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Running head: FUN IN THE WORKPLACE

Fun in the Workplace: A Review and Expanded Theoretical Perspective

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Fun in the Workplace: A Review and Expanded Theoretical Perspective

Highlights

- At present, the workplace fun literature is without a theoretically grounded framework.
- When presented with the opportunity to have fun at work, individuals make cognitive appraisals of whether or not they want to participate in the activity.
- A systematic review of the fun in the workplace literature is conducted to identify gaps.
- A theoretically grounded framework is developed to provide a more nuanced model of the temporal processes and contextual factors that explain how the benefits of fun in the workplace unfold.

Abstract

Since the turn of the century, a growing body of research has systemically examined the role of fun in the workplace. In general, the extant body of research has demonstrated that fun in the workplace has a beneficial impact for individuals and organizations, but some evidence has been mixed. To help advance research in this area, the aims of this paper are two-fold. The first aim is to review previous research on fun in the workplace and identify gaps in the literature to provide direction for future work. The second aim is to offer a theoretical framework that helps explain how individuals may interpret fun in the workplace and how it may be most beneficial. Drawing on the notion that fun in the workplace is in the eye of the beholder, our proposed framework provides a more nuanced understanding of the temporal processes and contextual factors that explain how individuals appraise and ultimately benefit from fun.

Key words: Fun in the workplace; Appraisal theory; Emotions

Fun in the Workplace: A Review and Expanded Theoretical Perspective

“If you infuse fun into the work environment, you will have more engaged employees, greater job satisfaction, increased productivity and a brighter place to be.”

— Stacy Sullivan, Chief Culture Office at Google

“When you play, play hard; when you work, don’t play at all.”

—Theodore Roosevelt

For more than 20 years, fun in the workplace has been argued to be a key ingredient to organization success. In their book *Built to Last*, Collins and Porras (1997) found that two great companies, Marriott and Walt Disney World, have strong corporate cultures that emphasize fun in the workplace. Marriott’s core ideology statement is “work hard, yet keep it fun” (p. 89), and Walt Disney World’s annual report contained words such as “fun, excitement, and joy” (p. 129). Widely known for its positive workplace, Google leaders believe that the defining mark of fun in the workplace is that “fun comes from everywhere” (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014, p. 56). In fact, rather than trying to manufacture fun in the workplace around specific fun activities, Google incorporates fun in the workplace in a variety of ways. For example, the company celebrates April Fool’s Day each year, allows employees to play beach volleyball and ping pong during breaks, and incorporates fun into its office design. The fundamental belief that permeates companies such as these is that fun in the workplace is a central means to promote engagement, cohesive relationships, creativity, and better employee health (Vorhauser-Smith, 2013; Yerks, 2003). Caccamese (2012) argues that although engaging in fun in the workplace does not necessarily create a great workplace, it does help to boost employee camaraderie, build trust, and motivate people to be themselves.

Building on these arguments, a growing body of research, which has primarily focused on the individual level of analysis, has emerged to validate the generalizability of the value of fun in the workplace. For example, Karl and colleagues demonstrated that fun in the workplace is positively related to job satisfaction (Karl & Peluchette, 2006a; Peluchette & Karl, 2005), trust in supervisors and coworkers (Karl, Peluchette, Hall, & Harland, 2005), and perceptions of service quality (Karl & Peluchette, 2006b), as well as negatively related to emotional exhaustion (Karl, Peluchette, & Harland 2007) and turnover intentions (Karl, Peluchette, & Hall, 2008). Furthermore, Tews and colleagues demonstrated that fun in the workplace has a favorable influence on applicant attraction (Tews, Michel, & Bartlett, 2012), job performance (Tews, Michel, & Stafford, 2013), and employee retention (Tews, Michel, & Allen, 2014).

One of the primary means through which fun in the workplace has the potential to have a favorable impact on individuals is by increasing positive affect, which is supported by the *affective events theory* and *broaden-and build theory*. According to Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) affective events theory, events that people experience at work are proximal causes of affective reactions to those events. Fun in the workplace can elicit emotional reactions from individuals. When individuals experience fun in the workplace favorably, they may be more likely to experience positive rather than negative emotions to such events. Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory can be used to explain why experiencing positive affect from engaging in fun in the workplace can have long-term benefits. The broaden-and-build theory suggests that experiencing positive affect over time broadens the thought-action tendencies of people, which lead to the development of intellectual, psychological, social, and physical resources. Thus, experiencing positive affect from fun in the workplace may help individuals think more creatively, approach situations more optimistically, develop stronger relationships, and acquire

better coping mechanisms to help individuals perform better, engage in more learning, and experience higher levels of well-being.

Despite its many potential benefits, fun in the workplace does not appear to be universally accepted by managers or employees, and the criticisms against fun in the workplace have some validity. The arguments against fun in the workplace are reflected in the second quote above by Theodore Roosevelt who believed that work should be about work and not about play. In support of this belief, a survey conducted by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that some managers question the universal effectiveness of fun in the workplace (SHRM, 2002). Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that time constraints could keep managers from endorsing fun in the workplace. Other reasons mentioned for skepticism include costs, long-term payoff, lack of management support, and a potential detriment to employee productivity. Fleming (2005) found that many employees disliked company-sponsored fun, considering it inauthentic and fake. Also, Fleming and Sturdy (2009) found that some individuals were resistant to participation in outside social activities and only feigned interest. The crux of these arguments is that work should be work.

To advance the fun in the workplace literature, we argue that additional work is needed to not merely examine whether fun in the workplace is beneficial, but to more fully understand the conditions under which it is valued and leads to desirable outcomes. Toward this end, the primary goals of this paper are two-fold. One, we conduct a systematic review of the empirical research on fun in the workplace and identify gaps in the fun in the workplace literature. Two, to advance theory and research in this area, we develop a theoretically grounded framework that provides a more nuanced model of the temporal processes and contextual and person-specific factors that explain how individuals may interpret fun in the workplace and how it may be most

beneficial over the short and long term. Drawing on the appraisal literature (Lazarus, 1991), along with affective events and broaden and build theories, the proposed framework will elucidate how fun in the workplace is in the eye of the beholder (Bolton & Houlihan, 2009). This framework will illustrate how individuals make appraisals before, during, and after engaging in fun in the workplace and how contextual and person-specific factors strengthen (or weaken) the favorability of these appraisals. Ultimately, we hope that this paper will provide a more nuanced perspective on the value of fun in the workplace and will stimulate further research in this area.

