


Recommendations for Conceptualizing and Measuring Constructs Within Psychology of Working Theory

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Ryan D. Duffy , Yeonwoo Choi, Haram J. Kim , and Junsang Park

Abstract

Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) has been increasingly adopted by counseling and vocational psychologists since its inception in 2016, and approximately 100 quantitative studies to date have tested various propositions of the Theory. As a relatively new theory, there has been lack of consistency in how the main constructs are conceptualized and measured by scholars, thus limiting further application of PWT. The following paper is aimed at addressing this inconsistency by providing a guide for researchers interested in using PWT as a theoretical framework in their studies. First, we provide an overview of PWT and the definitions of its core constructs: economic constraints, marginalization, work volition, career adaptability, decent work, and need satisfaction. Then, we review quantitative studies conducted to date to show how each of the constructs have been conceptualized and measured. Finally, we provide specific recommendations that researchers can follow in their future studies based on this review. It is hoped that the recommendations can provide a more streamlined way of measuring the constructs as well as ideas for researchers to expand the psychology of working literature.

Keywords

psychology of working, decent work, measurement

Recommendations for Conceptualizing and Measuring Constructs within Psychology of Working Theory

Since its publication in 2016, Psychology of Working Theory (PWT; Duffy et al., 2016) has become a popular framework within counseling and vocational psychology research. Compared to other prominent vocational theories, PWT is unique in that it includes the attainment of decent work as its central construct and places a heavier emphasis on structural factors such as economic constraints and experiences of marginalization as key drivers of vocational outcomes. As a

Department of Psychology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

Corresponding Author:

Ryan D. Duffy, Department of Psychology, University of Florida, 945 Center Drive PO Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611.
Email: rduf@ufl.edu

relatively new Theory, one of its shortcomings has concerned the conceptualization and measurement of its main constructs. Indeed, among the approximately 100 quantitative studies that have been completed using PWT as a central framework, there has been a lack of consistency in how the PWT constructs are defined and measured by various research teams. Although methodological variety is not problematic, this lack of consistency may be limiting our ability to make broader claims about how PWT constructs relate to one another, therein limiting our ability to make broader claims around practical implications.

In the current paper, we seek to address this shortcoming by providing a conceptualization and measurement guide to assist scholars interested in conducting PWT-framed research. A similar type of paper was completed by [Lent and Brown \(2006\)](#) to provide guidance for SCCT researchers and we follow their general structure in the current paper. First, we provide a brief overview of PWT and describe how each of its core constructs was originally conceptualized. Second, we describe how each of its six core constructs and four moderator constructs have been conceptualized and measured in practice by reviewing approximately 100 empirical, quantitative studies which have used PWT as a framework. Finally, we offer a series of recommendations for researchers moving forward based on this review.

A Brief Overview of Psychology of Working Theory

Psychology of Working Theory (PWT; [Duffy et al., 2016](#)) was derived from the Psychology of Working Framework (PWF; [Blustein, 2006; 2008](#)), which focused on documenting individual's experiences in the world of work, particularly those with limited choice in their career decision making. Based on Blustein and colleagues influential conceptual work, Duffy and colleagues developed a more comprehensive theory as well as a testable theoretical model which depicted predictor and outcome variables of decent work attainment. As the central construct within the model, decent work is defined as work that provides (1) a safe working environment, (2) access to healthcare, (3) adequate income, (4) hours for free time and rest, and (5) organizational values that match family and social values ([Duffy et al., 2016](#)).

The two primary structural predictors of decent work within PWT are economic constraints and marginalization experiences. Economic constraints are defined as limited economic resources and marginalization experiences are defined as the relegation of people or a community to a less powerful position in a society ([Duffy et al., 2016](#)). The Theory suggests that the greater economic constraints and experiences of marginalization an individual has across their lifetime, the less like they will be to have access to decent work. PWT proposed two psychological constructs as key mediators which explain in part why these structural factors link with decent work: work volition and career adaptability ([Duffy et al., 2016](#)). Work volition is the perception of choice in one's career decision making and career adaptability identifies the readiness to cope and adapt to current and future work tasks. PWT suggests that individuals with greater economic constraints and marginalization experiences will be less likely to attain decent work—in part—because of a limited ability to choose desired careers or adapt to the world of work ([Duffy et al., 2016](#)).

