its goals.” (p. 266). With these conceptual overlaps in mind I make the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 9**: Organizational identification will have a stronger positive relationship with affective commitment than with normative commitment.

**Hypothesis 10**: Felt obligation to repay the organization will have a stronger positive relationship with normative commitment than with affective commitment.

**Hypothesis 11**: Felt obligation to repay the organization will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and normative commitment.

**Employee Well-Being outside the Workplace**

Although job satisfaction represents a form of employee well-being at work, employee well-being outside of the workplace due to perceived organizational support has received less attention in research. The self-determination literature describes two different types of human well-being known as eudaimonia and hedonia. People experiencing eudaimonia focus on seeking behaviors that help them find meaning and self-realization in life, are concerned with the degree to which they are fully functioning, and accept the
presence of pain if it enhances psychological growth and the process of living well (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2001). On the other hand, individuals experiencing hedonia focus on seeking behaviors for pleasure and comfort and the avoidance of pain (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Self-determination theory posits that individuals who experience satisfaction of the basic psychological needs are more likely to experience eudaimonia or a combination of eudaimonia and hedonia while individuals whose needs go unsatisfied are more likely to experience only hedonia (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Meyer and Maltin (2010) proposed that experiencing eudaimonia or a combination of eudaimonia and hedonia buffers employees from the negative effect of workplace stressors while employees who only experience hedonia are less resilient to the negative effects. The employees experiencing eudaimonia interpret workplace stressors as challenges for them to overcome in order to better themselves. Contrary to that, employees experiencing only hedonia interpret workplace stressors as pain or discomfort to avoid. Therefore these individuals will not push themselves to reach higher levels of success but instead fulfill only the minimum requirements to remain in their current position. Conversely, individuals experiencing eudaimonia will look for opportunities to improve their performance and continue to grow as individuals and employees by seeking out new challenging activities at work.

Meyer and Maltin (2010) also integrated self-determination theory with organizational commitment theory. Specifically the authors maintained that employees who experienced normative commitment to the organization would more likely experience hedonia and less likely to experience eudaimonia. Conversely, those who experienced
affective commitment would be more likely to experience a combination of both eudaimonia and hedonia. This study continues to integrate self-determination theory with organizational commitment theory by directly testing those propositions.

*Hypothesis 12:* Affective commitment will be positively related to the extent to which participants seek both eudaimonic and hedonic activities.

*Hypothesis 13:* Normative commitment will be positively related to the extent to which participants seek hedonic activities.

**Method**

**Participants and Procedure**

Participants volunteered for this study via a snowball recruitment technique similar to the one employed by Byrne, Kacmar, Stoner, and Hochwarter (2005) and later again by Stoner and Gallagher (2010). Undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a major university in the Southeastern region of the United States of America helped recruit participants from a wide variety of work environments and organizations. Students emailed the online survey link for this study to two other individuals who worked at least 20 hours per week. Of the 1,466 individuals who received the survey, 844 of them submitted responses for a response rate of 60%. Of the 844 responses, 772 of them were complete with no missing data, and 607 of those responses were from individuals with managers or direct supervisors. Those 607 individuals made up the final sample of the study. Due to the large sample of the study, I randomly divided the participants into either a primary sample (N=400) or a holdout sample (N=207). The purpose of the holdout sample was to
create a clean set of data to replicate exploratory model findings if necessary. Table 1 displays the demographic information for the primary and holdout samples.

**Measures**

The online survey for this study consisted of the following nine scales.

**Perceived Organizational Support.** I used the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) created by Eisenberger et al. (1986) which consists of 8 items. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item (e.g., “The organization I work for really cares about my well-being”) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The coefficient alpha reliability estimate equaled .89.

**Need Satisfaction.** Respondents reported their satisfaction with psychological needs (i.e., competence, autonomy, and relatedness) on a scale used by Sheldon and Niemiec (2006). Three items assessed each need for a total of 9 items. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Examples from each of the three scales include; “When at work I feel very capable of what I am doing” (competence), “When at work I feel free to do things my own way” (autonomy), “When at work I feel a sense of contact with people who care for me and whom I care for” (relatedness). The coefficient alpha reliability estimates for the competence, autonomy, and relatedness satisfaction subscales was .79, .79, and .90 respectively.

**Autonomy Support.** The autonomy support subscale of the Need Supportive Management Scale (NSMS) developed by Parfyonova (2010) measured participant
perceptions of managerial autonomy support. The autonomy support subscale contains 4 items. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item (e.g., “My manager allows me to choose how to do my work”) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for the subscale was .89.

**Felt Obligation.** A seven-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (2001) measured the extent to which employees felt obligated to repay the organization (e.g., “I feel a personal obligation to do whatever I can to help the organization achieve its goals”). Respondents rated each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for this scale was .79.

**Organizational Identification.** Respondents expressed the extent to which they identified with their organization with the organizational identification scale used by Mael and Tetrick (1992). The scale consists of six items (e.g. “When someone criticizes the organization I work for, it feels like a personal insult.”) rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The coefficient alpha reliability estimate of this scale was .83.

**Affective and Normative Commitment.** The affective and normative organizational commitment scales created by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) measured participant affective and normative commitment to their organization. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item (e.g., “I owe a great deal to my organization” [normative], “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization” [affective]) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Each
commitment scale consists of 6 items. The coefficient reliability estimates for the affective and normative scales were .84 and .86 respectively.

**Eudaimonic and Hedonic Motives.** The Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (HEMA) scale created by Huta and Ryan (2010) assessed the extent to which participants sought eudaimonic and hedonic activities in their lives. The activities individuals seek in their lives reflect the extent to which they are likely to value and experience eudaimonia and hedonia. The instructions for this measure read: “Whether or not you actually achieve your aim, to what degree do you typically approach your activities with each of the following intentions?” Participants then rated 9 total items, four eudaimonic items (e.g., “Seeking to pursue excellence or a personal ideal”) and five hedonic items (e.g., “Seeking pleasure”), on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=not at all, 7=very much). The coefficient alpha reliability estimates for the eudaimonia and hedonia scales were .82 and .76 respectively.

**Results**

I first conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on the entire sample (N = 607) to assess the fit of the measurement model. Model fit for this study was judged based on four separate fit indices; $\chi^2$ difference test, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Although the $\chi^2$ value for the measurement model was significant, $\chi^2(1068, N = 607) = 2831.57, p < .05, \chi^2/df = 2.65$, the other three fit indices were in acceptable ranges (CFI = .90, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .05, 90% C.I. = 0.050-0.054) showing that the measurement model fit the data well. Because all variables were self-report in nature, the possibility existed of
common method bias inflating the observed relationships in the data (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To address this issue I conducted a second CFA with an unmeasured method factor added to the measurement model. In this model, all items loaded onto their respective primary factors as well as the unmeasured method factor that did not correlate with any of the other factors. The fit indices showed that this second CFA with the method factor also fit the data well ($\chi^2(1019, N = 607) = 2382.47, p < .05, \chi^2/df = 2.34$, CFI = .92, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .05, 90% C.I. = 0.045-0.049) and in fact, fit significantly better than the original CFA, $\Delta \chi^2(49, N = 607) = 449.10, p < .05$. This second CFA provided the necessary information to estimate the percentage of variance in responses due to the trait, method, and random error components of the data (Williams, Cote, & Buckley, 1989). This method revealed that the 9 latent factors in the study accounted for 46.5% of the total variance in the data, 43.0% of the variance was due to random error, and the method factor accounted for only 10.5% of the variance.