What is Fun in the Workplace?

It is important to clarify what is meant by fun in the workplace. In the existing body of literature, *fun in the workplace* is characterized as aspects or features of the work environment that have the potential to promote positive emotional reactions such as enjoyment, amusement, and lighthearted pleasure in individuals. In one of the earliest papers on fun in the workplace, Ford, McLaughlin, and Newstrom (2003) define fun in the workplace as a “work environment that intentionally encourages, initiates, and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities” (p. 22). McDowell (2004) argues that fun in the workplace involves activities that are “not specifically related to the job that are enjoyable, amusing, or playful” (p. 9). To provide a broader conceptualization of fun in the workplace, Fluegge (2008) defined it as “any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure” (p. 15). Unlike McDowell, Fluegge includes task activities as another way in which individuals can have fun in the workplace. Although these definitions explore fun in the workplace as something that is promoted intentionally by the organization, Bolton and Houlihan (2009) articulate that not all fun is organizationally sponsored and that it is important to distinguish between “packaged fun” and “organic fun,” the latter

reflecting an “intrinsic and inherent part of organizational life” (p. 557). Drawing on this previous literature, we define fun in the workplace as characteristics or features of the work environment of a social, playful, and humorous nature, which have the potential to trigger positive feelings of enjoyment, amusement, and lighthearted pleasure in individuals.

Research that has focused on fun as a feature of the work environment have focused on different levels of specificity and perspectives. Some researchers have focused on a global holistic evaluation of fun. For example, Karl and colleagues have examined the impact of *experienced fun*, which refers to whether individuals perceive that fun generally exists in the workplace (Karl & Peluchette, 2006b; Karl et al., 2007). Similarly, McDowell (2004) examined *global fun at work*, which refers to the overall evaluation individuals make with respect to whether an organization has a fun work climate. Other researchers have focused on specific features of the work environment that potentially increase an individual’s positive affect, which include fun activities, personal freedoms, manager support for fun, coworker socializing, and fun job responsibilities. *Fun activities* reflect social activities that are organized and sponsored by the organization designed to foster a sense of enjoyment and commitment (Ford et al., 2003; Karl et al., 2005; Tews et al., 2014), such as outings, team building activities, and public celebrations of achievements and personal milestones. *Personal freedoms* relate to whether the workplace encourages, permits and allows individuals to have fun in the workplace (McDowell, 2004), and *manager support for fun* refers to the extent to which managers specifically allow individuals to do so (Tews et al., 2014). Together personal freedoms and manager support for fun reflect supportive workplace practices for fun in the workplace. In turn, coworker socializing refers to friendly social interactions among coworkers, which may include sharing personal stories, telling jokes, and sharing food with one another (Fluegge, 2008; McDowell, 2004; Tews et al., 2014).

Finally, *fun job responsibilities* are tasks that are personally enjoyable, meaningful, and a good fit to the person's interests (Tews et al., 2012). It should be noted that fun job responsibilities may be at periphery of what constitutes fun in the workplace, in line with McDowell's (2004) argument that fun involves aspects of the workplace that are beyond the job itself, but are important nonetheless.

Fun in the workplace is related to, yet distinct from, other workplace constructs and streams of research including humor (Mesmer-Magnu, Glew, & Viswesvaran, 2012) and play (Sørensen & Spoelstra, 2011) at work. Unlike fun in the workplace, humor and play are specific tactics for fostering fun and are more narrowly focused constructs, which are likely subsumed within the types of fun in the workplace. In a general sense, humor is any verbal and nonverbal communication that produces a "positive cognitive or affective response from listeners" (Crawford, 1994, p. 57). Humor is used for collaborative purposes by managers and among coworkers to enhance social interactions, provide a buffer against stress, and lower one's social status so to seem more approachable (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). Integrating this definition with the different types of fun suggests that humor from one's coworkers is a sub-component of the coworker socializing dimension of fun and that humor from one's manager is a sub-component of manager support for fun. Play has been defined as "an activity or behavior that (a) is carried out with the goal of amusement and fun, (b) involves an enthusiastic and in-the-moment attitude or approach, and (c) is highly interactive among play partners or with the activity itself" (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015, p. 640). Like fun, play is an activity that promotes amusement, enjoyment, and pleasure. However, like humor, we argue that play is a sub-component of fun in the workplace. Following that play involves interactions among participants or with the activity itself, we argue that play is a sub-component of fun activities.

For example, some fun activities do include aspects of play, such as some teambuilding activities. Furthermore, play is also a sub-component of coworker socializing (e.g., individuals taking breaks to play games such as foosball or ping pong). Finally, working in an organization or for a manager who supports fun in the workplace will likely provide more opportunities to engage in play at work. It is important to note, however, that not all types of fun in the workplace rely on humor or play. While humor and play are aspects of fun in the workplace, fun at work comprises a wider range of activities and interactions.