Within the predictor portion of the PWT model, four moderators were theorized to affect the strength of the relation between the four predictor variables and decent work. These were as follows: proactive personality, critical consciousness, social support, and economic conditions ([Duffy et al., 2016](#)). Proactive personality refers to taking initiative to change things in the environment ([Li et al., 2010](#)) and critical consciousness is defined as critically evaluating social oppression and taking action to change social inequalities ([Freire, 2000](#)). Social support reflects support from interpersonal or social relationships that effects one's work experiences and economic conditions refer to larger economic factors that influence an individual's work (e.g., unemployment rate, job advancement opportunities; [Duffy et al., 2016](#)). PWT suggests that—for

example—when an individual has a proactive personality the negative effects of economic constraints and experiences of marginalization on decent work attainment may be diminished; a person who takes initiative and is persistent may mitigate some of these negative impacts. This same logic would apply to individuals who are highly critically conscious, have high levels of social support, or experience good economic conditions.

The second half of the model, the outcome portion, theorizes how decent work attainment would lead to work fulfillment and general well-being. Specifically, the Theory predicts that decent work will lead to these longer-term well-being outcomes because it satisfies individuals' survival, social contribution, and self-determination needs. PWT defines survival needs as basic human resources for living such as food, housing, and social capital, and described social contribution needs as the need to connect to something broader than oneself, such as contributing to the community or society at large (Allan et al., 2019). In addition, self-determination needs consist of three subcategories: the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to a desire to feel self-ownership in one's work tasks. Competence reflects the experience of control and mastery in the environment and relatedness is defined as a desire to feel connected and cared for or by others (Allan et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017). PWT proposes that decent work fulfills these needs across time, which in turn will increase an individual's sense of meaning and satisfaction at work as well as their overall life well-being. Collectively, decent work, its two predictors (economic constraints and marginalization experiences), two mediators (work volition and career adaptability), and need satisfaction represent the main six constructs that are unique to PWT.

Existing Evidence from Six Main Constructs

As discussed in the previous section, each of PWT's main constructs have a specific definition that was intended to guide future research. However, due to limited measurement tools to assess some of these constructs and different preferences by author teams, the constructs have often not been assessed as originally intended. In this section, we discuss how each of the six main PWT constructs have been measured across research completed to date. The purpose of this section is not to critique these publications (several of which authors of the current paper have published), but to point out different ways the constructs have been measured and to paint a complete picture of how PWT is being studied. We drew from the approximately 100 published quantitative papers which has used PWT as a guiding framework. To collate this group of studies, we used Web of Science and reviewed all 350 papers which cited the original 2016 Theory article. From there, we narrowed down this group by including only papers a) which were empirical, quantitative studies, b) used PWT as a guiding framework, and c) contained at least one of the central variables within PWT. This ultimately resulted in 96 studies we used for our review.

Economic Constraints

A total of 44 studies were identified that used some indicators or proxies of economic constraints as a correlate or predictor of other work-related outcomes. About half of these studies used various indicators of social status to assess this construct. These include studies using single indicators such as the MacArthur subjective social status scale (e.g., Wang et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2022) and those using multiple indicators including income, education, and social class/status (e.g., Kim et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2020). For example, Choi et al. (2022) studied a sample of employed Asian American women and used social class as a proxy for economic constraints, where the social class latent construct was comprised of three observed indicators: annual income, subjective social status using the MacArthur scale, and subjective social class also using a ladder type scale. The

authors found social class to predict work volition and work volition to mediate the relation between social class and decent work.

In 2019, Duffy and colleagues sought to develop measures to more directly address both economic constraints and marginalization from a PWT perspective, as experiences people have across their lifespan. The measure developed, the Economic Constraints Scale (ECS), included items such as “For as long as I can remember, I have had very limited economic or financial resources” and “Throughout most of my life, I have struggled financially.” For example, [Ma et al. \(2021\)](#) gave the ECS to a group of Chinese university students, finding that scores on the scale were negatively related to future decent work perceptions and that future decent work perceptions mediated the link between economic constraints and academic engagement. This measure has been used in approximately half of the 44 studies identified and was the most popular measure to assess economic constraints in the past four years since its development.