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, reliability estimates, and intercorrelations of the primary sample. I tested the entire hypothesized moderated structural equation model (MSEM) displayed in Figure 2 on the primary sample. Specifically, this study followed the procedure used by Mathieu, Tannenbaum, and Salas (1992) and further detailed by Cortina, Chen, and Dunlap (2001) to test MSEM’s. This particular method involved five specific steps. First, I created composite scores for each of the two latent factors (perceived organizational support and managerial autonomy support) that constituted the latent interaction factor by averaging the indicators of each component factor and then standardizing those values. Second, the standardized scores for each factor were multiplied
together to produce the latent interaction factor indicator. Third, I fixed the factor loadings for each latent factor to its single indicator equal to the square root of the scale reliability and the residual for each indicator was set equal to the product of its variance and one minus the scale reliability. Fourth, I fixed the measurement properties of the interaction factor by setting the factor loading from the latent interaction factor to its indicator using the following formula from Bornstedt and Marwell (1978):

\[ r_{\xi_1, \xi_2} \cdot \xi_1, \xi_2 = \left[ \left( r_{\xi_1 \cdot \xi_1} \cdot r_{\xi_2 \cdot \xi_2} \right) + r_{\xi_1 \xi_2}^2 \right] / \left( 1 + r_{\xi_1 \xi_2}^2 \right), \]

where \( r_{\xi_1, \xi_2} \cdot \xi_1, \xi_2 \) equals the reliability of the interaction factor, \( r_{\xi_1 \cdot \xi_1} \) and \( r_{\xi_2 \cdot \xi_2} \) are the reliabilities of the components, and \( r_{\xi_1 \xi_2}^2 \) is the square of the correlation between the components that make up the interaction factor. As with the other two variables, the residual for the interaction factor indicator was set equal to the product of its variance and one minus its reliability. The fifth and final step of this method involved conducting two tests of model fit; one with and one without paths from the interaction factor and comparing the two to see which model fit the data better.

I tested the full MSEM using Mplus version 5.21. The results showed that the hypothesized model without paths from the interaction factor did not fit the data well; \( \chi^2(682, N = 400) = 2428.93, p < .05, \chi^2/df = 3.56, \text{CFI} = .80, \text{SRMR} = .12, \text{RMSEA} = .08, 90\% \text{C.I.} = 0.077-0.083. \) The levels for all the fit indices were outside of acceptable ranges. Similarly, the hypothesized model that included paths from the estimated interaction factor also showed poor fit; \( \chi^2(718, N = 400) = 2479.59, p < .05, \chi^2/df = 3.45, \text{CFI} = .80, \text{SRMR} = .12, \text{RMSEA} = .08, 90\% \text{C.I.} = 0.075-0.082. \) Additionally, a Likelihood Ratio Difference Test showed no significant difference between the fit of the two models (\( \Delta \chi^2(36, N = 400) = 50.66, p > .05). \)
Table 2 displays the fit indices for the two CFA models and two MSEM. Figure 3 displays the standardized path coefficients of the hypothesized MSEM.

In order to test the hypotheses in a model that more accurately represented the data, I explored alternative models. I tested all alternative models on the primary sample \( (N = 400) \) first and made changes to the originally hypothesized model based on theory and the modification indices provided by Mplus. Figure 4 displays the final alternative model along with the standardized coefficients for the estimated paths. The fit statistics for this model showed good fit; \( \chi^2(626, N = 400) = 1309.61, p < .05, \chi^2/df = 2.09, \text{CFI} = .92, \text{SRMR} = .07, \text{RMSEA} = .052, 90\% \text{ C.I.} = 0.048-0.056 \). In order to replicate the findings of the alternative model I tested the same model on the holdout sample. Table 3 displays the means, standard deviations, reliability estimates, and intercorrelations of the holdout sample. Once again the alternative model showed good fit of the data \( (\chi^2(626, N = 207) = 1034.77, p < .05, \chi^2/df = 1.65 \text{CFI} = .92, \text{SRMR} = .07, \text{RMSEA} = .056, 90\% \text{ C.I.} = 0.050-0.062) \). Figure 5 displays the standardized path coefficients for the alternative model tested on the holdout sample. The holdout sample replicated every relationship from the primary sample.

The most obvious difference between the derived alternative model and the hypothesized one is in regard to the role that managerial autonomy support plays. The hypothesized model predicted that managerial autonomy support moderates the relationship between perceived organizational support and need satisfaction. Specifically, Hypothesis 5 predicted that when employees perceive higher levels of managerial autonomy support, the relationship between organizational support and the satisfaction of all three needs would be stronger. The poor fit of the hypothesized MSEM and the individual path coefficients from
the hypothesized model (Figure 3) showed that no significant interaction effects existed. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Instead, the alternative model shows a completely different relationship between perceived organizational support and managerial autonomy support. The alternative model shows that perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between managerial autonomy support and employee need satisfaction.

A second noticeable difference between the hypothesized and alternative model were the roles of affective and normative commitment. Hypotheses 12 predicted that affective commitment relates positively to the seeking of eudaimonic and hedonic activities and Hypothesis 13 predicted that normative commitment relates positively to the seeking of only hedonic activities. The alternative model showed this was not the case, Figures 4 and 5 show that both types of commitments fit better as final endogenous variables of the model rather than leading to the well-being variables. Moreover, adding those relationships to the alternative model resulted in a significant decrease in model fit ($\Delta \chi^2(8, N = 400) = 42.31, p < .05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 12 and 13 were not supported.

Hypothesis 1 aimed to replicate the findings of past research (Eisenberger et al., 2001) which found that employee perceptions of perceived organizational support related positively to felt obligation to repay the organization. Figure 4 shows that the final model contained a direct path between perceived organizational support and felt obligation and the standardized path coefficient was significant and positive ($\beta = .53, $S.E. = .04, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 2, 3, and 4 predicted that employee perceptions of organizational support would relate positively to employee satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Figure 4
shows the standardized coefficients from perceived organizational support to autonomy
satisfaction ($\beta = .55$, S.E. = .04, $p < .05$), competence satisfaction ($\beta = .50$, S.E. = .05, $p < .05$), and relatedness satisfaction ($\beta = .51$, S.E. = .04, $p < .05$) were all positive and
significant showing that as perceptions of organizational support increased so too did
employee need satisfaction. These results seem to support Hypotheses 1-4; however, the
major changes made to the hypothesized model have important ramifications on the results.
Although the relationships in Hypotheses 1-4 were significant and in the predicted direction,
they were so with managerial autonomy support as the exogenous variable instead of
perceived organizational support as predicted. Therefore, as originally conceptualized,
Hypotheses 1-4 were not supported.

Hypotheses 6 and 7 predicted that competence and relatedness need satisfactions
would mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational
identification. The alternative model shows that the best fitting model does not include paths
from competence and relatedness satisfaction to organizational identification. To test this
formally, I tested another model and compared its fit to the model depicted in Figure 4. This
new model was identical to the alternative model from Figure 4 except that I added new
parameters from competence and relatedness to organizational identification which resulted
in a significant decrease in model fit ($\Delta \chi^2(8, N = 400) = 27.39, p < .05$). This is evidence
that competence and relatedness need satisfactions did not mediate the relationship between
perceived organizational support and organizational identification in the alternative model,
thus Hypotheses 6 and 7 were not supported.
Hypothesis 8 predicted that autonomy need satisfaction would mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification. Rather than conducting a hierarchical regression to test this hypothesis, I conducted an indirect effect analysis in order the leave the relationships of the entire model intact and therefore test the mediation hypothesis in the context of the entire model. The indirect effect analysis offers a formal test in structural equation modeling of the influence one variable has on another via one or more intervening variables. The analysis revealed that autonomy satisfaction mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification ($\beta = .15$, S.E. = .03, $p < .05$). A significant amount of perceived organizational support’s influence on organizational identification worked through autonomy satisfaction. However, much like the results regarding Hypotheses 1-4, this result is present in the alternative model, not the originally conceived model from Figure 2, therefore Hypothesis 8, as originally conceived, was not supported.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that organizational identification would have a stronger relationship with affective commitment than with normative commitment. Figure 4 shows that the standardized path coefficient from organizational identification to affective commitment equaled .93 (S.E. = .03, $p < .05$) and the coefficient from organizational identification to normative commitment equaled .58 (S.E. = .05, $p < .05$). The differences in coefficients alone seem to support Hypothesis 9 but a more formal test is required before making a final judgment. To test this hypothesis, I tested an additional model to compare its fit to the alternative model. The new model was identical to the alternative model except that the paths from organizational identification to affective and normative commitment were
constrained to be equal. If the model with constrained paths fits significantly worse than the model with freely estimated paths, this would be formal evidence that the path from organizational identification to affective commitment is significantly stronger than the path to normative commitment. The constrained model fit significantly worse than the freely estimated model, $\Delta \chi^2(1, N = 400) = 71.37, p < .05$. Therefore, Hypothesis 9 was supported.

