Tests of the Theory of Work Adjustment With Economically Distressed African Americans

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The present study tested 2 competing, extended models of the theory of work adjustment (TWA) with a sample of 100 economically distressed working African Americans receiving services at a nonprofit community center. Model 1 depicted a mediated model consistent with postulations of the TWA’s original theorists. Model 2 depicted a moderated mediation model consistent with cultural critiques of the TWA. Bivariate correlations indicated that perceptions of person–organization (P–O) fit were positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions, and job satisfaction was negatively related to turnover intentions. Furthermore, perceptions of racial climate were positively related to perceptions of P–O fit and job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions. Moreover, results of the path analyses indicated stronger support for Model 2, the moderated mediation model, in which the indirect link of P–O fit with turnover intentions through job satisfaction was conditional on levels of racial climate. Specifically, when racial climate was perceived as less supportive, the indirect link of P–O fit with turnover intentions was nonsignificant, but when employees reported moderate and more supportive levels of racial climates, this indirect relation was significant. Research and career counseling implications of the present study’s findings for financially distressed African American employees are discussed.

Keywords: African Americans, socioeconomic status, person–environment fit, job satisfaction, turnover intentions

According to U.S. Department of Labor (2013a) estimates, recent jobs added to the economy tend to be part time and in low-paying industries such as retail and food services. Many of the individuals working these jobs are economically distressed employees categorized as “working poor” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013c). Exact definitions of who constitutes the “working poor” differ depending on source; nevertheless, researchers tend to recognize the working poor as those who are engaged in the workforce yet experience difficulty meeting the financial demands of daily living (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013c; Wicks-Lim, 2012). Scholars have identified challenges specific to this segment of the working population including low levels of education (Kim, 1999) and poor health along with restricted access to health care and health insurance (Stewart, 2007). The working poor are also less likely to possess requisite job skills (Kim, 1999) and are more vulnerable to unemployment and involuntary part-time employment (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013c) than employees who receive higher financial compensation. In the present study, the terms working poor and economically distressed employee are used interchangeably.

Overrepresented among the working poor are African Americans, who are more than twice as likely to be working poor (13.3%) than their European American counterparts (6.1%; U.S. Department of Labor, 2013c). Given the tenuous connection this population may have to the world of work, we use components of the theory of work adjustment (TWA; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), a theory designed to predict employee tenure, to frame the present study. Currently, the TWA enjoys empirical support with culturally diverse samples in terms of race (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006) and sexual orientation (Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; Velez & Moradi, 2012). However, previous samples were privileged with regard to socioeconomic status, which potentially limits the generalizability of the TWA to economically distressed employees.

The TWA

Consisting of 27 propositions, the predictive model of the TWA was developed to identify the factors associated with employees’ job satisfaction, workplaces’ satisfaction with their employees, and employee tenure (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). Rather than focusing solely on individual or environmental factors, the TWA describes the ways that person and environmental factors intersect (via
person–environment values fit). According to the TWA, when employees are satisfied with their workplaces and workplaces are satisfied with its employees, employees will remain in the workplace; thus, satisfaction is hypothesized to predict tenure. In the present study, we tested Propositions III (“Satisfaction is predicted from the correspondence of the work environment’s reinforcers to the worker’s values”; Dawis, 1996, p. 89), VII (“The probability of quitting is negatively related to satisfaction”; Dawis, 1996, p. 89), and VIII as it relates to the positive relation between satisfaction and tenure. These propositions have been the focus of scholarly debate on the relevance of assumptions of many trait and factor models such as the TWA (e.g., prioritization of choice in the determination of a job or career) vary according to individuals’ social standing and group membership (e.g., Richardson, 2012). Furthermore, other scholars have questioned whether competing predictors (e.g., employers’ financial stability, employment discrimination) obscure or transform hypothesized relations in traditional vocational theories (Blustein, 2006; Fassinger, 2001).

Specific to the TWA, researchers have long speculated about how contextual and cultural variables may impact the model (Dawis, 1994; Dawis & Lofquist, 1993; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Rounds & Hesketh, 1994; Tinsley, 1993). Most of this conceptual inquiry has focused on workplace discrimination. For example, Fassinger (2001) questioned the strength and presence of a direct relation between fit and satisfaction for groups who may experience workplace discrimination. Similarly, Fitzgerald and Betz (1994), Rounds and Hesketh (1994), and Tinsley (1993) proposed that workplace discrimination might moderate relationships in the model such as the relation between fit and job satisfaction and fit and tenure (Rounds & Hesketh, 1994), making outcomes more difficult to predict in the presence of workplace discrimination.