Marginalization Experiences

A total of 30 studies were identified that assessed marginalization experiences in some fashion. Of the main PWT variables, the measurement of this construct had the greatest variety. The most used measure, with 10 studies, was the Lifetime Experiences of Marginalization Scale (LEMS) developed by [Duffy et al. \(2019\)](#). This measure gives participants a prompt that provides a definition of marginalization and asks items such as, “Throughout my life, I have had many experiences that have made me feel marginalized” and “During my lifetime, I have had many interpersonal interactions that have often left me feeling marginalized.” [Autin et al. \(2021\)](#) surveyed a sample of Latinx employed adults using a Spanish version of the LEMS. They found that lifetime experiences of marginalization predicted both work volition and decent work and that work violation mediated the relation of marginalization to decent work.

The other 20 studies have used a wide array of measures representing a wide range of domains. For example, several have focused on marginalizing experiences specifically in the workplace, such as the workplace climate experiences of LGBT workers ([Allan et al., 2019](#)). Other studies have measured individual’s experiences with marginalization based on specific identities not confined to the workplace, including gender ([Blustein et al., 2020](#); [Tebbe et al., 2019](#)), race/ethnicity ([Duffy et al., 2018](#)), or chronic illness ([Tokar & Kaut, 2018](#)). Finally, several studies have focused more on behavioral experiences of microaggressions, in or out of the workplace, across both gender and race ([Williams et al., 2023](#)). In sum, the scope and variety of ways that marginalization has been measured are wide and this construct in particular is in need of deeper discussion around best practices.

Work Volition

Over half of the studies in our review (52) used a measure of work volition, with 38 using the Work Volition Scale (WVS; [Duffy, R. D, Diemer, & Jadidian, A., 2012](#)) and another 14 using the student version of this scale (WVS-SV; [Duffy, R. D, Diemer, & Perry, J. C., 2012](#)). Unlike economic constraints or marginalization experiences, work volition was measured in a consistent and straightforward manner across studies. This is likely due to the construct being conceptualized—and having instruments developed—4 years before the Theory paper, thus giving researchers immediately valid tools to use for a construct that was always grounded within a psychology of working framework. The WVS contains three subscales measuring general volition, financial constraints, and structural constraints whereas the WVS-SV only has two subscales measuring volition and constraints. Many authors have chosen to only use the volition subscales from each of these measures, the implications of which will be discussed later.

Career Adaptability

A total of 26 studies used a measure of career adaptability, with 17 using the full or shortened version of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The CAAS is the most frequently used instrument to assess career adaptability, particularly in studies that draw from Career Construction Theory (CCT; Savickas, 2020). It measures four career adaptability attributes—concern, control, curiosity, and confidence—which are seen as personal resources for managing career transitions. The CAAS prompts respondents to rate how much they have developed abilities in each of the career adaptability attributes such as “Realizing that today’s choices shape my future” (concern) and “Making decisions by myself” (confidence). PWT studies using this measure have shown its scores to moderately correlate with work volition but often weakly or non-significantly correlate with other model constructs. For example, in the first two tests of the predictor portion of the PWT model, Douglass et al. (2017) and Duffy et al. (2018) used the CAAS and each found it to not significantly predict decent work or be predicted by indicators of economic constraints and marginalization. In their review of PWT, Blustein and Duffy (2020) suggested that these non-significant relations found across many studies may be due to a mismatch between how career adaptability is conceptualized in CCT and in PWT, the former relating to personal attributes and the latter relating to perceived adaptability within the world of work.

Specifically, in the primary article which describes the development the CAAS Savickas and Porfeli (2012) define adaptability as, “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions, traumas in their occupational roles that, to some degree large or small, alter their social integration (Savickas, 1997); p. 662.” This article presents data from 13 different countries which validated the measure, the vast majority of which used samples of high school or college students (e.g., Hou et al., 2012; Maree, 2012; Porfeli & Savickas, 2012; Soresi et al., 2012). Participants are presented with scale instructions that note how different people use different strengths to build their careers and asks people to rate their abilities on 24 different items. However, only a few of these items actually reference career or work and most refer to general attitudes (e.g., Exploring my surroundings, Learning new skills, Planning how to achieve my goals, and Keeping upbeat). As such, we suspect this scale may be better suited for students and may be better at capturing broad strengths in terms of how one’s approaches the world versus specific experiences in the workplace and confidence in navigating the world of work.