Hypothesis 10 predicted that the relationship between normative commitment and felt obligation would be stronger than the relationship between affective commitment and felt obligation. However, the alternative model fit significantly better without the paths from felt obligation to normative or affective commitment ($\Delta \chi^2(4, N = 400) = 28.25, p < .05$). As originally stated, this hypothesis requires that felt obligation should predict both normative and affective commitment, however these relationships did not occur in the best fitting model, consequently the hypothesis was not supported. This same situation arose for Hypotheses 11. Hypothesis 11 predicted that felt obligation would mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and normative commitment but once again the best fitting model did not contain this pattern of relationships. Furthermore, adding those relationships caused a decrease in model fit ($\Delta \chi^2(5, N = 400) = 42.60, p < .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 11 was not supported.

Discussion

Organizational support theory states that favorable job conditions lead to employee perceptions of organizational support which cause employees to feel both identified with and obligated to the organization for which they work (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Although organizational support theory proposes that organizational identification leads to
many of the same outcomes as felt obligation, until now most of the empirical research investigating the motivational mechanisms behind organizational support has centered on social exchange theory and felt obligation. The past emphasis on social exchange theory has left our understanding of organizational identification somewhat limited because it fails to account for employees who identify with their organization because of an inherent desire to do so rather than as a way to reciprocate beneficial behavior. One possible reason for the lack of empirical work pertaining to the role of organizational support on organizational identification is the absence of an established theory of motivation to help guide this research. To fill that void, this study tested a model of the organizational support process that integrated self-determination theory with social exchange theory to further our understanding of effects of organizational support on employee motivation.

Three unique features in the hypothesized model expand upon the model traditionally put forth by organizational support theory. First, the basic psychological needs of self-determination theory (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) enhance Hill’s (1987) presentation of socioemotional needs. Second, I hypothesized that managerial autonomy support would moderate the relationship between perceived organizational support and need satisfaction. Finally, I predicted that employee felt obligation and organizational identification would lead to different outcomes, namely different forms of organizational commitment. The results showed that my hypothesized model did not fit the data. Most notably, there were no interactive effects between perceived organizational support and managerial autonomy support on need satisfaction. In other words, differing levels of
managerial autonomy support did not affect the relationship between organizational support and need satisfaction.

Although the hypothesized model as a whole did not fit, many of the specific relationships between the variables were significant and consistent with self-determination theory. First, employees who perceived higher levels of organizational support tended to also report higher levels of basic psychological need satisfaction and higher levels of felt obligation to repay their organization. Second, employees who had their needs satisfied also tended to identify with their organization. Before this study, there was scant empirical evidence directly investigating the relationships between organizational support, need satisfaction, and organizational identification. Third, identified employees tended to experience stronger feelings of affective commitment relative to normative commitment. Organizational support theory has traditionally proposed that both these motivational mechanisms lead to affective commitment (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011). However, based on self-determination theory I predicted obligation and identification would have different outcomes. The current results support that assertion. Finally, employees who felt affectively committed to their organization tended to pursue both hedonic and eudaimonic activities in life. These results showed that the addition of self-determination theory to organizational support theory expands our understanding of employee reactions to organizational support.

In light of the encouraging preliminary evidence from the hypothesized model, I explored alternative models that better fit the data. Several findings from the alternative model are consistent with self-determination theory and are of note. The first important
finding is that managerial autonomy support functioned as an antecedent of perceived organizational support rather than a moderator of its effects on need satisfaction as originally proposed. Perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between managerial autonomy support and all three need satisfactions. I propose that participants interpreted the autonomy support from their managers as signals that the organizations for which they worked valued them as employees and cared about their well-being. This finding supports one of the propositions of organizational support theory as well. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found that one of the antecedents of organizational support was supervisor support; however, conceptualizing managerial autonomy support from the perspective of self-determination theory adds an explanation not offered in previous research.

Specifically, the often-used Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) asks employees to estimate the general level of care they believe their manager/supervisor has for them (e.g., “My supervisor really cares about my well-being”) without much detail into specific managerial behaviors. The creators of the Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support created its items by taking the items from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support and replacing the word “organization” with “supervisor”. By constructing the items in this manner the measure fails to address the more specific behaviors that managers or supervisors perform to support their employees. Although the measure functions well in capturing the general nature of the relationship, it is lacking in other areas of the criterion.

On the other hand, the Need Supportive Management Scale (Parfyonova, 2010) used in this study asks employees about behaviors that a manager or supervisor performs to
support their employees (e.g., “My manager allows me to choose how to do my work”). The more specific items in the Need Supportive Management Scale expand and capture the criterion space of managerial/supervisor support more accurately than before by addressing specific managerial behaviors managers can perform to support their employees. Therefore, not only does the Need Supportive Management Scale derived from self-determination theory more accurately capture the construct of manager/supervisor support, it is also more practically useful for managers and organizations.

A second important finding from the alternative model was that employee perceptions of organizational support lead to the satisfaction of all three basic psychological needs outlined by self-determination theory. Past research linking perceived organizational support with need satisfaction examined Hill’s (1987) socioemotional needs. As discussed earlier in this paper, the need for competence and relatedness as outlined by self-determination theory overlapped conceptually with the socioemotional needs examined in the past. The results from both models here show that the basic psychological needs defined by self-determination theory integrate very well with organizational support theory, and more importantly, they do so with an additional dimension rarely included in studies of perceived organization support in the past; the need for autonomy.

A central tenant of self-determination theory is the importance of autonomy satisfaction in determining individual well-being and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Of all three need satisfactions, only autonomy satisfaction predicted any other variable in the alternative model. First, only autonomy satisfaction mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification. Employee feelings of
competence or relatedness in their work environment were not as important in helping employees to integrate aspects of their organization with their self-concept. Furthermore, only autonomy need satisfaction predicted the extent to which employees sought out eudaimonic and hedonic activities in life. These results support the propositions of self-determination theory and join other work from areas such as job design, worker empowerment and engagement, organizational justice, and participative management in showing the importance of employee feelings of autonomy while at work (Gagné and Bhave, 2011).

The final notable finding in this study is that organizational identification predicted employee commitment but felt obligation did not. This is somewhat divergent from past research findings based on the propositions of organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Although perceived organizational support did lead to both felt obligation and organizational identification, only identification predicted employee commitment in this study. These results support one of the main assertions of this study that these two motivational mechanisms lead to different outcomes, in this case commitment, based on their qualitative differences. Without the incorporation of self-determination theory these differences would go unrecognized. If future research replicates the findings of this study, the dominant role that social exchange theory has had in explaining organizational support needs to be qualified.

Based on the evidence of this study, self-determination theory makes several important expansions to organizational support theory. First, managerial autonomy support promotes specific behaviors that are conducive to employee commitment and well-being.
Second, the inclusion of the basic psychological needs shows the importance of satisfying an employee’s need for autonomy in determining motivation and well-being. Finally, self-determination theory helps to clarify the differences between felt obligation and organizational identification and the possible different outcomes that result from each. In conjunction with the ample empirical evidence supporting the social exchange theory aspect of organizational support, this study helps form a more complete understanding of psychological processes underlying organizational support theory by investigating the processes involved in organizational identification.

As with any study, it is important to think about possible alternative explanations for the present results, the study’s limitations, and ways in which future research can build upon and improve it. One possible explanation for the findings of this study could be the way in which the data were collected. I administered surveys to a wide variety of employees from a wide variety of industries without any knowledge of their organizations’ current practices or policies regarding employee support. The survey asked employees to report the current levels of organizational support as they perceived them at that particular time. Because the survey asked about general perceptions of support, not about specific organizational policies or practices, employees determined their perceptions of organizational support based on their own conceptions of it. This potentially could have led employees to rely on the most salient and proximal indicator of organizational support; their relationship with their manager or supervisor. Perhaps drawing on one’s relationship with a manager primed employees to report the attitudes found in this study and attribute the support from their manager as indications of organizational support. On the other hand, if instead employees responded to
the same survey immediately after receiving some material organizational reward, I might expect different results. Specifically, employees might report higher levels of felt obligation to repay the organization because the newly supplied material rewards would be the most salient indicators of organizational support.