It should be emphasized that fun in the workplace is different from *having fun*. Fun in the workplace reflects features or aspects of the work environment. In contrast, having fun reflects a state internal to an individual, that is, the actual experience of enjoyment, amusement, and pleasure. In other words, having fun is the experience of positive affect, a state of “high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement” (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988: 1063). In this vein, Pryor, Singleton, Taneja, and Humphreys (2010) characterize having fun as “the pleasure you experience while you are involved in some action such as doing something, seeing something, or even relaxing” (p. 294). That is, having fun refers to the actual experience of positive emotions that people experience when engaged in fun in the workplace. In support of this distinction, studies by Isen and Daubman (1984) and Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki (1987) demonstrated that participants that watched humorous video clips experienced more positive affect than those that watched a non-humorous video about mathematics. Similarly, Carnevale and Isen (1986) demonstrated that participants that watched cartoons experienced more positive affect compared to a control group. Furthermore, research has also demonstrated that other types of positive events also increase positive affect. Clark and Watson (1988) demonstrated a positive relationship between student engagement in social events, such as going out to dinner with

others, attending parties, and physical activities, and positive emotion. Similarly, Gable, Reis, Impett, and Asher (2004) found that college students had higher positive emotion when they engaged in social events (e.g., going out to eat with a friend) or public achievements (e.g., getting ahead in course work). These findings provide evidence that positive affect is an outcome of fun characteristics or features of the work environment rather than a dimension of fun in the workplace (e.g., Fluegge, 2008).

Prior Fun in the Workplace Literature

The extant body of research on fun in the workplace has generally focused on three lines of inquiry. One stream of research, which is largely descriptive in nature, has attempted to determine what types of workplace activities are fun or not. A second stream of research, which has been largely quantitative, has focused on validating the impact of fun in the workplace by examining its relationships with job attitudes, performance, and turnover. A third area of research, which has largely been qualitative, has examined fun in the workplace from a more critical perspective. Each of these will be described in detail in the following subsections.

Descriptive Fun in the Workplace Research

Early research on fun in the workplace focused on fun activities. In one of the earliest studies on fun in the workplace, Ford et al. (2003) surveyed 572 human resource managers to determine if HR managers felt that it is important for individuals to have fun at work and examined the frequency with which different potentially fun activities occur in the workplace. Ford et al. found that HR managers favored promoting a fun work environment and believed that it was an important management practice and not a fad. Their data showed that of the ten activities examined, the most frequently occurring were recognition of personal milestones, social events, and public celebrations of personal achievements. Competitions among

individuals, opportunities for personal development, and entertainment were the least. In another study, Karl et al. (2005) also examined what individuals considered fun or not. Using 242 individual responses from a variety of organizations, Karl et al. found that most individuals preferred activities involving food at work, celebrations of personal milestones, and workplace outings. Some of the activities individuals least preferred were those coined “wacky activities” (e.g., individuals lining up chairs and pretending they are a train, having “humor first aid kit” filled with toys and games, and doing skits at annual celebrations). These findings highlight that not all fun in the workplace is necessary equal.

Most recently, Chan (2010) conducted a qualitative case study with grounded theory approach and identified four categories of fun activities — (1) staff-oriented activities, (2) social-oriented activities, (3) supervisor-oriented activities, and (4) strategy-oriented activities. Staff-oriented activities are used to celebrate employee contributions and milestones of employees and include the celebration of birthdays, anniversaries of employment, and employee appreciation weeks. Social-oriented activities are used to build social relationships at work and include social gatherings, buffet lunches, holiday parties, and organizationally sponsored outings. Supervisor-oriented activities are initiated by supervisors to create a fun environment and include having lunch with the supervisor, informal supervisor-subordinate gatherings after work, and happy hour with the supervisor. Finally, strategy-oriented activities include management policies and strategies designed to support fun at work and include casual dress days, organization-provided food and beverages, and family-friendly benefits. Chan argues the more that individuals engage in these activities, the more well-being they will experience.

Quantitative Research Aimed at Validating the Impact of Fun in the Workplace

Other research has focused on validating the positive impact that fun in the workplace has on job attitudes, performance, learning, and retention. In a series of studies, Karl and colleagues studied the relationships between *experienced fun* and employee attitudes. Karl et al. (2005) found that employees' attitudes regarding the appropriateness, salience, and consequences of a fun work environment were positively related to trust in one's supervisor and coworkers, which suggests that building trusting relationships could be a precondition for fun in the workplace. In another study, Peluchette and Karl (2005) found that positive attitudes regarding the appropriateness, salience, and consequences of fun in the workplace were positively related to job satisfaction in a sample of health care workers. Also, in a healthcare context, Karl and Peluchette (2006a) found that experiencing fun in the workplace reduced the negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction, and Karl et al. (2007) found that experienced fun was negatively related to emotional exhaustion and emotional dissonance and positively related to job satisfaction. With a sample of undergraduate students employed in service settings, Karl and Peluchette (2006b) found that experienced fun was positively related to job satisfaction, especially for those who placed a high value on fun in the workplace. Furthermore, these authors also found that satisfied employees perceived that they provided better service quality to customers. Lastly, Karl et al. (2008) found that positive attitudes toward experienced fun was positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions in a sample of volunteers.

Another line of research has examined fun in the workplace as a multidimensional, higher order construct. McDowell (2004) developed a multidimensional framework of fun in the workplace which included the previously described dimensions of *coworker socializing*, *fun activities*, *personal freedoms*, and *global fun*. Aggregating these dimensions into an overall

measure, McDowell (2004) demonstrated that fun in the workplace was significantly related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions with a sample of oil company employees. In another study, which examined the same dimensions, Fluegge (2008) found that fun in the workplace had a positive relationship with job performance, including task performance, creative performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) with a sample of working undergraduate students. Moreover, she demonstrated that the relationship between fun in the workplace and task performance was mediated by employee positive affect and that the relationship between fun in the workplace and creative performance was mediated by work engagement. However, neither positive affect nor work engagement mediated the relationship between fun in the workplace and OCBs. Although these two studies provided initial evidence for the importance of multiple dimensions of fun in the workplace, they did not determine which aspects of fun in the workplace were most influential because all dimensions were aggregated into a single measure.