The other nine studies used the full or partial adaptability subscale from the Career Futures Inventory (CFI; Rottinghaus et al., 2005). This measure was also developed to—in part—assess adaptability, as career adaptability made up one of three subscales of CFI. The subscale contains 11 items such as “I am good at adapting to new work settings” and “I can adapt to change in the world of work.” Items in the scale appear to be a much better match to how adaptability is conceptualized in PWT, relating more to flexibility in the world of work. Indeed, scores on this scale do tend to more strongly and consistently correlate with decent work. For example, recent studies by with a diverse sample of employed women and Williams et al. (2023) with Black employees used this subscale and found career adaptability to significantly predict decent work within a larger structural model. However, studies using this scale have continued to see non-significant or weak correlations with economic constraints and marginalization.

Decent Work

As the central construct within PWT, it’s not surprising that this construct has been used in the majority of studies we reviewed (69). Of this group, almost all have used either the Decent Work Scale for working adults (DWS; Duffy et al., 2017, 61) or the Future Decent Work Scale (FDWS;

Kim et al., 2019, 6). Both of these scales contain 15 items, with three items assessing each of the five decent work dimensions. The FDWS was adapted to ask students their feelings about working in the future. It is important to note that the DWS has also been validated in over 15 different countries outside of the U.S. (Duffy et al., 2020). Both the DWS and FDWS have been shown to be generally valid and reliable and were tailor made to measure decent work as was originally proposed by Duffy et al. (2016).

One concern that has been raised about the DWS, however, is its four items which are negatively worded. Dating back to the original instrument development study (Duffy et al., 2017), studies have demonstrated that loading these four items with two positively worded items on their respective subscales cause statistical fit concerns in both measurement and structural models, and resulting scores on these two subscales having lower internal consistency reliability compared to other subscales. This is likely because when participants complete the survey they assume all items are positively worded and answer that way, even when items call for opposite answers. One recent study addressed this issue by simply changing the four negatively worded items to be positively worded, matching the other 11 items (Perez et al., 2023). This procedure proved to be very helpful in improving the internal consistency reliability of the scales score for the *adequate compensation* and *free time for rest* subscales.

Need Satisfaction

The primary outcome of decent work within PWT is need satisfaction, and to date 12 studies have assessed this construct empirically within a PWT framework. The majority of these (10) used the Work Need Satisfaction Scale (WNSS; Autin et al., 2019) which was specifically developed to measure need satisfaction from a PWT perspective. It includes 20 items with five, four item subscales measuring survival needs, social contribution needs, and the three types of self-determination needs (autonomy, relatedness, competence). The instrument assesses the degree to which work fulfills these needs for individuals (e.g., My work allows me to...Have the resources to pay for adequate housing for my family) versus assessing if someone has these needs at work or not. Like decent work and work volition, the WNSS represents an instrument that was developed specifically using a PWT frame and thus ties well into the original PWT conceptualization of need satisfaction.

One notable change evident in the WNSS compared to the original 2016 article is that they relabeled social connection needs as social contribution needs. This was completed due to the factor analysis from Autin et al. (2019) revealing that items related to social connection loaded better on the relatedness dimension of self-determination, and that social contribution needs (e.g., helping others at work) represented a unique construct. The change has trickled down into the core conceptualization of constructs with PWT. Specifically, as is noted by Blustein and Duffy (2020), the relatedness dimension of self-determination needs was already capturing social connection within the workplace, making a standalone social connection construct redundant. By adding in social contribution as a new form of need satisfaction, it broadens this construct to capture the need of utility—is my work helping others or society in some way? We contend this is a welcome addition to the PWT model and captures a basic, universal human need of feeling like one is making a contribution.

Existing Evidence from Four Moderator Variables

PWT contains four moderator variables which are proposed to alter how the four structural and psychological predictor variables relate to one another and decent work. Research on each of these constructs is more limited and is discussed below:

Critical Consciousness

Three studies used a measure of critical consciousness (CC). Two of them used the 22-item Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS; Diemer et al., 2017), assessing critical reflections about unequal conditions and personal or collective activism to change perceived inequalities. The CCS consists of three factors: perceived inequality, egalitarian beliefs, and sociopolitical participation. Another study measured critical motivation using the 10-item Critical Motivation Scale (CMS; Rapa et al., 2020) to capture the willingness to correct societal inequity. Results from this small group of studies have demonstrated inconsistent results. For example, found perceived inequality and sociopolitical participation to significantly moderate five of the six model paths in the predictor section of the PWT model, however, several went in the opposite direction as hypothesized. Kim and Allan (2021) found egalitarianism had a significant moderation effect on buffering classism in its relation to career adaptability. However, although Kenny et al. (2022) found teacher support did moderate the relation between career adaptability and work volition, it was in the opposite direction as hypothesized. In sum, studies are very limited and inconsistent with regards to this construct, making it challenge to make assessment recommendations.