Within the added context of self-determination theory, a new question for research on perceived organizational support emerges; what conditions lead employees to feel obligated to repay their organizations versus identified with their organizations as a result of organizational support? Answers may lie in the different antecedents of perceived organizational support and whether or not those antecedents can fulfill an employee’s need for autonomy. The meta-analysis conducted by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found three distinct antecedents of perceived organizational support; supervisor support, fairness, and organizational rewards. The current results replicated the findings of past research in illustrating the importance of managerial support in helping employees feel autonomous while at work (Baard et al., 2004; Parfyonova, 2010). The second antecedent, fairness, may also play a role in helping employees feel autonomous and identified with their organization. Employees expect the policies of their organizations to be just and they expect their managers to treat them fairly and respectfully (Greenberg, 2009). Therefore, when the actual job fulfills those expectations employees know that they will receive fair treatment based on their behavior which allows them to feel comfortable and more in control of their own outcomes at work. The final antecedent, organizational rewards, may lack the empowering aspect of autonomy support or fairness. Self-determination theory proposes that extrinsic rewards control employees and limit their autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Furthermore,
research has empirically demonstrated that extrinsic rewards have negative effects on intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Therefore, extrinsic material rewards may undermine employee feelings of autonomy, making it more likely for them to report higher levels of felt obligation to repay the organization rather than identification. Future research should simultaneously examine all to discover which plays the most important role in determining perceptions of organizational support in different contexts.

**Conclusions**

Although researchers have conducted large amounts of research on organizational support theory, the current study is the only one to this point to approach the topic from the perspective of self-determination theory. I expanded upon the model put forth by organizational support theory by integrating self-determination theory and showing that managerial autonomy support led to increased perceptions of organizational support, which in turn satisfied employee competence, relatedness, and autonomy needs. Also, within the context of a single analysis, the results provide preliminary evidence into how the motivational mechanisms of felt obligation and organizational identification have differential relationships with employee commitment. Results showed that organizational identification is the more important of the two employee motivational mechanisms but I encourage future researchers to continue to simultaneously examine these mechanisms further. Finally, this study showed the importance that autonomy satisfaction has in determining employee motivation and well-being. Employee autonomy satisfaction plays an important role in many other areas of the organizational behavior literature such as engagement, empowerment,
justice, participative management, and job design. This study adds empirical evidence regarding autonomy’s role in organizational support theory.
References


Table 1
Descriptive Information for the Primary and Holdout Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary Sample (N = 400)</th>
<th>Holdout Sample (N = 207)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>169 (42%)</td>
<td>86 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>231 (58%)</td>
<td>121 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>44.47 (SD = 11.54)</td>
<td>44.83 (SD = 10.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean hours worked per week</td>
<td>42.32 (SD = 10.93)</td>
<td>42.83 (SD = 10.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean months worked at current job</td>
<td>111.87 (SD = 110.67)</td>
<td>109.57 (SD = 107.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Utilities/Construction</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale/Retail Trade</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
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<td>Information</td>
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<td>1.9%</td>
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<td>Finance/Insurance</td>
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<td>8.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional/Technical Services</td>
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<td>8.2%</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Health Care</td>
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<td>Accommodation/Food Services</td>
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<td>3.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal, State, or Local Government</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perceived Organizational Support</td>
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<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. Managerial Autonomy Support</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Autonomy Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Competence Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Relatedness Satisfaction</td>
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<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Organizational Identification</td>
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<td>1.02</td>
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<td>7. Felt Obligation</td>
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<td>8. Affective Commitment</td>
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<td>9. Normative Commitment</td>
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<td>10. Hedonic Well-Being</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>1.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Eudaimonic Well-Being</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>0.81</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Coefficient alpha reliability estimates are on the diagonal.

$p < .05.$
Table 3
*Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for Structural Equation Models*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\chi^2/df$</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>90% CI</th>
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<td>Measurement*</td>
<td>1068</td>
<td>2831.57</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.050, 0.054</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measurement* with CMF</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>2382.47</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.045, 0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized without interaction**</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>2428.93</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.077, 0.083</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypothesized with interaction**</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>2479.59</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.075, 0.082</td>
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*Note.* All $\chi^2$ values significant at $p < .05$. CMF = common method factor.
* Tested on the entire sample ($N = 607$)
** Tested on the primary sample ($N = 400$)
Table 4
Means, Standard Deviations, Reliability Estimates, and Intercorrelations of the Holdout Sample (N = 207)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Perceived Organizational Support</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Managerial Autonomy Support</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.56*</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Autonomy Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.59*</td>
<td>.69*</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Competence Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>.64*</td>
<td>.79</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Relatedness Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.52*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
<td>.73*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
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<td>6. Organizational Identification</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.61*</td>
<td>.51*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
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<td>.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Felt Obligation</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.52*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>.45*</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.60*</td>
<td>.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Affective Commitment</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.68*</td>
<td>.48*</td>
<td>.54*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>.56*</td>
<td>.75*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Normative Commitment</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.35*</td>
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<td>.33*</td>
<td>.64*</td>
<td>.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Hedonic Well-Being</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.26*</td>
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<td>.20*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Eudaimonic Well-Being</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.38*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.82</td>
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</table>

Note. Coefficient alpha reliability estimates are on the diagonal. *p < .05.
Figure 1. A process model of the effects of perceived organizational support on affective commitment.
Figure 2. The hypothesized moderated structural equation model.
Figure 3. Moderated structural equation model results. All values in the figure are standardized path coefficients. Not depicted in the figure are the standardized path coefficients for the three need satisfactions on the interaction factor (Perceived Organizational Support*Managerial Autonomy Support). Those coefficients are as follows: competence = .05, relatedness = .05, autonomy = .00. All three p values for the paths from the interaction are > .05.

*p < .05.
Figure 4. Alternative structural equation model results for primary sample. $N = 400$. $^*p < .05$. 

Managerial Autonomy Support $\rightarrow$ Perceived Organizational Support $\rightarrow$ Autonomy Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Competence Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Relatedness Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Felt Obligation $\rightarrow$ Organizational Identification $\rightarrow$ Affective Commitment $\rightarrow$ Normative Commitment $\rightarrow$ Hedonia $\rightarrow$ Eudaimonia
Figure 5. Alternative structural equation model results for holdout sample. $N = 207$.

*p < .05
Appendix
Fully Supporting Employees: Augmenting the Effects of Perceived Organizational Support
with Managerial Autonomy Support

The relationship between an organization and its employees is at the heart of the concept known as perceived organizational support. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) developed and defined perceived organizational support as the employee’s global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values the employee’s contributions and cares about his or her well-being. If organizations provide their employees with favorable job conditions employees will most likely develop the perception that the organization cares about their well-being (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Perceived organizational support leads to beneficial outcomes for employee well-being such as positive mood at work (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001) and job satisfaction (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Furthermore, employee perceived organizational support is also associated with beneficial outcomes for organizations. Employees who experience organizational support exhibit positive behaviors and attitudes towards their organizations such as increased job performance (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), fewer withdrawal behaviors (Eisenberger et al. 2001), and affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001; Shore & Wayne, 1993).

Organizational Support Theory states that employee identification with the organization occurs due to employee socioemotional need satisfaction and identification then leads to outcome behaviors and attitudes such as affective commitment (Armeli et al., 1998).
In conjunction with this sense of identification, Organizational Support Theory also states that the effect of organizational support on outcomes such as affective commitment also works through employee felt obligation to repay the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Figure 1 depicts this pattern of relationships. According to Organizational Support Theory, both identification and felt obligation lead to the same outcomes. I propose however, that these two different mindsets lead to somewhat different outcomes that work in conjunction with one another to benefit the organization and its employees. Therefore, in order for organizations to fully benefit from providing support to their employees, employees must experience both a felt obligation to repay the organization as well as identification with that organization.