To determine the relative importance of different aspects of fun in the workplace, Tews and colleagues conducted several studies focused on the relative importance of different aspects of fun in the workplace. With a sample of collegiate job seekers, Tews et al. (2012) demonstrated that fun in the workplace was a stronger predictor of applicant attraction than compensation and opportunities for advancement, while coworker socializing and fun job responsibilities were stronger predictors of applicant attraction than fun activities. Tews et al. (2013) examined the impact of fun activities and manager support for fun on employee performance and turnover with a sample of restaurant servers. The results of this study demonstrated that fun activities were positively related to performance and manager support for fun was negatively related to turnover, thus promoting retention. However, manager support for fun had an adverse impact on

performance. The authors speculated that manager support for fun may lead to lower performance because employees may have been allowed to “slack off.” Tews et al. (2014) examined the relationship between three forms of fun in the workplace on turnover—fun activities, coworker socializing, and manager support for fun with another sample of restaurant servers. The results of this study showed that coworker socializing and manager support for fun were significantly related to turnover, and that constituent attachment mediated the relationship between each of the three forms of fun in the workplace and turnover. With a sample of full-time working Millennials employed in different organization, Tews, Michel, Xu, and Drost (2015) found that fun job responsibilities were the most dominant predictor of embeddedness followed by perceived career opportunities, praise and rewards, manager support for fun, coworker socializing, and fun activities. Finally, with a sample of casual dining restaurant managers, Tews, Michel, and Noe (2017) demonstrated that fun activities were related to informal learning, but manager support for fun was not. However, manager support for fun was positively related to a sub-dimension of informal learning, learning from oneself. Further, fun activities were positively related to the sub-dimensions of learning from others and learning from non-interpersonal sources. Overall, these studies highlight that not all fun in the workplace is necessarily equal.

Qualitative Research Examining Fun in the Workplace from a More Critical Perspective

Several qualitative studies have questioned the value of fun in the workplace. Taylor and Bain (2003) illustrated that supervisor efforts to sponsor fun in the workplace may at times be counterproductive. Individuals that engaged in satire and jokes developed countercultures that clashed with the goals and priorities of two call centers. Baptiste (2009) found that public sector senior managers were resistant to fun in the workplace because it would represent a burden when confronted with other work demands and stressors. Furthermore, Redman and Matthews (2002)

found that some individuals viewed formal fun activities cynically, and Fleming (2005) found that some individuals did not like formal fun activities because they considered them fake and inauthentic. Fineman (2006) suggested that the use of formal fun activities helps to humanize the organization and improve employee attitudes and behaviors, yet managing fun in the workplace too tightly can be problematic as fun basically “gains its ‘funness’ from its spontaneity, surprise, and often subversion” (p. 280). Fleming and Study (2009) demonstrated that some individuals faked interest in company sponsored fun activities and thus resisted participation in such activities, especially when engagement was encouraged. Finally, Plester and Hutchison (2016) conducted an ethnographic study to examine the relationship between three types of fun in the workplace — managed fun, organic fun and fun job responsibilities — and workplace engagement. They found that for some individuals, fun in the workplace offers a “refreshing break” that results in greater workplace engagement. However, for others, fun in the workplace can result in disengagement if it causes distractions from one’s work tasks.

Summary of Prior Fun in the Workplace Literature

Several conclusions can be drawn from the previous research on fun in the workplace to date. Overall, fun in the workplace appears to have a consistent favorable relationship with attitudes, yet fun’s relationships with employee performance and retention is mixed. Furthermore, although global fun measures have predictive value, additional value can be gained by focusing on different dimensions of fun in the workplace. In general, coworker socializing, manager support for fun, and fun job responsibilities exhibit stronger relationships with important outcomes than fun activities. However, not all findings are as supportive of fun in the workplace. Finally, a theme that has been echoed through the qualitative investigations is that fun in the workplace may not always be fun and that whether fun in the workplace is “fun” is

context dependent. We contend that fun in the workplace is largely in the eye of the beholder and more work is needed to systematically understand how individuals determine what is fun or not. To accomplish this goal, we will draw on the appraisal, affective events, and broaden-and-build literatures to develop a theoretically grounded framework for understanding temporal processes and contextual and person-specific factors that explain how and under what conditions fun in the workplace is most beneficial. Discussion of this framework is the focus of the following section.

When, How, and Under What Conditions is Fun in the Workplace “Fun”?

When individuals engage in fun in the workplace, they may experience reactions that, in turn, influence their attitudes and behaviors. What is less clear is when and under what conditions some individuals experience benefits from engaging in fun events and under what conditions they do not. Whether individuals experience positive benefits depends on the cognitive and emotional appraisals made about the fun event. In other words, whether fun in the workplace is “fun” is in the eye of the beholder. Broadly considered, appraisal theory can be used to explain why some individuals experience positive emotions from fun in the workplace, while others experience negative emotions. According to Lazarus’s (1991) structural theory of appraisals, individuals’ emotional reactions to events are determined by their interpretations of an event. According to affective events theory, events that individuals experience at work are proximal causes of affective reactions to those events, which have a direct influence on their attitudes and behaviors (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Weiss and Cropanzano describe an event as “a change in circumstances, a change in what one is currently experiencing” (p. 31). Whether transitory or ongoing, work events elicit positive or negative emotional reactions in individuals based on how an event is appraised, rather than the event itself (Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990). Although some events, such as experiencing something highly stressful are more critical

and elicit stronger emotional reactions, other events are less significant and cause more ephemeral emotional reactions. Regardless of whether the event is highly significant or less noteworthy, the more positive events that are experienced, the higher levels of positive emotion the person should feel (Conway & Briner, 2002).

In the context of fun in the workplace, we contend that it is important to consider individuals' cognitive and emotional appraisals prior to an event, during and after (see Figure 1). This model provides a theoretically grounded framework of the temporal processes and contextual and person-specific factors that explain how individuals may interpret fun in the workplace and how fun may lead to desirable short-term and long-term benefits. Central to the model are the anticipatory, principal, and retrospective appraisals. The anticipatory appraisal occurs prior to a fun event; the principal appraisal occurs during the fun event itself; and the retrospective appraisal happens sometime after fun event occurs. Examining whether fun is beneficial or not, requires a temporal lens. We contend that each of these appraisal processes offers a unique vantage point into how fun in the workplace impacts employee attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs.