Proactive Personality

Five studies used various versions of the 17-item Proactive Personality Scale (PPS; Bateman & Crant, 1993) to assess this construct. Three studies used the 10-item PPS, and others used the 4-item or 6-item PPS. Example items include “I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life” and “If I see something I don’t like, I fix it.” Even though proactive personality has demonstrated positive direct effects on vocational outcomes, the moderation effect has—like critical consciousness—shown inconsistent results. For example, Douglass et al. (2020) and Kenny et al. (2022) found no support for proactive personality acting as moderator variable for any PWT paths. Kim et al. (2020) did find proactive personality to significantly buffer the effects of low social status on work volition, however, Wang et al. (2019) found a significant moderation effect but in the opposite direction as hypothesized. Like critical consciousness, these inconsistent results warrant further investigation for its role within the PWT model. Nevertheless, it seems that using some validated version of the PPS is the best method to capture the construct.

Social Support

Social support may be a more flexible and malleable concept in the PWT since individuals have multifaceted social relationships with other people, organizations, and communities (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Given this, it is not surprising that the three studies that have examined this construct used three different scales. For instance, Wang et al. (2019) assessed Chinese urban workers’ perceived social support using the 10-item Chinese Social Support Rating Scale (i.e., I receive support and care from family members; Xiao, 1994). On the other hand, Kenny et al. (2022) measured teacher support to investigate how social support moderates the effects of external barriers on vocational outcomes, using the 6-item Learning Climate Subscale (LCS) of the Learning Climate Questionnaire (i.e., I feel my teacher provides me with choices and options; Black & Deci, 2000). Finally, Han et al. (2022) assessed trade union support to investigate how the perceived social support buffers the effect of socio-economic status on work volition with Chinese rural-urban migrant workers. Results were again inconsistent, with Wang et al. (2019) and Kenny et al. (2022) finding social support to be a significant moderator, but in the opposite direction as hypothesized and Han et al. (2022) finding union support to moderate in the expected direction. With very few studies and a diversity of measures, it is difficult to make any conclusions about this

construct and it seems important that a more PWT tailored measure of social support needs to be developed.

Economic Conditions

Two studies were found to investigate the moderation effect of economic conditions. [Duffy et al. \(2022\)](#) developed a 5-item economic conditions questionnaire to assess individuals' perceptions of the strength of the economy ([Duffy et al., 2016](#)). Examples include "The economy is strong" and "The economy is in good condition." Another study used a 3-item scale to measure participants level of uncertainty within their specific work environment ([Han et al., 2022](#)). Both studies reported a significant moderation effect of perceived economic conditions buffering the negative effect of marginalization or economic constraints on work volition. [Duffy et al.'s \(2022\)](#) measure was directly tied to the definition of economic conditions within PWT so this would be recommended at the current time to assess subjective perceptions until a more valid instrument is developed. Importantly, both studies assessed conditions using a self-report measure and in the original PWT article ([Duffy et al., 2016](#)) the authors more focus on assessing this construct using macro level indicators versus self-report (e.g., unemployment rate, accessibility of living wages). In this sense, results from these studies should be considered with caution given they were capturing subjective perceptions of economic conditions versus larger, macro level data.

Recommendations for Researchers

In this final section of the paper, we hone in on 10 concrete recommendations for researchers who plan to use PWT as a grounding framework for their scholarship. Although PWT has become a popular theory for qualitative research (e.g., [Blustein et al., 2022](#); [Cadaret & Speight, 2018](#); [Kozan et al., 2019](#)), in the current study, we tailor these recommendations primarily to assist those conducting quantitative research using PWT informed measures.

Measure Lifetime Experiences

As has been noted in the prior sections, PWT originally intended that the constructs related to economic constraints and marginalization were capturing lifetime experiences—how much has an individual felt economically constrained or marginalized across their whole life. This is different from how someone feels in a specific domain (e.g., the workplace), over a specific period of time (e.g., experience of everyday discrimination), or about specific incidents (e.g., microaggressions), although these all are likely tied to lifetime experiences. For researchers interested in exploring these constructs explicitly from a PWT lens, we recommend using the five-item Economic Constraints Scale (ECS; [Duffy et al., 2019](#)) and the three item Lifetime Experiences of Marginalization Scale (LEMS; [Duffy et al., 2019](#)), or analogous instruments that capture lifelong experiences.