However, the TWA’s original theorists (Dawis, 1994; Dawis & Lofquist, 1993) proposed the TWA as an individual-differences model, which would be confirmed with culturally diverse samples. Specifically, they endorsed a mediated model in which cultural variables would predict person–environment fit, which in turn would predict TWA outcome variables (i.e., job satisfaction, satisfactoriness, tenure). In other words, experiences shaped by cultural context (e.g., discrimination) could impact individuals’ correspondence with particular environments (person–environment fit), which, in turn, is related to job satisfaction and intentions to leave the job.

Recent empirical tests of the TWA have supported the usefulness of the TWA in understanding individual differences in employees’ job outcomes with culturally diverse samples (Lyons et al., 2005; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Velez & Moradi, 2012). Specifically, these studies support the posited relations between perceptions of person–organization (P–O) fit and job outcomes with culturally diverse samples of employees (e.g., sexual minority employees, college-educated African American employees). In addition, culturally salient variables (e.g., workplace racial climates, workplace heterosexist discrimination) have been shown to yield indirect links with job outcomes via the mediating role of P–O fit (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Lyons et al., 2005; Velez & Moradi, 2012). Notably, the mediating role of P–O fit in the relations of culturally salient variables with job outcomes was posited by the TWA’s developers (Dawis, 1994; Dawis & Lofquist, 1993). Furthermore, cultural critiques proposing moderation have not received empirical support (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Lyons et al., 2005).

These aforementioned studies have extended our understanding of the links of culturally salient variables such as workplace discrimination to relations posited in the TWA. However, the authors of each of these studies described their samples as strikingly well educated and economically stable compared with the general population (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Lyons et al., 2005; Velez & Moradi, 2012). Moreover, across these studies, the authors called for replication of their research with diverse samples in terms of education and income. Thus, one of the goals of the present study was to explore the role of a culturally salient variable in the TWA model with a sample experiencing unique socioeconomic pressures—that is, economically distressed African American employees.

**Cross-Cultural Validation of the TWA**

In recent years, empirical tests of the TWA have focused on the cross-cultural validity of the theory (e.g., Lyons et al., 2005; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Velez & Moradi, 2012), following conceptual debate over the applicability of the theory for diverse populations. On a conceptual level, counseling psychologists have argued that the relevance of assumptions of many trait and factor models such as the TWA (e.g., prioritization of choice in the determination of a job or career) vary according to individuals’ social standing and group membership (e.g., Richardson, 2012). Furthermore, other scholars have questioned whether competing predictors (e.g., employers’ financial stability, employment discrimination) obscure or transform hypothesized relations in traditional vocational theories (Blustein, 2006; Fassinger, 2001).

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**Cultural Variability and TWA Outcomes**

Supporting these calls for TWA research with economically diverse samples is literature suggesting variability in TWA outcome variables (i.e., job satisfaction and tenure) by socioeconomic status and race. Some of this research is mixed as in the case of research on the between-group cultural differences in job satisfaction. This research has produced equivocal results with some studies suggesting that African Americans and those with less formal education report lower levels of job satisfaction than European Americans and those with more formal education (Clark & Oswald, 1996; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Tuch & Martin, 1991). However, other research suggests the contrary (Baurer, Huber, Jenny, & Hamming, 2009; Mueller, Finley, Iverson & Price, 1999). Findings related to income tend to be clearer, suggesting that those who earn more are more satisfied (Baurer et al., 2009; Dunaway & Running, 2009). With regard to cultural differences in tenure, Fassinger (2008) suggested that culturally disadvantaged groups may be more vulnerable to shorter periods of organizational tenure than culturally advantaged groups for a variety of reasons (e.g., employees’ poor health, increased vulnerability to downsizing). This postulation has been supported empirically with research suggesting that the working poor have shorter job tenures than other employees (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013c). Group differences are exaggerated when the interaction of race and class are considered (e.g., working-class African American experience more involuntary job loss than middle-class African Americans and European Americans in general; Wilson, 2005).

Together, this research suggests that counseling psychologists are still learning about the direct relevance of socioeconomic
The Present Study

In the present study, we test relations between variables used in prior cultural adaptations (Lyons et al., 2005; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Velez & Moradi, 2012) of the TWA with a sample of economically distressed African American employees. Our first set of hypotheses concern the bivariate associations between the variables of interest. Specifically, we predict that P-O fit will be positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions. We also predict that job satisfaction will be negatively related to turnover intentions. Finally, we hypothesize that racial climate will be positively related to P-O fit and job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions.

Next, we compare two competing path models testing the role of a culturally salient variable (racial climate) in the chain of relations posited in the TWA. These conceptual models are depicted in Figure 1, Panels a and b. Consistent with Propositions III, VII, and VIII of the TWA’s predictive model (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), both models predict that P-O fit yields a negative indirect relation with turnover intentions through the mediating role of job satisfaction. On the basis of Dawis and Lofquist’s (1984) articulation of the role of culturally salient variables to the TWA’s predictive model, Model 1 (see Figure 1, Panel a) posits that racial climate will yield a positive indirect relation with job satisfaction via the mediating role of P-O fit. In addition, Model 1 also predicts a negative indirect relation of racial climate with turnover intentions through the chain of relations involving P-O fit and turnover intentions.