With respect to the anticipatory appraisal, individuals assess whether they elect to participate in a fun event and their level of engagement. In this regard, prior to a specific incident of fun in the workplace, individuals consider whether they intend to *commit to* (engage fully with enthusiasm), *comply with* (engage, but with apathy and minimal effort), or *resist* participation (avoid because of opposition)¹. Individuals are likely to commit to engage in fun events when their anticipatory appraisal of the experience is favorable and they believe the experience could be fun and worthwhile. Compliance is likely when individuals are unsure if the event will be

¹ These three engagement decisions are based on the influence outcomes proposed by Falbe and Yukl (1992).

enjoyable or worthwhile or if they feel compelled to participate by others. Individuals will likely resist when other deadlines or responsibilities take precedence or when the event is mandatory and not seemingly enjoyable.

With respect to the *principal appraisal*, if individuals engage in a fun event, they then make a *real-time* assessment based on the emotions they experience from the event. If individuals experience positive emotions such as enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure, they will have a favorable principal appraisal of the event. However, if individuals experience negative emotions such as annoyance, frustration, or irritation, they will have an unfavorable principal appraisal of the event. When individuals make favorable principal appraisals from experiencing positive emotions, they will be more likely to gain short-term and long-term benefits from the event. However, if individuals make unfavorable principal appraisals from experiencing negative emotions, they will be more likely to disengage from the event. Short-term benefits could include making a new connection with a colleague, learning something new, or “earning points” with their manager by participating in events sponsored by management. Long-term benefits are developed over time at least partly through the broaden-and-build process (Fredrickson, 2001), which is described in detail later in the paper. Long-term benefits include stronger social relationships, more creativity and mindfulness, and greater psychological well-being.

With respect to the *retrospective appraisal*, after a fun event, individuals will assess whether the event was beneficial or not. When individuals experience positive emotions and gain benefits from engaging in a fun event, they will have favorable retrospective appraisals, which will increase the likelihood of engaging in, and ultimately appraise similar experiences positively in the future. For example, if an event is enjoyable and provides an opportunity to develop new friendships with coworkers, individuals may perceive the event as worthwhile and be more likely

to appraise future events more favorably. However, when individuals do not gain benefit from engaging in a fun event, they will have unfavorable retrospective appraisals and thus be less likely to engage in future events. It should be noted that individuals may have a favorable primary appraisal but fail to realize any long-term benefits. Even if individuals gain no other benefits than “having fun,” their retrospective appraisals may still be favorable. For example, having a positive experience at an informal happy hour will have a positive impact on how an individual appraises other future instances of fun in the workplace.

Insert Figure 1 about here

We contend that it is important to differentiate among individuals’ appraisals before, during, and after engaging in fun events because appraisals may evolve over the course of the experience. Although some individuals may have similar positive or negative appraisals before, during, and after a specific incident of fun in the workplace (congruent appraisals), others’ appraisals may differ throughout the process (incongruent appraisals). The following examples illustrate different paths of incongruent appraisals that individuals could make. In one path, while the anticipatory appraisal is unfavorable, the principal and retrospective appraisals are favorable. An individual may dread the prospect of attending the annual company holiday party but has an enjoyable experience and ends up getting to know a couple of coworkers better during the festivities and ends up benefiting from the experience. In a second path, although the anticipatory appraisal and principal appraisals are both unfavorable, the retrospective appraisal ends up being favorable. An individual may not want to attend a mandatory teambuilding activity and perceives that the actual experience is too manufactured and “goofy.” However, because the individual participated in the activity, he believes he will be viewed favorably by management, which may

be of benefit in the future. In a third path, the anticipatory appraisal is favorable, but the primary and retrospective appraisals are unfavorable. For example, an individual may be excited to go out to lunch with some coworkers she has never interacted with before, but during lunch the individual did not really enjoy her interactions with her peers. Upon reflection, she no longer has a desire to interact with this group of coworkers in the future. These examples are meant to illustrate that one's appraisal of fun in the workplace may not be static and that value is to be gained by focusing on fun in the workplace at different points of an experience.

Contextual and Person-Specific Factors of How Fun in the Workplace is Appraised

In the preceding sections, we have argued that whether fun in the workplace is enjoyable and beneficial for individuals depends in part on a multi-step appraisal process. Below we propose some important contextual and person-specific factors that likely strengthen (or weaken) the likelihood that individuals' appraisals of fun in the workplace will be favorable or not. We focus on four categories of contextual factors — supportive practices for fun, characteristics of fun in the workplace, characteristics of the job, and person-specific factors. Supportive practices for fun include manager support for fun and person freedoms. Characteristics of fun in the workplace include activity type, those involved in an event, and voluntariness of involvement. Characteristics of the job include work demands, compensation and the person's role in fun in the workplace. Finally, person-specific factors include person-organization fit, and positive and negative affectivity.

Supportive practices for fun. Earlier in the paper, we discussed manager support for fun and personal freedoms as components of fun in the workplace. We also explained that due to the similarity between these constructs, it may be best to combine them into a single construct — supportive practices for fun in the workplace. Specifically, manager support for fun in the

workplace refers to the extent to which managers encourage individuals to engage in fun in the workplace events at work, and personal freedoms reflects the extent to which fun in the workplace is permitted and supported throughout the workplace. We argue that supportive practices for fun in the workplace are critical factors in determining how individuals appraise fun events. When individuals perceive that partaking in fun in the workplace is encouraged by management, they will have more favorable appraisals about the fun event and be more likely to perceive the experience as beneficial. Individuals may look to management for cues as to whether engaging in fun in the workplace is acceptable or not. Supportive practices for fun in the workplace can also reduce any fear individuals may have about negative repercussions they may encounter from engaging in fun in the workplace (Tews et al., 2014). Some individuals may fear that engaging in fun in the workplace is seen by some as “a waste of valuable work time.” However, when individuals perceive that engaging in fun in the workplace is supported and valued, they themselves may value fun in the workplace more highly and be more open to investing themselves fully in a fun event.