Research has shown that employee felt obligation does account for some of the outcome behaviors described by organizational support theory and Social Exchange theory explains the psychological processes involved in those relationships (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). On the other hand, there is no designated theory to explain the psychological processes involved in the identification aspect of organizational support theory. This study will use concepts from Self-Determination Theory to explain the processes involved in the identification aspect of perceived organizational support. Specifically I will integrate the concept known as autonomy support. Autonomy supportive is a set behaviors that managers can perform to fulfill the basic psychological needs of their employees. Specifically, those behaviors include; providing employees with meaningful rationales behind the performance of work tasks, providing choices to employees for how to perform work tasks, acknowledging employee feelings during the performance of work tasks, and
providing employees with useful feedback. I propose that when employees perceive low levels or a lack of autonomy support with organizational support, employees will report lower levels of need satisfaction. Conversely, when employees perceive higher levels of autonomy support in addition to organizational support, employees will report greater levels of need satisfaction. The greater satisfaction of psychological needs will then lead employees to more fully identify with their organization and develop the positive attitudes and behaviors associated with organizational identification. The theoretical background of Self-Determination Theory explains the processes involved in employees identifying with their organization and more importantly, autonomy support provides managers and organizations with concrete techniques to better address the needs of their employees in order to augment the total effects of perceived organizational support.

Figure 2 displays the proposed relationships between the constructs of interest in this study. Each oval represents a construct that I will examine using a self-report survey method. This study contributes to the organizational support theory literature in four major unique ways. First, it combines organizational support theory with concepts from Deci and Ryan’s (2000) Self-Determination Theory. Specifically, this study includes relationships associated with the three basic psychological needs defined by Self-Determination Theory (competence, relatedness, and autonomy) along with the concept of autonomy support. Second, this study examines the two proposed psychological processes underlying perceived organizational support simultaneously; felt obligation and organizational identification. Third, this study examines the relationships of perceived organizational support with affective organizational commitment and normative organizational commitment in the same study. Finally, this study
addresses employee well-being outside of the workplace by investigating relationships between perceived organizational support and hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The former type of well-being focuses on the relatively short-term attainment of pleasure and the latter focuses more on the longer term process of living well (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008).

The solid arrows in Figure 2 display the pathway I refer to as the obligation pathway. In line with Organizational Support Theory, I predict perceived organizational support will lead to a felt obligation to repay the organization. In contrast with Organizational Support Theory however, I then predict that felt obligation will be more strongly associated with normative commitment than affective commitment and ultimately lead to a positive relationship with hedonic well-being. The dotted arrows in Figure 2 display the identification mindset pathway, produced when the basic psychological needs of employees are satisfied. Perceived organizational support in contexts where managers are more autonomy supportive will relate more strongly with the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs than when employees perceive their manager as being less autonomy support. Consequently, the fuller satisfaction of basic psychological needs is then associated with organizational identification and less associated with felt obligation. Employees that identify with their organization then experience relatively stronger affective commitment and weaker normative commitment and ultimately a combination of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

The investigation of these two motivational pathways is important not only for employees but for organizations as well. Study findings could have important practical implications for managers of organizations that believe that they are now providing employees with all the support they need when perhaps there is more that they could be
doing. In the following pages I will expound upon the constructs displayed in Figure 2 and the proposed relationships between them. I will begin first with a summary of the concept of perceived organizational support. Then I will address some of the conceptual overlap between Organizational Support Theory and Self-Determination Theory. Then I will describe the concept of autonomy support and how individual psychological need satisfaction can be enhanced when organizational support is combined with an autonomy supportive context. Finally, I will describe some of the different outcomes of the felt obligation and identification mindsets and why without the augmenting effects of autonomy support, organizational identification is less likely which will hinder organizational and employee well-being.

**Perceived Organizational Support: Simultaneous Identification and Obligation**

Eisenberger et al. (1986) were the first to propose that material rewards such as pay, rank in the organization, job enrichment, and influence over policy would signal organizational support to employees. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) conducted a meta-analysis demonstrating that favorable job conditions that lead to perceived organizational support fall under three different categories; organizational rewards, fairness, and supervisor support. The organizational rewards category consists of material rewards, promotions, recognition and other rewards from the organization that employees see as supportive. The fairness category consists of the three different organizational justice categories of procedural, interactional, and distributive justice the employee perceives in the work environment. Procedural justice is concerned with the way in which managers or organizations make decisions, interactional justice is concerned with the interpersonal relationship between the employees and their supervisors, and distributive justice is
concerned with the distributions of resources throughout the organization (Greenberg, 2009). Finally the supervisor support category reflects the quality of relationship that employees perceive they have with their supervisors. Organizations that leverage each of these three categories should increase the amount of organizational support their employees perceive (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). Compared to the first two categories, the supervisor support category is not as fleshed out in the literature. The measure used to assess supervisor support does not specifically address what actions supervisors or managers take to support their employees; autonomy support however does describe specific supportive behaviors.

Managers or supervisors are directly responsible for providing autonomy support to their employees therefore, the current study will further contribute to the Organizational Support Theory by identifying specific behaviors managers can perform to address employee needs and that without autonomy support, perceived organizational support may not fully address employee psychological needs.

Organizational Support Theory maintains that the beneficial outcomes of perceived organizational support result due to Social Exchange Theory. Social Exchange Theory states that the exchange of desirable resources from one person to another causes the recipient to feel an obligation to reciprocate this behavior to the other by also providing desirable resources (Gouldner, 1960). To repay the organization for supplying favorable job conditions, employees reciprocate with favorable behaviors and attitudes that benefit the organization. For example, employees “repay” the organization with affective commitment, a positive mood at work, and a desire to remain with the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Felt obligation to repay the organization also reduces employee absenteeism
(Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), increases employee conscientiousness on the job, and increases innovation on behalf of the organization (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, Eisenberger et al. (2001) used self-report survey methodology to find that employee felt obligation fully mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and affective commitment, organizational spontaneity, in-role performance, and withdrawal behavior. The first hypothesis of this study aims to replicate the relationship between perceived organizational support and felt obligation found by previous research;

Hypothesis 1: Employees’ perception of perceived organizational support will be positively related to employees’ felt obligation to repay the organization.

Much like the support received from friends and family fulfills socioemotional needs in interpersonal relationships (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Willis, 1985), Organizational Support Theory states that the favorable job conditions that signal perceived organization support to employees can fulfill socioemotional needs at work (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). For example, Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Lynch (1998) proposed that perceived organizational support fulfilled several of the socioemotional needs described by Hill (1987). Hill (1987) described three different needs: the need for esteem which encompasses people’s desire for praise and recognition, the need for affiliation which includes people’s desire to receive affection and cognitive stimulation, and finally the need for emotional support which comprises people’s desire for consolation and sympathy when experiencing distress. Armeli et al. (1998) hypothesized that perceived organizational support would have a stronger relationship with job performance among police officers (operationalized by the number of
DUI arrests and speeding citations issued by police officers) for those employees who required greater fulfillment of their socioemotional needs. In other words, employees who required greater socioemotional need fulfillment would be more receptive to organizational support and therefore perform better on the job when supported. The results obtained supported their hypothesis. The association between perceived organizational support and the number of DUI arrests made and speeding tickets issued increased in individuals with greater needs for esteem, affiliation, and emotional support.

Addressing employee socioemotional needs makes it easier for employees to identify with the organization. “In meeting socioemotional needs, perceived organizational support increases the attractiveness of the organization, resulting in greater organizational identification” (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011, p. 171). Organizational identification is the process of incorporating aspects of an organization with one’s own self-concept and results in many favorable outcomes (Riketta, 2005). A meta-analysis conducted with 96 independent samples (Riketta, 2005) found that organizational identification is positively related to affective organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement, and extra-role behavior but negatively related to intention to leave the organization and absenteeism.