Model 2 (see Figure 1, Panel b) is consistent with cultural critiques of the TWA that predict that culturally salient variables may modify the strength or nature of the links of P-O fit with job outcomes (e.g., Fassinger, 2001; Rounds & Hesketh, 1994; Tinsley, 1993). Thus, in Model 2, we examine racial climate as a moderator of the P-O fit-job satisfaction and P-O fit-turnover intentions link. Because the nature of this moderation has not been specified in prior conceptual work, we examine the nature of these interactions exploratorily. In addition, if racial climate moderates the predictor–mediator relation (i.e., the relation of P-O fit with job satisfaction), this indicates a case of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2013), whereby the negative indirect link of P-O fit with turnover intentions through job satisfaction is conditional on levels of racial climate. Thus, if the P-O Fit × Racial Climate interaction for job satisfaction is significant, we follow-up with an examination of the nature of the indirect link of P-O fit with turnover intentions at low and high levels of racial climate.

Despite the fact that culture is not formally proposed as part of the TWA model, the TWA’s authors have described the mediated relations presented in Model 1 in conceptual writings (e.g., Dawis, 1994; Dawis & Lofquist, 1993). Furthermore, previous tests of the TWA with culturally diverse samples (Lyons et al., 2005; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Velez & Moradi, 2012) are consistent with these predictions. For those reasons, we hypothesize that Model 1 will yield a significantly better fit with the data than Model 2.

Method

Participants

Data were analyzed from 100 participants. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 73 ($M = 47.31$, $SD = 11.17$, $Mdn = 49$). For subsequent descriptive data, percentages may not sum to 100% due to small levels of missing demographic data. With regard to gender, 81% identified as women and 19% identified as men. In terms of race/ethnicity, 95% of participants identified as Black/African American and 4% identified as multiracial. During data collection, we specified and required that participants be African American or Black. Therefore, multiracial individuals were retained given the assumption that they would also identify as African American or Black. With regard to highest level of education attained, approximately 10% earned less than a high school diploma, 36% earned a high school diploma, 13% earned a trade certification, 18% finished some college, 7% earned an associate’s degree, 5% earned a bachelor’s degree, and 1% earned a professional or graduate degree. In terms of employment status, approximately 30% were employed part time, 63% were employed full time, and 3% worked more than one job.

Participants worked in a variety of fields, including healthcare (approximately 25%), administration (12%), warehousing (8%), restaurants (6%), retail (5%), security and maintenance (4% each), childcare and transportation (3% each), education (2%), and construction and skilled trades (1% each); an additional 25% described their field as “other.” Approximately 3% of participants earned less than $4 dollars per hour, 8% earned between $4 and $7 dollars per hour, 28% earned between $7 and $10 dollars per hour,
27% earned between $10 and $13 per hour, 19% earned between $13 and $16 per hour, 6% earned between $16 and $20 per hour, and 8% earned more than $20 per hour; an additional 7% reported working “under the table.” The minimum wage in the state of data collection is $7.25 an hour (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013b). Participants reported a range of employment lengths with their current employer from 1 month ($n = 1, 1\%$) to 34.5 years ($n = 1, 1\%$), with a mean of 7.02 years ($SD = 8.36, Mdn = 4.00$).

Determining who is counted among the “working poor” depends on the definition considered. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2013c), the working poor are those with incomes below the national poverty level who have been working or looking for work for at least 27 weeks out of the year. However, others caution that these criteria are too extreme and do not account for those at higher income levels who have difficulty affording basic necessities (Kim, 1999). For this reason, some scholars set more liberal criteria by not restricting employment length and considering income between 2 and 4 times the federal poverty level (Wicks-Lim, 2012). In the present study, we used the definition provided by the data collection site, a nonprofit agency designed to distribute food and financial assistance. This agency provides assistance to individuals at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, which takes into account income and household composition. Therefore, our definition of “working poor” did not consider length of employment and fell above the income specified by the U.S. Department of Labor definition, but fell below other established definitions (Wicks-Lim, 2012).

Procedure

All participants responded using paper surveys, and surveys were only distributed to individuals who indicated being African American and employed at the time of data collection. Beginning with informed consent, participation took approximately 20 min. Study participants were compensated for their time with vouchers to a local farmer’s market worth $3.