Activity type. A fundamental factor that may determine how favorably a fun event is appraised is the type of activity. As previously discussed, Karl et al. (2005) found that not all activities are evaluated equally by individuals. While events involving food, celebrations of personal milestones, and workplace outings were most preferred by participants, events that were more eccentric in nature were least preferred. Individuals are more likely to appraise fun events more favorably when the event is more mainstream and aligned with their personal interests. Some individuals may appraise an event less favorably if they do not believe they will be successful in that event. For example, individuals will be less likely to appraise a sporting event

as favorable if they do not believe they can perform well and feel that engaging in the event may make them appear foolish and threaten their identity with coworkers.

Those involved in the event. The other individuals who participate in a fun event will also likely influence how one appraises the experience. If an event will be attended by others the individual likes or who have similar values, the event will likely be appraised more favorably than if an event is populated by those someone does not particularly like. In addition, individuals may prefer a fun activity that involves people one knows as opposed to strangers. When involved with an activity with others that one knows, an individual is more apt to feel at ease. When there are strangers involved in a fun experience, there may be uncertainty about how one should behave and uncertainty whether one will be successful navigating the social landscape. Furthermore, some individuals may prefer fun events that do not involve supervisors or managers. When fun in the workplace involves supervisors or managers, employees may feel less free to be themselves and feel more constrained to adhere to their prescribed work role.

Voluntariness of involvement. Self-determination theory posits that individuals value experiences where they are afforded greater autonomy (Gagné & Deci, 2005). When individuals feel more autonomous, they feel more intrinsically motivated to engage in an activity voluntarily. Thus, when participation to engage in fun in the workplace is at individuals' own discretion, their appraisals will be more favorable, and they may be more likely to perceive that the experience will be beneficial. On the other hand, when individuals believe that involvement in is obligatory, their appraisal will be less favorable, and they will perceive less potential value from the experience. If a company sponsors a volunteer event for individuals and an individual feels that his supervisor is forcing him to participate in the event, the individual may appraise the event unfavorably and perceive the experience as a hindrance rather than a benefit. Furthermore,

individuals may perceive that fun in the workplace is more likely to interfere with work-life balance issues when engagement in the event is obligatory versus voluntary. To the extent to which fun in the workplace causes work-life conflict, individuals will appraise fun in the workplace less favorably and be less likely to benefit from engaging in fun events.

Work demands. When individuals feel that work demands, such as total hours worked, consume too much time and energy they often become stressed because of the limited time remaining to deal with other demands besides work (Barnes, Wagner, & Ghumman, 2012; Ilies, Wilson, & Wagner, 2009). With respect to fun in the workplace, when individuals are experiencing high work demands, they may perceive that engaging in fun events is yet another obstacle in their schedule. Alternatively, those with low work demands may be more likely to have favorable appraisals of fun in the workplace because they have more free time in their schedules. It is possible that excessive work demands may have negative impact particularly on one's anticipatory appraisal, but such demands may have less of an impact on one's principal appraisal. To the extent that a fun activity helps to alleviate stress or allows individuals to make positive connections with others, an individual could perceive fun in the workplace as a needed break from one's hectic work demands.

Compensation. Whether individuals are paid on an hourly or salary basis could also impact appraisals of fun in the workplace. When fun in the workplace occurs "on the clock," employees who are paid on an hourly basis may have more favorable appraisals of fun in the workplace and be more likely to engage in the event because they are compensated for all time spent at work. Fun in the workplace may be even more valued among hourly employees when fun in the workplace extends beyond a forty-hour workweek, entitling individuals to overtime pay in the U.S. under the *Fair Labor Standards Act*. In contrast, salaried employees may have

less favorable appraisals of fun in the workplace because they see engaging in fun in the workplace as a distraction from completing job responsibilities. Salaried employees are not held to a traditional forty-hour workweek, and they must often persevere in completing job responsibilities until they are completed, irrespective of time spent on the job or at home. When fun in the workplace requires a significant time commitment away from completing core job responsibilities, individuals may be resistant to engaging in such events. In this respect, fun in the workplace may be perceived yet another job demand. Salaried employees may not necessarily view fun in the workplace negatively but may be more apt to do so when confronted with significant task demands.

Person's role in fun in the workplace. Depending on whether an individual is a participant, coordinator, or bystander, one could react very differently toward fun in the workplace. Arguably, fun in the workplace might be appraised most favorably by those who are the focal participants in an event. To the extent that fun in the workplace is aligned with one's interests and an individual has time to devote to fun in the workplace, a participant may very well experience enjoyment and pleasure. At the same time, there might be a discontent between one's felt emotions (e.g., anxiety or frustration) and the emotions one is expected to display (e.g., happiness and enjoyment). In this regard, participating in fun in the workplace may be considered a form of emotional labor. In turn, if one is the coordinator of a fun activity, he or she might feel another set of pressures, stemming from a desire to ensure that an event runs smoothly and that participants enjoy themselves. Lastly, bystanders, such as managers who attend a fun event in support of employees, may experience the least amount of enjoyment as their role might be merely to observe.

Person-organization fit. Person-organization (P-O) fit refers to the “compatibility between people and their organizations in which they work” (Kristof, 1996, p. 1). P-O fit theory asserts that employee attitudes and behaviors are influenced by the degree to which characteristics (i.e., needs, values, and goals) of individuals are congruent with the collective characteristics of the organization. When individuals perceive similarity between their values and those espoused in the organization, there is strong P-O fit (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). Drawing on this literature, organizations with strong P-O fit for fun in the workplace will have a strong culture for fun in the workplace, because they will attract, select, and retain employees who share fun as a common value (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). As such, we propose that individuals will have more favorable appraisals of fun in the workplace when there is strong value congruence between the individual and the organization with respect to fun in the workplace. In other words, when individuals who value fun, work in organizations that also value and promotes fun in the workplace the individuals will be more likely to favorably appraise fun in the workplace. However, for individuals who do not value fun, working in an organization that values and promotes fun in the workplace will cause them to appraise fun in the workplace less favorably and possibly even cause the individual to look for jobs in organizations with similar values to their own (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