But domain specific instruments are OK too

Although measures of lifetime experiences are our primary recommendation, it is important to note that PWT was developed to be adaptable to fit research needs and interests. As such, we recommend scholars use the underpinnings of PWT to pursue their own unique agenda, and simply make sure that when using domain specific measures this is clearly articulated and justified as an outgrowth of PWT logic. For example, a recent study by [Smith et al. \(2020\)](#) studied how current experiences of financial strain (as a proxy for economic constraints) and an unsupportive work climate (as a domain specific proxy for marginalization experiences) predicted decent work

attainment across time with an LGBTQ employed adult population. Findings pointed more to the effects of present-day experiences versus experiences across the lifetime, which is also an important focus of scholarship.

Use Only Positive DWS Items

One strong recommendation we have is to adapt the Decent Work Scale (DWS; [Duffy et al., 2017](#)) to ensure that all items are worded positively. This appears to meaningfully improve the reliability of the scale and make fit better in larger measurement or structural models. In the original, validated version of the scale ([Duffy et al., 2017](#)), four items were negatively worded, including two items from the adequate compensation subscale (#'s 7 and 8) and two items from the free time and rest subscale (#'s 10 and 11). Several recent studies (e.g., [Perez et al., 2023](#)) have simply reworded these four items to be positively valanced, with the adapted items listed below:

- #7: I am properly paid for my work.
- #8: I feel I am paid enough based on my qualifications and experience.
- #10: I have enough time for non-work activities
- #11: I have time to rest during the work week.

We recommend using these new four items to pair with the other 11 items in the DWS which were already positively valanced.

Choose the appropriate career adaptability measure

The fit of career adaptability within the PWT model has been uneasy, with many studies finding it to be unrelated to various other key PWT outcomes. [Blustein and Duffy \(2020\)](#) suggested this may be due to measurement issues, with scholars often using the CAAS ([Savickas & Porfeli, 2012](#)). This measure's items and associated conceptualization of adaptability doesn't match that which was proposed within PWT, especially when studying working adult populations. As such, we recommend using the adaptability subscale from the CFI ([Rottinghaus et al., 2005](#)) when measuring adaptability with working adults. Specifically, we recommend using the first 9 of 11 items from this subscale, as the final two items are negatively worded and actually better represent career locus of control than adaptability. A number of studies have used this 9-item measure (e.g., [Duffy et al., 2019](#)) and found it to be a stronger predictor of decent work.

Changing Social Connection to Social Contribution

An important change was made within the PWT model after the publication of [Autin et al.'s \(2019\)](#) paper which developed measures of work need satisfaction. Namely, as discussed above, the social connection need satisfaction construct was changed to social contribution (e.g., helping others with your work). We recommend that in the future PWT researchers either just use [Autin et al.'s \(2019\)](#) measure to capture need satisfaction or make sure that they assess social contribution needs in some fashion, as these appear to be unique from social connection needs within the workplace which are captured by the relatedness sub-dimension of self determination needs.

Use Shorter/Shortened Measures and Subscales

Many of the scales used to assess PWT constructs published after the original 2016 theory paper were specifically designed to be short, with several full scales being under five items (ECS,

LEMS) and others with subscales which have only three or four items in each subscale (DWS, WNSS). These scales were created to be short and reliable, in efforts to ease data collection by decreasing the burden on participants with unnecessarily long surveys. Given that the vast majority of research using PWT will be on working adult populations, which are often hard to reach and have limited time to fill out surveys, we recommend choosing short or shortened scales to assess other model constructs. For example, the WVS is 13 items with three subscales, one of which is the four-item volition subscale. We recommend only using that subscale for author's who wish to purely assess work volition, where the goal is to assess feelings of choice in one's career decision making as the construct is conceptualized within PWT. The other two subscales assess constraints to volition (financial constraints, structural constraints) and are more useful for authors who are interested in barriers to volition. As another example, the adaptability subscale of the CFI is nine items, although one recent study just used the three items that most correspond to the adaptability definition within PWT (Perez et al., 2023). Scores on this shortened scale evidenced good internal consistency reliability. Overall, if researchers can assess PWT constructs in a more parsimonious fashion with reliable, short scales, we highly recommend this approach to ease the burden on participants.