Response rates were not recorded during data collection. However, other data are available that allow for a comparison of the study sample with clients from the data collection site. In 2013, 1,970 households received food or financial assistance at the agency (R. Neill, personal communication, January 6, 2014). In terms of demographic characteristics, only 25% of site clients are employed full- or part-time. The majority of clients are African American (92%) and women (55%). The site does not gather data on levels of education, nor was data on age provided (R. Neill, personal communication, January 6, 2014).

As with previous research with low-SES samples (Serafini & Maitland, 2013; Sutin, Costa, Evans, & Zonderman, 2013), the measures were adjusted for readability given that the range in educational levels of survey participants was anticipated to be greater than in research used to develop survey instruments. Readability was adjusted by replacing difficult words in item stems and response scales of the survey instruments, while attending to semantic and conceptual equivalence. The resulting Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score was 5.4, using the formula developed by Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers, and Chissom (1975). This formula considers sentence length and number of syllables per word. The resulting score indicates the text was readable on a fifth-grade level. Resulting surveys were reviewed for conceptual and semantic equivalence by a practicing vocational psychologist and graduate students in counseling and clinical psychology who were not members of the research team.

Data for the present study were collected on 33 days over 10 months from a total of 106 individuals in a mid-Atlantic city. Six participants (6%) were removed from the data set because they were missing more than 20% of the items analyzed in the study, surpassing the tolerance range for proportion of missing data suggested in prior research (e.g., Parent, 2013). Of the remaining 100 participants, 40 participants (40%) were missing between one and five items (2%–11% missingness), and an additional participant (1%) was missing seven items (15% missingness). For the path analyses, maximum likelihood estimation was conducted with Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) to handle the few missing items.

Instruments

**Demographic questionnaire.** The demographic questionnaire was designed to collect information that described the sample, such as age, race, and gender, as well as information that described the employment of the sample, such as industry and earnings.

**Perceptions of P–O fit.** The perceived degree of correspondence between the values and needs of employees and their workplaces was assessed using a revised version of Saks and Ashforth’s (1997) 10-item measure. Items were rated on a 5-point scale where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. A sample item is: “Does your workplace fulfill your needs?” Item responses were averaged to derive overall scores, with higher scores signifying greater P–O fit. With a sample of business program graduates, Saks and Ashforth (1997) supported the validity of the P–O fit measure with a confirmatory factor analysis, which indicated that the P–O fit measure was distinct from—but moderately correlated with—a measure of person–job fit. With a sample of African American employees, items from this measure yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .92 (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006). Cronbach’s alpha in the present sample was .88.

Identification of measurement issues inherent in the use of difference scores (e.g., lack of commensurate measures for person and environment, lost information in the calculation of fit indices; Edwards, 2001; Tinsley, 2000) precipitated the development of two contemporary approaches to fit measurement in vocational psychology and industrial/organizational psychology: direct evaluations of fit perceptions, as assessed in the present study, and the use of polynomial regressions. Both approaches possess recognized strengths (see Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). However, the use of fit perceptions is recognized as more proximal to employees’ decision making than other measurement approaches (Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003) and is consistent with contemporary tests of the TWA within counseling psychology (e.g., Lyons et al., 2005; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Velez & Moradi, 2012). Finally, even though the TWA’s theorists did endorse the use of difference scores, they also noted the importance of perceptions in the TWA when stating, “it is the perception of correspondence that matters for satisfaction” (Dawis & Lofquist, 1993, p. 116).

**Perceptions of racial climate.** Perceptions of racial climate were assessed using the 18-item Racial Climate Scale (RCS; Watts & Carter, 1991). Items were rated on a 5-point scale (from 1 =
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Never to 5 = *Always*). Appropriate items were reverse scored, and responses were averaged to derive an overall score, with high scores indicating more supportive racial climates. An example item is: “Racism is *not* tolerated at my job.” With regard to validity, RCS scores have been shown to correlate positively with job satisfaction and negatively with turnover intentions in samples of African American employees (Holder & Vaux, 1998; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006). In a sample of African American employees, modified RCS items yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .88 (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006). Cronbach’s alpha in the present sample was .86.

**Job satisfaction.** Satisfaction with one’s job was assessed using the 20-item short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ-SF; Weiss et al., 1967). MSQ-SF items ask participants to rate their satisfaction with 20 aspects of their jobs (e.g., compensation, achievement). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *Very dissatisfied* to 5 = *Very satisfied*). An example item is: “The freedom to use my own judgment.” Responses were averaged to derive overall scores, with higher scores indicating greater job satisfaction. In terms of validity, MSQ-SF scores correlated positively with other measures of job satisfaction in a sample composed primarily of European American employees (e.g., Bizot & Goldman, 1993). In a sample of African American employees, MSQ-SF items yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .92 (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006). Cronbach’s alpha in the present sample was .96.