Positive and negative affectivity. Individual differences can change how an individual appraises fun in the workplace including dispositional affectivity. Dispositional affectivity is a personality trait that predicts general affective tendencies across various domains of life (Watson et al., 1988). Those high in positive affectivity have a higher baseline of positive mood and exhibit a zest for living and tend to be happier, energetic, and sociable (Watson & Clark, 1984). Alternatively, those high in negative affectivity tend to be angry, nervous, anxious, and easily

afflicted (Watson & Clark, 1984). Compared to those high in negative affectivity, people with high positive affectivity can regulate their affect in such a way that they can experience positive emotions irrespective of external circumstances (Bowling, Beehr, Wagner, & Libkuman, 2005). We argue that having high positive affectivity will enhance whether fun in the workplace are appraised favorably. Because individuals with high positive affectivity are happier, they will be more likely to have favorable appraisals of fun in the workplace because such events provide a mechanism for them to enjoy their time at work. On the other hand, having high negative affectivity will increase the extent to which the individual's appraisals of fun in the workplace are unfavorable. Furthermore, because individuals with high negative affectivity have poor self-concepts, their evaluative appraisals of fun in the workplace are also likely to be unfavorable because such events provide unnecessary stress at work; thus, they will typically experience negative affect from fun in the workplace.

Building Positive and Enduring Resources at Work

As argued previously, one way in which long-term benefits of fun in the workplace are developed is through the broaden-and-build process. When individuals experience increases in positive emotions from engaging in numerous fun in the workplace overtime, they may also experience increases in performance and well-being through the broaden-and-build process. According to Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory, people respond differently to positive and negative emotions. Fredrickson argues that unlike negative emotions which narrow a person's momentary thought and action repertoires in preparation for quick actions (e.g., to fight off stress), positive emotions *broaden* a person's momentary thoughts and actions, which allow them to contemplate a wider array of behaviors, viewpoints, or results, thus promoting the development of intellectual, psychological, social and physical resources, which they can draw

on immediately or at a later time when needed (Fredrickson, 2003). People who experience more positive emotions tend to cope more effectively with adversity (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003), enjoy more successes in their work (Diener, Nickerson, Lucas, & Sandvik, 2002), have better relationships (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006), and even live longer (Levy, Slade, Kunkel & Kasl, 2002).

Application of the broaden-and-build theory to work settings suggests that when individuals experience positive events, they will generate new ideas, additional resources, better social relationships, and improved problem solving via recognition of a wider scope of possible solutions (Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, 2013). Experiencing positive emotions from engaging in fun events at work generates upward spirals as individuals broaden their thought-action repertoires and build enduring resources. As this process occurs over time, individuals' base-line positive affect increases. This increase in base-line positive affect has been shown to lead to several important outcomes such as enhanced creative problem solving (Isen, 1999), engagement in helping behaviors (Isen & Baron, 1991), and cooperation during negotiations (Kramer, Newton, & Pommerenke, 1993).

Thus, we propose that experiencing positive emotions from engaging in fun events over time should encourage individuals to abandon common views and actions and motivate them to engage in creative, resourceful, and even unexpected ways of thinking and behaving at work (Fredrickson, 2001). As thought-action repertoires expand, individuals develop important intellectual (e.g., creativity and mindfulness), psychological (e.g., resilience and optimism), social (e.g., constituent attachment and social support), and physical (e.g., less illness and better sleep quality) resources that can enhance performance, learning, well-being and retention. For example, experiencing enjoyment (a common positive reaction to fun in the workplace) is argued

to create the urge to play, push the limits, and foster creativity (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2008). However, we also propose that experiencing negative emotions from engaging in events intended to be fun, may cause individuals to look for ways to “escape” the situation so they can discontinue their participation in the event. As such, individuals who experience negative emotions over time will experience a “narrowing” of thoughts and behaviors, which may diminish their motivation to perform new tasks, learn new skills and reduce their well-being and even possibly their desire to stay with the organization.

Agenda for Future Research

As highlighted throughout the paper, though several studies have examined fun in the workplace, a strong theoretical framework to explain how individuals may interpret fun in the workplace and how fun in the workplace can be beneficial has yet to be developed. Drawing on the notion that it is important to understand how fun in the workplace is perceived by individuals, our proposed framework helps to fill this important void and provides a more nuanced understanding of the temporal processes and contextual factors that explain how individuals appraise and ultimately benefit from fun in the workplace. In the following sections, we advance an agenda for future empirical research to test aspects of the proposed framework. First, we discuss how future research needs to provide greater distinction between the dimensions of fun in the workplace because individuals may appraise some events more favorably than others. Second, we discuss how future research should examine the appraisal process by employing a within-subject design because doing so will help elucidate how appraisals change over the course of a fun event. Third, we discuss how future research should examine how different contextual and person-specific factors serve as boundary conditions of individual appraisals of fun in the workplace. Fourth, we discuss how future research should be

conducted to test the extent to which fun in the workplace, when experienced overtime, can initiate a broaden-and-build process and ultimately create long-term benefits for individuals.

Based on the preceding discussion throughout the paper, we offer several propositions to guide future research that are depicted in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Distinguishing Dimensions of Fun in the Workplace

Future research should be conducted to better distinguish between the different types of fun in the workplace. As previously discussed, several dimensions have been examined in the literature. With few exceptions, most of the previous research on fun in the workplace has focused either on a single dimension (e.g., fun activities) or on a multidimensional, higher-order construct of fun in the workplace (i.e., collapsing different dimensions of fun into a single construct). While doing so makes sense due to typically high correlations among the dimensions, collapsing the different dimensions of fun in the workplace into a single construct is problematic as each dimension is theoretically and practically distinct. Furthermore, even though different aspects of fun in the workplace have been advanced, no study has examined all aspects together in a single investigation. Examining all aspects of fun in the workplace could help to elucidate the similarities and differences among the dimensions of fun in the workplace. For example, future research could explore if personal freedoms and manager support for fun are two distinct constructs, or if personal freedoms are simply examples of how managers support fun. Similarly, examining manager support for fun and global climate for fun together can help to determine if these two constructs are substantially distinct aspects of fun in the workplace or if they are simply the same construct at different levels of analysis — global climate for fun at the

organizational level and manager support for fun at the group or department level. A related, yet slightly different, issue is whether fun job responsibilities should be considered as an aspect of fun in the workplace or if it is simply a task that is intrinsically enjoyable.