**Integrating Self-Determination Theory with Organizational Support Theory**

Separate from the socioemotional needs that Hill (1987) defined, Self-Determination Theory outlines three different psychological needs termed competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Ryan and Deci (2000) defined a psychological need as an energizing state that when satisfactorily addressed yields health and well-being, but when left unaddressed contributes to pathology and ill-being. The needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness
each carry unique features necessary for optimal human motivation and daily emotional well-being (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). The need for autonomy refers to individuals feeling that their behavior is their own and fully endorsed by themselves (deCharms, 1968). Competence is the individual’s need to feel masterful in his or her environment (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006). Relatedness refers to an individual’s need to feel connected, understood, and appreciated by others around them (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006).

Referring back to the socioemotional needs of esteem, affiliation, and emotional support described by Hill (1987), it is evident that there is some conceptual overlap between Hill’s socioemotional needs and Self-Determination Theory’s basic psychological needs. I argue here that the need for relatedness overlaps with both the needs for affiliation and emotional support and that the need for competence overlaps with the need for esteem. None of Hill’s socioemotional needs appear to overlap with the basic psychological need of autonomy however; perceived organizational support and employee autonomy share a positive relationship. Eisenberger, Rhoades, and Cameron (1999) used a self-report survey to demonstrate that employee perceptions of autonomy mediated the positive relationship between performance-reward expectancy with perceived organizational support. “Employees appear to…attribute this autonomy to organization’s commitment to their well-being and the organization’s positive evaluation of their contributions” (Eisenberger, Rhoades, & Cameron, 1999, p. 1034). More importantly, the authors found that the correlation between perceived autonomy and perceived support was significant, this study predicts a similar relationship. While the Eisenberger et al. (1999) study included employee autonomy as a variable, the authors did not examine the direct effects of perceived organizational support on employee
autonomy nor did they examine any ways in which the augmentation of organizational support might improve employee autonomy. The 1999 study only scratched the surface of the possible relationships between these two variables. This study will examine them in more depth. With the similarities between the two different sets of needs in mind, this study proposes the following hypotheses depicted in Figure 2:

Hypothesis 2: Employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be positively related to their perceptions of the extent to which their need for competence is satisfied.

Hypothesis 3: Employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be positively related to their perceptions of the extent to which their need for relatedness is satisfied.

Hypothesis 4: Employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be positively related to their perceptions of the extent to which their need for autonomy is satisfied.

Further Satisfying Basic Psychological Needs with Autonomy Support

One way to further address employee psychological needs is for managers to create an autonomy supportive work environment. To do so, managers must perform four specific behaviors: provide workers with meaningful rationales behind the performance of tasks, provide with choices for how to perform those tasks, acknowledge the workers’ feelings during the fulfillment of those tasks, and provide workers with useful feedback upon the completion of tasks (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick & Leone, 1994; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Parfyonova, 2010). Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, and Leone (1994) found that the provision of rationale, acknowledgment of feeling, and conveyance of choice promoted
internalization of uninteresting activities as evidenced by participant self-regulation of behavior. Contexts that are autonomy supportive promote more integration of externally regulated behaviors, whereas contexts lacking in autonomy support promote less integration of those same behaviors (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994).

In nearly any context with externally regulated behaviors, autonomy support can enhance the motivation of individuals who carry out those tasks. Furthermore, autonomy support is an extremely cost effective method to enhance individual motivation and while this characteristic is desirable in many contexts, it is perhaps most important in the context of a work organization. Using self-report questionnaires, Baard, Deci, and Ryan (2004) found that managers who were understanding and acknowledging of their subordinates’ perspective, provided meaningful information in a non-manipulative manner, offered opportunities for choice, and encouraged self-initiation were perceived by their subordinates as autonomy supportive. From their regression analyses, Baard et al. also found that perceived autonomy support positively related to the satisfaction of competence, autonomy, and relatedness which all positively related to psychological adjustment at work and more positive performance evaluations. Autonomy support positively relates to psychological need satisfaction in individuals outside of the United States of America as well. Using two samples, one from the United States of America and one from Bulgaria, Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov, and Kornazheva (2001) demonstrated that need satisfaction mediated the relationship between autonomy support and the outcomes of worker engagement, anxiety, and general employee self-esteem. In 2010, Parfyonova created and validated the Need-Supportive Management Scale to further demonstrate the importance of autonomy support in
work settings. Parfyonova (2010) showed that managerial autonomy support led to the satisfaction of competence, autonomy, and relatedness in their employees. Additionally, employees who perceived their managers as autonomy supportive were more highly engaged at work, experienced positive affect at work, and infrequently experienced negative affect relative to employees with less supportive managers.

As hypotheses 2-4 state, I expect employees who perceive organizational support to have their basic psychological needs addressed. Moreover, I predict that the additional perception of higher levels of autonomy support from managers will augment the effects of perceived organizational support resulting in the fuller satisfaction of the psychological needs. The dotted arrows in Figure 2 display the following hypotheses and the predicted interactive effects between perceived organizational support and autonomy support on the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs.

Hypothesis 5: When employees perceive higher levels of autonomy support, perceived organizational support will have a stronger positive relationship with competence satisfaction than when autonomy support is not experienced.

Hypothesis 6: When employees perceive higher levels of autonomy support, perceived organizational support will have a stronger positive relationship with relatedness satisfaction than when autonomy support is not experienced.

Hypothesis 7: When employees perceive higher levels of autonomy support, perceived organizational support will have a stronger positive relationship with autonomy satisfaction than when autonomy support is not experienced.
Separate Motivational Pathways

Self-Determination Theory states that the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs is critical in determining the level to which employees internalize and integrate work behavior into their own self-concept. “Internalization refers to people’s taking in a value or regulation, and integration refers to the further transformation of that regulation into their own so that, subsequently, it will emanate from their sense of self” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). The more internalized work is, the more likely it is that the individual will integrate work into his or her own self-concept. According to Riketta (2005), the integration of different aspects of an organization with one’s self-concept is the definition of organizational identification. Based on this definition, we can infer that the satisfaction of the psychological needs is critical to helping employees identify with the organization and the greater the satisfaction of those needs, the more likely it is that employees will arrive at a state of identification. Therefore, this study predicts that under autonomy supportive conditions where employee basic psychological needs are satisfied to a higher level, the satisfaction of those needs will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification. Specifically, I propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 8: The satisfaction of the need for competence will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification.

Hypothesis 9: The satisfaction of the need for relatedness will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification.
Hypothesis 10: The satisfaction of the need for autonomy will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational identification.

When employees identify with their organization and integrate work with their own self-concept, they also develop an increasingly intrinsic orientation towards their work as opposed to a more extrinsic orientation towards their work (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Gagné and Deci (2005) propose that holding a more intrinsic orientation towards work produces favorable outcomes such as persistence and maintained behavioral change, effective job performance, job satisfaction, positive work-related attitudes, organizational citizenship behaviors, and enhanced psychological adjustment and well-being. Having an intrinsic orientation towards work means that employees believe they are the origin of their own behaviors and perform those behaviors from an inherent desire to do so. This is natural since at this point the individual has integrated the goals of the organization with his or her own self-concept and thereby is successfully accomplishing his or her own individual goals by accomplishing the organization’s goals.

On the other hand, when employee psychological needs go unaddressed the integration of work behaviors with their own self-concept becomes less likely and identification with the organization becomes less likely. Employees who are unable to identify with the organization are then more likely to develop an extrinsic orientation towards work behaviors rather than an intrinsic orientation. Holding an extrinsic work orientation as compared to an intrinsic work orientation is associated with less job satisfaction, less work dedication, lower job vitality, lower life satisfaction, more conflict between their job and
family life, greater exhaustion, and a greater intention to leave the organization (Vansteenkiste, Neyrinck, Niemiec, Soenens, De Witte, & Van den Broeck, 2007). Along with these undesirable outcomes, an extrinsic orientation does not allow individuals to feel like the origin of their own behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Instead, individuals who hold an extrinsic orientation towards work behaviors perform those behaviors because they feel obligated to do so, not because they have an innate desire to achieve their common goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Different Motivational Mindsets Lead to Different Commitments**

As mentioned previously, affective commitment is a consistently studied outcome of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) defined commitment as a force binding the individual to a target and or to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets. The authors described three different types of commitment; affective, normative, and continuance. Each different type of commitment arises from different bases or mindsets of the individual. Affective commitment grows due to individuals identifying with the organization and wanting to remain with the organization. Normative commitment on the other hand grows from a mindset of obligation to continue a course of action or remain with the organization. Finally, continuance commitment grows from a lack of viable alternative employment opportunities or fear of the loss of investments made by the employee. The first two types (affective and normative) are of importance to this study while continuance is not; therefore, this study does not examine continuance commitment.
Although felt obligation has mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and affective commitment in the past (Eisenberger et al., 2001), some questions remain as to whether this is the true state of things. One of the most important issues is the lack of discriminability between affective and normative commitment (Bergman, 2006). The two scales correlate strongly with one another; a meta-analysis conducted by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) reported a value of 0.63 between the two constructs. Because these two concepts appear to be overlapping, it may be possible that felt obligation also mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and normative commitment. In fact, felt obligation may even have a stronger relationship with normative commitment than with affective commitment.