**Turnover intentions.** Intentions to quit one’s job were assessed using Colarelli’s (1984) three-item scale. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. An example item is: “I frequently think of quitting my job.” One item was reverse scored, and all three items were averaged to derive an overall score, with higher scores indicating greater intentions to quit one’s job. The validity of scores on this measure was supported via negative correlations with scores on measures of commitment to and identification with one’s workplace organization in a sample of business program graduates (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). In a sample of African American employees, items in this measure yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .83 (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006). Cronbach’s alpha in the present sample was .74.

**Results**

Before conducting the primary analyses, the data were screened and determined to meet guidelines for univariate normality (i.e., skewness < 3.0 and kurtosis < 10.0; Weston & Gore, 2006). In addition, standardized residuals for the subsequent regression analyses were less than three and Cook’s distances were less than one, which suggest the absence of outliers that could significantly influence the results (Field, 2009). With regard to multicollinearity, absolute correlations were below .90, condition indices were below 30, and variance inflation factors were below 10; thus, multicollinearity was not deemed a concern (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Before conducting analyses, the authors reviewed studies with minority populations that used similar constructs and tested similar hypotheses (Lyons et al., 2005; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Velez & Moradi, 2012). Effect sizes in prior research ranged from $R^2 = .12$–.26 for P–O fit, $R^2 = .45$–.63 for job satisfaction, and $R^2 = .20$–.59 for turnover intentions. Using Cohen’s (1992) benchmarks for small ($R^2 = .02$), medium ($R^2 = .13$), and large ($R^2 = .26$) effects, these effects ranged from near-medium to large. A power analysis for the most complex regression equation embedded within the primary analysis (i.e., with four predictors) indicated that the present sample yielded a power of .97 to detect a medium effect and .99 to detect a large effect.

**Correlations**

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1. Cohen’s benchmarks for small ($r = .10$), medium ($r = .30$), and large ($r = .50$) effect sizes are used to describe the magnitudes of correlations. Consistent with prediction, supportive racial climates and P–O fit were positively correlated with job satisfaction and negatively correlated with turnover intentions. In addition, job satisfaction and turnover intentions were negatively correlated. Correlations ranged in magnitude from medium to large.

**Tests of Competing Models**

Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) was used to test the competing conceptual models (see Figure 1, Panel a, Panel b). Before conducting the analyses, the data were screened for multivariate normality. Inspection of Mahalanobis distances indicated that one case was a multivariate outlier ($p < .001$). Thus, the subsequent analyses were conducted with maximum likelihood estimation with mean-adjusted chi-square tests and robust standard errors (MLM), which is more robust to nonnormality (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Because the models were fully saturated (i.e., all possible direct and indirect paths were estimated) and nonnested, the Akaike’s information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) were used to compare model fit (Burnham & Anderson, 1998). For both AIC and BIC, smaller values indicate better fit. Guidelines suggest that AIC differences $\leq 2$ indicate no substantial difference, 3–9 indicate some difference, and $> 10$ provide strong evidence of difference (Burnham & Anderson, 2002). With regard to BIC, differences $< 2$ provide weak evidence

| Table 1: Correlations, Descriptive Statistics, and Cronbach’s Alphas of Variables of Interest |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|----------|
| Variable                                      | 1         | 2         | 3         | M        | SD       |
| 1. Person–organization fit                    | —         | 3.59      | 1.09      | 1–5      | −0.83    | 0.12     | .88      |
| 2. Racial climate                             | .45***    | —         | 3.50      | 0.70     | 1–5      | −0.41    | 0.69     | .86      |
| 3. Job satisfaction                           | .50***    | .48***    | —         | 3.81     | 0.97     | 1–5      | −0.64    | −25      | .96      |
| 4. Turnover intentions                        | −.46***   | −.35***   | −.46***   | 2.82     | 1.24     | 1–5      | 0.09     | −1.02    | .74      |

*** $p < .001$.
of difference, 2–5 indicate some difference, 6–9 provide strong evidence of difference, and $>10$ provide very strong evidence of difference (Raftery, 1995).

**Model 1.** The observed direct and indirect relations estimated in Model 1 are presented in Figure 2. The AIC and BIC for Model 1 were 828.52 and 859.78, respectively. Model 1 accounted for 20% of the variance in P–O fit, 33% of the variance in job satisfaction, and 29% of the variance in turnover intentions. Direct relations were largely consistent with bivariate correlations and Dawis (1994) and Dawis and Lofquist (1993). That is, racial climate yielded a significant unique positive link with P–O fit, racial climate and P–O fit yielded significant unique positive links with job satisfaction, and P–O fit and job satisfaction yielded significant unique negative links with turnover intentions. However, the unique link of racial climate with turnover intentions was nonsignificant.