Attempt to Gather Longitudinal Data

The PWT model is depicted in a way that implies mediation. It is a linear model where—for example—economic constraints is believed to predict access to decent work across time, in part due to limited work volition. To date, most studies have tested these relations using cross sectional data (Blustein & Duffy, 2020) which has severely limited our understanding of how these variables relate to one another across time. We acknowledge that gathering longitudinal data is challenging and often requires funding and concede that even the authors on this paper have only been able to complete a few PWT framed longitudinal papers (Allan et al., 2020; Duffy et al., 2020). However, given that we have nearly 100 quantitative studies using the Theory, it seems imperative that researchers prioritize taking that next step to assess the way these constructs relate across time.

Use PWT as a Framework for Examining new Constructs and Questions

PWT was not intended to just be concerned with the core model variables. It was intended to be a framework to demonstrate predictors and outcomes of decent work, and the number of variables that exist that fit into this category is limitless. For example, Smith et al. (2020) included psychological ownership as a predictor in the model versus career adaptability, Kim and Allan (2021) examined classism as a predictor of decent work, Blustein et al. (2022) looked at the overlap between precarious work and decent work, Duffy et al. (2022) added in decent education as another predictor variable, and Huang and Yuan (2022) focused on how decent work predicts performance versus satisfaction. We highly encourage researchers to keep using the model as a general framework for investigating specific questions or constructs that may have not be included in the original theory.

Move Beyond Work Outcomes

Related to the previous point, to date the vast majority of studies using PWT have examined how decent work attainment relates to other work outcomes, like job satisfaction, withdrawal intentions, or meaningful work. However, access to decent work likely has a broader range of impacts, especially with regards to mental and physical health. Some initial studies have begun

to look at these links (e.g., [Blustein et al., 2022](#); [Duffy et al., 2021](#); [Sönmez et al., 2022](#)), but these outcomes can be greatly expanded to address the broad ways one's work experiences impact the lives of those and those around them. We suspect that moving beyond work outcomes represents a fruitful area of future research, and long term could envision an expanded PWT model that better addresses the wide-ranging effects of attaining decent work. Certainly, general and physical well-being would be a key long term outcomes variable to study, but there are a slew of other interesting potential outcomes. For example, how does an individual attaining decent work effect their family and their larger community? Or, does the attainment to decent work differentially relate to outcomes the longer an individual remains in stable employment?

Dig Deeper Into Moderation Effects

Finally, as was evidenced in the review above, only a handful of studies to date have looked at the PWT proposed moderators. These also represented the most speculative part of PWT when it was originally introduced. Within this small group of studies, questions have already been raised concerning the theoretically implied role of critical consciousness, social support, and proactive personality. Results have varied greatly and in some cases the moderators were significant, but in the exact opposite direction as hypothesized. It's difficult to speculate why these findings have been so inconsistent given that we have little data to draw from, as perhaps the core ideas themselves could be off (e.g., support is better positioned as a direct predictor of decent work vs. moderator; [England et al., 2020](#)) or moderators may function differently based on sample (e.g., adults vs. college students). Additionally, the economic conditions construct is likely better assessed using group level versus individual data to get at the impact of living in specific neighborhoods, cities, states, or countries. This approach is also more consistent with what was originally suggested within PWT. Although it represents an added challenge for researchers to gather this type of data, we believe it could provide a more nuanced understanding of how macro level factors interact with individual perceptions. Overall, it seems likely that as scholarship on the Theory matures, it may be that different moderator variables—or different ways of measuring moderator variables—may emerge as a more promising way to understand which factors may buffer negative effects of contextual barriers on attaining decent work.

Conclusion

PWT was published in 2016 and as such is still in its infancy as a core theory within counseling and vocational psychology. The approximately 100 quantitative studies that have already been completed using the Theory have shown its validity and relevance of its propositions. However, the growth of this scholarship will depend—in part—on making sure key constructs within the Theory are clearly conceptualized and measured. In the current paper we reviewed how this has been completed to date and offered 10 recommendations for researchers interested in moving PWT scholarship forward. We are excited to see the growth of this work over the next 10 years.

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ORCID iDs

Ryan D. Duffy  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7418-3274>

Haram J. Kim  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3749-3617>

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