I predict that affective commitment should relate more strongly to organizational identification than felt obligation and that normative commitment should relate more strongly felt obligation than organizational identification. I make these predictions according to the bases from which the two different commitments develop. As discussed earlier, organizational identification leads employees to develop a more intrinsic orientation towards work which causes employees to perform behaviors due to an innate desire to do so. The bases from which affective commitment forms such as personal involvement and identification with the target of commitment match very closely to the identification mindset and do not seem to match well with the felt obligation mindset. In contrast, the base from which normative commitment forms centers on one’s sense of obligation to an organization which matches more closely with felt obligation than identification. Wayne, Coyle-Shapiro, Eisenberger, Rousseau, and Shore (2009) wrote “Normative commitment as recently
formulated by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), has moved away from the heavy emphasis on obligation to remain with the organization and to a more diverse set of obligations to the organization. Thus, normative commitment has grown more similar to organizational support theory’s concept of felt obligation to help the organization reach its goals.” (p. 266). I propose the following hypotheses based on these differences between affective and normative commitment:

Hypothesis 11: Organizational identification will have a stronger positive relationship with affective commitment than with normative commitment.

Hypothesis 12: Felt obligation to repay the organization will have a stronger positive relationship with normative commitment than with affective commitment.

Hypothesis 13: Felt obligation to repay the organization will mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and normative commitment.

**Employee Well-Being outside the Workplace**

Job satisfaction is another consistently studied outcome of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). While job satisfaction represents a form of employee well-being at work, employee well-being outside of the workplace due to perceived organizational support has received less attention in research. The Self-Determination Theory literature describes two different types of human well-being known as eudaimonic well-being and hedonic well-being. A eudaimonic approach to well-being focuses on whether a person finds meaning and self-realization in life and is concerned with the degree to which a person is fully functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). On the other hand, a hedonic approach to well-being focuses on
happiness and defines well-being as the avoidance of pain and the attainment of pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2001). While a hedonic approach focuses on the avoidance of pain, a eudaimonic approach accepts the presence of pain if it means that an individual will grow to reach his or her innate potential. Hedonic well-being focuses more on the outcome of happiness or pleasure while eudaimonic well-being focuses on the process of living well (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Self-Determination Theory posits that the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs typically fosters eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

While the differences in well-beings are relevant for individual health outside of work, the question remains as to why organizations should care about it in their employees on the job. Meyer and Maltin (2010) did an excellent job of combining concepts from Self-Determination Theory with several concepts from organizational behavior research and proposed several relationships that would matter to organizations. The authors proposed that employees experiencing eudaimonic well-being or a combination of eudaimonic and hedonic well-being as opposed to only hedonic well-being are buffered from the negative effect of workplace stressors. The employees experiencing eudaimonic well-being are more resilient and interpret workplace stressors as challenges for them to overcome in order to better themselves. Contrary to that, employees experiencing hedonic well-being interpret workplace stressors as pain or discomfort to avoid rather than overcome. Helping employees to develop more eudaimonic well-being as opposed to hedonic well-being is one way to help employees become more resilient against the stressors of the modern day workplace.

Meyer and Maltin (2010) also integrated Self-Determination Theory with Organizational Commitment Theory. Specifically, Meyer and Maltin (2010) proposed that
employees who experienced normative commitment to the organization would be more likely experience hedonic well-being and less likely to experience eudaimonic well-being. Conversely, those who experienced affective commitment would be more likely to experience a combination of both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. This study continues to integrate Self-Determination Theory with Organizational Commitment Theory by directly testing those propositions.

*Hypothesis 14:* Affective commitment will be positively related to both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being.

*Hypothesis 15:* Normative commitment will be positively related to both hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being.

**Method**

**Participants and Procedure**

This study will involve a minimum of 300 voluntary participants. The method for recruiting participants will be the same used by Byrne, Kacmar, Stoner, and Hochwarter (2005) and later again by Stoner and Gallagher (2010). Undergraduate students at a major university in the Southeastern region of the United States of America will help to recruit participants from a wide variety of work environments and organizations. I will give undergraduate students in an introductory psychology course a link to the survey used in this study and ask them to solicit the participation of two full-time employees in any occupation. The undergraduate students will be responsible for passing the link along to potential study participants via email. For their help, students will receive research credit that counts towards their introductory psychology course. I will ask students to CC me on the email distributing
the survey so I can ensure that students receive course credit even if participants fail to complete the survey. An automated system provided by the university will ensure that the appropriate students receive credit for distributing the survey. Participants who complete the survey will automatically enter into a raffle to win a gift card as compensation for their participation.

**Measures**

The survey administered to all participants contains the 9 scales described in detail below. Participants will also answer several demographic items which will be included as part of the survey. Appendix A contains all items that make up the survey.

**Perceived Organizational Support.** Participant will report whether they believe that they are receiving organizational support using the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) created by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The original scale consists of 36 items and a reported reliability coefficient of .97 (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This study will employ the shorter version of the SPOS, which consists of only 8 items. Participants will indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements of each item (e.g., “The organization I work for really cares about my well-being”) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, and Lynch (1997) and Eisenberger, Rhoades, and Cameron (1999) used the same shortened 8 item version of the scale and found the respective reliability coefficients of .90 and .89.

**Need Satisfaction.** The items used by Sheldon and Niemiec (2006) will assess the satisfaction of the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The phrase “When at work” begins each item so they fit a workplace setting. Three items assess each need for a
total of 9 items. Participants will indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements of each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Examples from each subscale include; “When at work I feel very capable of what I am doing” – competence, “When at work I feel free to do things my own way” – autonomy, “When at work I feel a sense of contact with people who care for me and whom I care for” – relatedness. The Cronbach’s alpha values for the competence, autonomy, and relatedness subscales are .84, .76, and .88 respectively (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006).

**Autonomy Support.** The Need Supportive Management Scale (NSMS) developed by Parfyonova (2009) will measure participant perceptions of autonomy support. The scale contains a total of 27 and is broken down into three subscales, support for competence, support for autonomy, and support for relatedness, the reported Cronbach’s alpha values are .97, .91, and .98 respectively (Parfyonova, 2009). Participants will indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement of each item (e.g., “My manager provides a meaningful rationale for work activities”) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

**Felt Obligation.** Felt obligation is measured using the seven item scale developed by Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, and Rhoades (2001). The scale consists of seven items to which participants indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each item (e.g., “I feel a personal obligation to do whatever I can to help the organization achieve its goals”). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The reported Cronbach’s alpha value of this scale from the Eisenberger et al. (2001) study was .88.
**Organizational Identification.** The scale used by Mael and Tetrick (1992) will assess participant organizational identification. The scale consists of six items to which participants indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each item (e.g., “When someone criticizes the organization I work for, it feels like a personal insult”). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). The reported Cronbach’s alpha value for this scale is .81 (Mael & Tetrick, 1992).

**Affective and Normative Commitment.** The affective and normative organizational-commitment scales used by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) will measure participant affective and normative commitment to their organization. Participants will indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement of each item (e.g., “I owe a great deal to my organization” – normative scale, “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization” – affective scale). Responses are made on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Each scale consists of 6 items and the reported internal reliability value for the affective scale is .82 while the reported internal reliability value for the normative scale is .83 (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993).