To determine the significance of indirect relations, 95% confidence intervals (CIs; generated using MLM’s robust standard errors) were examined. If the CI does not contain zero, the indirect relation is significant at $p < .05$ (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006). Consistent with prediction, racial climate yielded a significant positive indirect link with job satisfaction through the mediating role of P–O fit ($B = .22$, 95% CI [.079, .363], $\beta = .16$). Racial climate also yielded a significant negative total indirect link with turnover intentions via paths through P–O fit and job satisfaction ($B = -.47$, 95% CI [-.701, -.230], $\beta = -.26$). In addition, P–O fit yielded a significant negative indirect link with turnover intentions via the mediating role of job satisfaction ($B = -.11$, 95% CI [-.213, -.014], $\beta = -.10$). Given the nonsignificant direct link of racial climate with turnover intentions, the corresponding significant indirect link reflects full mediation. In contrast, given the significant direct links of racial climate with job satisfaction and P–O fit with turnover intentions, the corresponding significant indirect links reflect partial mediation.

**Model 2.** Prior to conducting the analyses, the predictor, mediator, and moderator variables were centered to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). The results of the analyses are presented in Table 2. The AIC and BIC for Model 2 were 538.97 and 567.63, respectively. Model 2 accounted for 39% of the variance in job satisfaction and 29% of the variance in turnover intentions. As was the case for Model 1, P–O fit and racial climate yielded significant unique positive links with job satisfaction, and P–O fit and job satisfaction yielded significant unique negative links with turnover intentions. In addition, as predicted, the P–O Fit $\times$ Racial Climate interaction was significant with job satisfaction as the criterion. The P–O Fit $\times$ Racial Climate interaction accounted for 6% of the variance in job satisfaction beyond the variance accounted for by the first-order terms. In contrast, the P–O Fit $\times$ Racial Climate interaction was nonsignificant, with turnover intentions as the criterion. The interaction accounted for approximately 0% of the unique variance in turnover intentions.

Mplus was used to conduct simple slope analyses to determine the nature of the significant P–O Fit $\times$ Racial Climate interaction in relation to job satisfaction. Specifically, the simple slope analyses tested the direct link of P–O fit with job satisfaction at low (1 SD below the mean) and high (1 SD above the mean) levels of racial climate. In addition, these analyses tested the conditional indirect link of P–O fit with turnover intentions through job satisfaction at low, mean, and high levels of racial climate.

The simple slope analyses indicated that at low levels of racial climate, the link of P–O fit with job satisfaction was nonsignificant ($\beta = .18$, $p = .17$). However, when racial climate was high, the link of P–O fit with job satisfaction was significant and positive ($\beta = .64$, $p < .001$). The nature of this interaction is depicted in Figure 3. At low levels of P–O fit, individuals who perceived less supportive racial climates and individuals who perceived more supportive racial climates reported comparable levels of job satisfaction. However, as P–O fit increased, individuals with more supportive racial climates experienced greater gains in job satisfaction than individuals with less supportive racial climates.

The significant P–O Fit $\times$ Racial Climate interaction predicting job satisfaction indicated moderated mediation (Hayes, 2013). Thus, we used Mplus to examine the indirect link of P–O fit with turnover intentions at low, mean, and high levels of racial climate. Results indicated that for individuals who reported poorer racial climates, the indirect link of P–O fit with turnover intentions was nonsignificant ($B = -.06$, 95% CI [-.149, .039], $\beta = -.05$). However, the indirect link of P–O fit with turnover intentions was significant at mean and high levels of racial climates: $B = -.13$ (95% CI [-.237, -.016]), $\beta = -.11$; $B = -.20$, (95% CI [-.364, -.033]), $\beta = -.18$, respectively.

**Model comparison.** Comparisons of fit indices showed that Model 2 yielded AICs and BICs that were 289.55 and 292.15 lower, respectively, than the AIC and BIC of Model 1. These values provide strong evidence that Model 2 yielded better fit to
the data than Model 1 (Burnham & Anderson, 2002; Raftery, 1995).

Discussion

Although prior studies have tested cultural adaptations of the TWA with diverse groups (Lyons et al., 2005; Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Velez & Moradi, 2012), such studies have used samples with notably elevated SES relative to the general population. In order to expand the generalizability of such cultural adaptations of the TWA, we tested in the present study tenets of the theory with a population with different financial circumstances—that is, economically distressed African American employees. In addition, we compared two models regarding the role of a culturally salient variable (racial climate) in the TWA. In Model 1, we tested Dawis and Loфquist’s (1984) contention that culturally salient variables would shape P–O fit, which would in turn be associated with job satisfaction and turnover intentions. In contrast, in Model 2, we examined racial climate as a moderator of the relations of P–O fit with job satisfaction and turnover intentions, which is consistent with cultural critiques of the TWA (e.g., Fassinger, 2001; Rounds & Hesketh, 1994; Tinsley, 1993). Findings of this study provide some support for traditional formations of the TWA while also indicating potential points of divergence for the population of interest. The results of this study can inform career counseling and research with economically distressed African American employees.

Bivariate correlations were largely consistent with hypotheses and the predictive model of the TWA (Dawis & Loфquist, 1984). That is, P–O fit was positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions, and job satisfaction was negatively related to turnover intentions. Moreover, using Cohen’s (1992) benchmarks, the magnitudes of these relations ranged from near-large (i.e., correlations of P–O and job satisfaction with turnover intention, both \( r = -0.46 \)) to large (correlation of P–O fit with job satisfaction, \( r = 0.50 \)). Beyond these direct relations, both Model 1 and Model 2 indicated that P–O fit yielded a negative indirect link with turnover intentions via the partial mediating role of job satisfaction. Thus, the results of this study support perceived fit with one’s workplace organization as an important individual-difference variable that is associated with economically distressed African American employees’ job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Although economically distressed populations may not experience as much work volition as other populations with regard to choosing characteristics of their workplace (Duffy & Autin, 2013), psychologists conducting career counseling with this population should not dismiss the important role perceived fit plays in the vocational functioning of this population.

Another goal of this study was to examine the role of a culturally relevant variable in the TWA’s predictive model. Consistent with prior research with a well-educated sample of African American employees (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006), perceptions of supportive workplace racial climates were positively related to P–O fit and job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions. These correlations ranged in magnitude from medium (correlation of racial climate with turnover intentions, \( r = 0.35 \)) to near-large (correlation of racial climate with job satisfaction, \( r = 0.48 \)). Beyond these bivariate associations, the two path models compared in this study tested different formulations of racial climate’s contributions to the TWA’s predictive model. On the basis of postulations by the founders of the TWA (Dawis & Loфquist, 1984), we tested in Model 1 racial climate as a conceptual precursor to P–O fit and job outcomes. Results for this model indicated that racial climate yielded a positive indirect link with job satisfaction via the mediating role of P–O fit and yielded a negative indirect link with turnover intentions via paths including P–O fit and job satisfaction. Alternatively, Model 2 incorporated cultural critiques of the TWA, which suggested that culturally relevant variables would change the strength or nature of relations between TWA variables. Thus, in Model 2, we tested racial climate as a moderator of the
links of P–O fit with job satisfaction and turnover intentions. We also tested the conditional indirect relation of P–O fit with turnover intentions through job satisfaction at varying levels of racial climate. Results indicated that the P–O Fit × Racial Climate interaction in relation to job satisfaction was significant, although the P–O Fit × Racial Climate interaction in relation to turnover intentions was nonsignificant. The nature of the significant interaction was such that the association of P–O fit with job satisfaction became stronger as racial climate became more positive (see Figure 3, Panel a). Moreover, the negative indirect link of P–O fit with turnover intentions via job satisfaction became stronger as racial climate became more positive (see Figure 3, Panel b).

When comparing Models 1 and 2, fit indices indicated that Model 2 yielded a better fit to the data than Model 1. Thus, consistent with cultural critiques of the TWA (Fassinger, 2001; Fitzgerald & Betz 1994; Rounds & Hesketh, 1994; Tinsley, 1993), it appears that the relations between P–O fit and job outcomes may depend, in part, on culturally relevant variables such as workplace racial climate. That is, the direct association of P–O fit with job satisfaction and the indirect association of P–O fit with turnover intentions through job satisfaction became stronger as racial climate was perceived as more supportive of African American employees. Thus, when workplaces affirm their employees with regard to racial climate, the relations posited in the TWA are supported. However, when racial climate is perceived as less affirmative, the relations between fit, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions are attenuated.

These findings suggest that racial climate is an important contextual factor to attend to when examining the job functioning of economically distressed African Americans. Given the findings in the present study, it is possible that when workplaces are perceived to be less affirmative of their racial identities, these employees may “disidentify” with the organization, making perceived fit between oneself and one’s workplace organization a less salient predictor of job functioning. In these cases, other factors—such as salary, job security, and the like—may be more contextually relevant factors. Such disidentification from one’s workplace has been evinced in research on the consequences of negative cultural experiences, including chronic stereotype threat (Woodcock, Hernandez, Estrada, & Schultz, 2012).