**Eudaimonic and Hedonic Well-being.** The Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (HEMA) scale created by Huta and Ryan (2010) will assess participant well-being in this study. The instructions for this measure read: “Whether or not you actually achieve your aim, to what degree do you typically approach your activities with each of the following intentions?” Participants then give ratings on four eudaimonic motives (e.g., “Seeking to pursue excellence or a personal ideal”) and five hedonic motives (e.g., “Seeking pleasure?”). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1=not at all, 7=very much). The internal
reliability value for the eudaimonia scale is .82 and the internal reliability value for the hedonia scale is .85 (Huta & Ryan, 2010).

Analyses

After collecting and cleaning the data, I will use the computer program Mplus to carry out all the analyses for this study. The analysis will take place in three different phases. First, a confirmatory factor analysis will check that the manifest indicators of all the subscales used in this study load onto the appropriate latent constructs. Research has demonstrated the reliability and factor structure of each scale being used, however if some items are found to cross load on multiple latent constructs they will be eliminated from the analysis. Once the measurement model is confirmed then the analysis will move on to phase 2 of the analyses.

In phase 2 of the analyses in this study I will test the depicted structure of the entire model in Figure 2. This phase will include two different runs. The first run will test whether the exact model in Figure 2 represents the data well. In the second run, the autonomy support latent variable will not be included in the model. I will then compare the fit indices of both runs to determine whether the inclusion of autonomy support in the model increases overall fit. I will also request that Mplus produce modification indices in the output so that I can explore whether eliminating or adding pathways to the model will improve its fit. I will use a Likelihood Ratio Test to determine whether subsequent revisions of the model fit the data better than previous models.

In phase 3, I will test the specific hypotheses of the study. To test hypothesis 1, the felt obligation latent variable will be regressed upon the perceived organizational support
latent variable. Then, to test hypotheses 2-4, the latent variables of competence, autonomy, and relatedness satisfaction will be regressed onto the latent variable of perceived organizational support. Testing hypotheses 5-7 will require processes that are more complicated. Testing interactive relationships in structural equation modeling requires the creation of an interaction term from the two exogenous latent variables upon which the endogenous latent variable(s) is then regressed. For hypotheses 5-7, the latent variables of competence, autonomy, and relatedness satisfaction will be regressed onto an interaction term created from the perceived organizational support and autonomy support latent variables.

To test hypotheses 8-10 I will conduct a regression analysis using the methods outlined by Barron and Kenny (1986). To supplement the regression analysis, I will also conduct an indirect effects analysis in Mplus. The organizational identification latent variable will be regressed onto each of the three need satisfaction latent variables and each of those will then be regressed onto the perceived organizational support latent variable. The results of both of these analyses will determine whether there is a mediational relationship between these variables.

Testing hypotheses 11 and 12 will require the run of two additional models in Mplus. First, to test hypothesis 11 I will run the entire model depicted in Figure 2 once again but this time, I will constrain the relationship between organizational identification and affective commitment to be equal to the relationship between organizational identification and normative commitment. I will then conduct a likelihood ratio test between the fit indices of this constrained model and the unconstrained model of phase 2. If the constrained model fits
the data significantly worse than the unconstrained model from phase 2, this is evidence that the relationship between organizational identification and affective commitment is significantly different from the relationship between organizational identification and normative commitment. I will follow the exact same process for hypotheses 12, testing the relationship between felt obligation and normative commitment to that of felt obligation and affective commitment.

To test hypothesis 13 I will employ the same processes used to test hypotheses 8-10 but this time with the normative commitment, felt obligation, and perceived organizational support latent variables. To test hypothesis 14 I will regress the hedonic and eudaimonic well-being latent variables onto the affective commitment latent variable. Finally, to test hypothesis 15 I will regress the hedonic well-being latent variable onto the normative commitment latent variable.
References


Study Survey Items

Demographic Items

- Age
- Gender
- Do you have a manager or direct supervisor whom you work for?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- Of the industries listed below, which one would you say your current job belongs to?
  (Agriculture, mining, utilities, construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, information, finance/insurance, real estate/rental/leasing, professional/technical services, company/enterprise management, waste services, educational services, health care/social assistance, arts/entertainment/recreation, accommodation/food services, public administration, unclassified, federal, state and local government, other)

- How many years have you been employed at your current job?
- How many hours per week do you work?

Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997)

Select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the organization you work for . . .

- My organization cares about my opinions.
- My organization really cares about my well-being.
- My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
- Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.
- My organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part.
- If given the opportunity, my organization would take advantage of me. (R)
- My organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor.

Psychological Need Satisfaction Items (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006)

Select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. . .

When at work, I feel…

- …that my choices are based on my true interests and values.
- …that I am successfully completing difficult tasks and projects.
• …a sense of contact with people who care for me and whom I care for.
• …free to do things my own way.
• …that I am taking on and mastering hard challenges.
• …close and connected with other people who are important to me.
• …that my choices express my true self.
• …very capable of what I am doing.
• …a strong sense of intimacy with people I spend time with.

Need Supportive Management Scale (Parfyonova, 2009)
Select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements . . .
My manager …
• …allows me to choose how to do my work.
• …encourages me to work in my own way.
• …creates opportunities for me to decide how to go about doing my work.
• …encourages me to do my work the way I prefer it.
• …helps me see the connection between my work and organizational goals.
• …makes sure I understand the purpose of my work.
• …provides a meaningful rationale for work activities.
• …explains to me the importance of what I do at work.
• …provides clear guidelines that I can use to direct my performance.
• …makes it clear what is expected of me at work.
• …provides clear instructions when I need them.
• …gives me direction when I work on challenging tasks.
• …gives me timely performance feedback.
• …gives me suggestions on how to do my job better.
• …makes useful comments about my performance.
• …makes sure I know how well I am doing.
• …provides me with constructive feedback.
• …shows empathy when I am in distress.
• …cheers me up when I feel down.
• …sympathizes with me when I have problems.
• …provides me with emotional support when needed.
• …acknowledges my feelings at work.
• …is personally concerned about my well-being at work.
• …treats me warmly.
• …takes into account my situation when making decisions that affect me.
• …listens to my concerns at work.
• …is sensitive to my needs.
**Felt Obligation (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, & Rhoades, 2001)**
Select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the organization you work for.

- I feel a personal obligation to do whatever I can to help the organization achieve its goals.
- I owe it to the organization to give 100% of my energy to its goals while I am at work.
- I have an obligation to the organization to ensure that I produce high-quality work.
- I owe it to the organization to do what I can to ensure that its customers are well-served and satisfied.
- I would feel an obligation to take time from my personal schedule to help the organization if it needed my help.
- I would feel guilty if I did not meet the organization’s performance standards.
- I feel that the only obligation I have to the organization is to fulfill the minimum requirements of my job. (R)

**Organizational Identification (Mael & Tetrick, 1992)**
Select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the organization you work for.

- When someone criticizes the organization I work for it feels like a personal insult.
- I’m very interested in what others think about the organization I work for.
- When I talk about the organization I work for I usually say “we” rather than “they”.
- The successes of the organization I work for are also my successes.
- When someone praises the organization I work for it feels like a personal compliment.
- I act like a (name of your organization) person to a great extent.

**Organizational Commitment (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993)**
Affective Commitment

Select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the organization you work for.

- I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
- I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own.
- I do not feel a strong sense of “belonging” to my organization. (R)
Normative Commitment

Select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the organization you work for.

- I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer. (R)
- Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.
- I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.
- This organization deserves my loyalty.
- I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.
- I owe a great deal to my organization.

The Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities Scale (Huta & Ryan, 2010)

Whether or not you actually achieve your aim, to what degree do you typically approach your activities with each of the following intentions?

- Seeking to pursue excellence or a personal ideal?
- Seeking to use the best in yourself?
- Seeking to develop a skill, learn, or gain insight into something?
- Seeking to do what you believe in?
- Seeking enjoyment?
- Seeking pleasure?
- Seeking fun?
- Seeking relaxation?
- Seeking to take it easy?
Figure 1. A process model of the effects of perceived organizational support on affective commitment.
Figure 2. The hypothesized model of the current study.