The Role of SES

Notably, in prior research with African American employees reporting higher levels of formal education, largely employed in “white collar” jobs, racial climate did not moderate the direct links of P–O with job satisfaction or turnover intentions (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006). Similar results were found in studies of well-educated lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees (Lyons et al., 2005). These discrepant findings across samples beg the question: Is affirmation of culture more salient for lower SES African American employees than employees more securely situated in terms of income and education? Prior research suggests that this may be the case. African Americans of lower SES do report a greater likelihood of experiencing racial discrimination and harassment than African Americans of higher SES (Brondolo et al., 2009). Despite this, lower SES African Americans are less likely to work in jobs protected by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), given that they may be more likely than higher SES African Americans to be employed illegally or work in smaller organizations not subject to such legislation (Burstein, 1985). Perhaps relatedly, middle-class African Americans are more likely than working-class African Americans to file complaints with the EEOC (Dobbin, Sutton, Meyer, & Scott, 1993). Therefore, those most likely to endorse the experience of racial discrimination and harassment are the least likely to be protected from it, potentially heightening the salience of racial climate in shaping the relations of P–O fit, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions for this population.

At the same time, the results of the present study are not necessarily inconsistent with previous findings. Participants in the present study reported a greater range of responses than observed with prior samples (Lyons & O’Brien, 2006; Lyons et al., 2005; Velez & Moradi, 2012). In previous tests of the TWA, researchers reported cultural climate scores restricted to low and moderate levels. Because in the present study we found that outcomes were more difficult to predict with racial climate scores at low levels but not moderate and high levels, this range restriction in the previous studies might have limited previous researchers’ ability to reveal moderation. Additionally, given that range restriction increases the likelihood of committing a Type II error (Aguinis, Sturman, & Pierce, 2008), the potential difficulty finding moderation may have been heightened in previous studies.

Limitations

The implications of the present study should be interpreted with consideration of its limitations. To start, it is conceivable that the generalizability of the present study is limited given the potential uniqueness of sample characteristics. Data for the present study were collected at a social service agency representing a limited geographical location. Furthermore, given that working-poor individuals generally underuse services for which they qualify (Kim, 1999), participants in the present study might possess needs that are different from the general population of working-poor individuals or have a more acute sense of their needs. A final limitation as is related to the sample in the present study was the use of financial criteria to determine economic distress that fell below criteria supplied by other researchers (e.g., Wicks-Lim, 2012) yet above the criteria set by the federal government (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013c). This lack of agreement on a clear definition of the term working poor may result in difficulty discerning to whom results of the present study generalize.

On a related note, measurement of SES varies throughout the literature (e.g., Shavers, 2007). In most investigations, composites of SES are used that include some configuration of household income, occupation, occupational status (or parental occupational status), education, or perceived social class (e.g., Blustein et al., 2002). In the present study, education and income data were collected after participants’ met the financial prerequisites established by the data collection site (based on household income and number of dependent household occupants). However, SES was not analyzed as a variable in the present study. Additionally, psychological components of class (e.g., social class worldview, experiences with classism) were neither measured nor analyzed, which limit the ability of practitioners and researchers to establish the direct role of SES in the TWA. However, the purpose of the present study was to...
determine the generalizability of the proposed relations among variables in the TWA for economically distressed African American employees. Future studies may more directly assess the role of SES by comparing the fit of Model 2 in the present study across different SES groups.

Another limitation of the present study was the use of cross-sectional data, which precludes conclusions about temporal precedence or causality. Certainly, future experimental and longitudinal research can be designed to test the theoretically proposed causal relations in the TWA as well as the potential ability of workplace climates to influence workplace outcomes, which has been suggested in previous experimental (Good & Rudman, 2010; Magallares, Morales, & Rubio, 2011) and longitudinal (Pavalko, Mossakowski, & Hamilton, 2003) research. Future experimental and longitudinal research would also allow for assessment of actual workplace tenure rather than rely on turnover intentions.

Finally, reading levels of established measures were modified for the present study to capture potentially limited reading and comprehension abilities of some participants. Despite the fact that these measures displayed strong psychometric properties with the present sample, as reflected in internal consistency estimates and theoretically consistent correlations, more comprehensive measurement development may be beneficial.

Research and Clinical Implications

As this line of inquiry progresses, researchers and practitioners may benefit from an understanding of the role of context in the prediction of TWA variables. More specifically, research on TWA variables and relations for economically distressed African American employees might incorporate varied ecological layers in analyses, including national concerns (e.g., ratio of unemployed workers to job openings), organizational factors (e.g., an organization’s financial health, presence of a critical mass of culturally similar employees), in addition to person-level variables such as educational opportunities, work history, personal experiences with discrimination, and knowledge of protective legislation.

To conclude, results from this study indicated that the TWA has relevance for economically distressed African American employees, when these employees work in racial climates deemed as moderately and highly supportive. However, when racial climates are not perceived as supportive, the ability to predict who will be satisfied and who will remain with their employers is compromised. Continuation of this line of inquiry may yield a more holistic and accurate conceptualization of the role of work in the lives of economically disadvantaged African Americans that recognizes work as means of expressing one’s vocational values.

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