Previous research has been conducted to explore how different types of fun in the workplace relate to different work-related outcomes. For example, Tews et al. (2013) found that fun activities had a favorable impact on performance and manager support for fun had a favorable impact in reducing turnover. However, manager support for fun had an adverse impact on performance. In addition, Tews et al. (2014) provided evidence that coworker socializing and manager support for fun had stronger effects in reducing turnover relative to fun activities. Given findings such as these, additional research appears warranted that further assesses the differential impact of the dimensions of fun in the workplace. One opportunity for future research is to further examine the different dimensions of fun in the workplace on job performance. The Tews et al. research cited above examined job performance among restaurant servers. Notwithstanding the validity of these findings, future research could examine the relationships among the different dimensions of fun in the workplace in other job contexts. Another opportunity for future research is to examine how different dimensions of fun activities impact work outcomes. Previous research has examined fun activities as a single dimension, which masks the effects of the distinct types of activities. Future research could draw on Chan's (2010) four types of fun activities—staff-oriented activities, social-oriented activities, supervisor-oriented activities, and strategy-oriented activities to determine if different types of activities relate to different work outcomes. Finally, drawing on the work of Tews and colleagues, future research should determine if different dimensions of fun in the workplace have distinct relationships with other work-related outcomes. For example, whereas coworker socializing likely has stronger

relationship with making new connections, fun activities might have a stronger relationship with “earning points” with one’s manager, since such activities are often promoted by management.

Temporal Nature of Appraising Fun Events

As proposed in this paper, individuals likely make multiple appraisals, before, during and after engaging in fun events at work. Whereas some individuals may appraise fun in the workplace similarly before, during, and after engaging in a fun event, others may appraise fun in the workplace differently throughout the process. As such, future research should employ a within-subject design to see how an individual’s appraisals of and emotional reactions to fun events change (or do not change) overtime. Utilizing a within-subjects design would not only help to identify how individuals’ appraisals of fun in the workplace change overtime but would also help to pinpoint characteristics that influence how individuals interpreting whether engaging in a fun event is enjoyable and beneficial. Future research could thus employ an experience sampling methodology in which participants are asked to stop and rate their current affect and general perceptions about their experience before, during, and after engaging in a fun event. After the experience, participants would be asked to rate the extent to which they enjoyed the event, gained any short-term or long-term benefits from the event, and how likely they would be willing to engage in a similar event in the future.

Contextual and Person-Specific Factors of Fun in the Workplace

We previously proposed ten contextual and person-specific factors that may alter whether individuals appraise fun events favorably or not. These contextual and person-specific factors were classified into four broad themes—supportive work practices for fun in the workplace, characteristics of fun events, job characteristics, and person-specific factors. Future research should be conducted to examine the degree to which each of these factors moderates the

relationship between fun in the workplace and individual appraisals of fun. Furthermore, to the extent to which appraisals mediate the relationship between fun in the workplace and short-term and long-term benefits of fun events, future research should examine the degree to which the contextual and person-specific factors moderate the proposed mediated relationships. For example, individuals may be more likely to make consistent favorable appraisals of fun in the workplace and experience subsequent short-term and long-term benefits when the organization employs supportive work practices for fun in the workplace. Finally, future research should examine if certain contextual or person-specific factors moderate certain parts of the appraisal process more than others. For example, work demands are more likely to moderate the relationship between fun in the workplace and anticipatory appraisals because individuals will make less favorable appraisals of a fun event if they are too busy at work. However, the type of fun activity is more likely to moderate the relationship between the principal appraisal of fun in the workplace and ultimate benefit from the event.

Fun in the Workplace and the Broaden-and-Build Theory

Finally, as previously discussed, we argue that experiencing positive emotions from engaging in fun in the workplace overtime at work overtime may raise an individual's baseline level of positive affect and encourage individuals to abandon common views and actions and motivate them to engage in creative, resourceful, and even unexpected ways of thinking and behaving at work (Fredrickson, 2001). Eventually the broadening process will help individuals become more creative, optimistic, socially connected with others and resilient, each of which have been found to be important components of human flourishing (Seligman, 2012). Future research should thus employ a cross-lagged longitudinal design to examine if in fact repeated engagement in fun in the workplace increases an individuals' baseline level of positive emotion,

ultimately helping individuals develop positive resources that can be drawn on to develop long-term benefits. A month-long field experimental design could be employed to test these assertions. Specifically, researchers could evaluate the affect, performance and well-being of participants before randomly assigning them to the experimental and control conditions. Participants in the experimental condition could then be presented the opportunity to engage in numerous fun events over the course of the week. During the week, participants could be presented with brain teasers, mental agility games, or creativity challenges to see if participants in the experimental group are thinking more broadly and creatively than the control group. At the end of the week, ratings of individual affect and psychological resources could be compared between participants in the experimental and control conditions. A couple weeks later, the performance and well-being of participants could be assessed and compared to see if in fact fun in the workplace helps individuals flourish via a broaden-and-build process.

Conclusion

Fun in the workplace has taken organizations by storm, but our understanding for how and under what conditions fun in the workplace operates needs further attention from scholars. Although fun in the workplace has been embraced by several successful organizations, until recently academic research on fun in the workplace has been scant. Insofar as problem-driven research remains a central starting point for scholarly inquiry, there is a need to provide a clear understanding for why organizations should emphasize fun in the workplace and how engaging in fun events benefits individuals. We believe that our review and theoretical framework provides an important first step toward explaining how individuals may interpret fun in the workplace and how fun in the workplace can be beneficial in both the short- and long-term.

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Table 1

Propositions Derived from Present Theory

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1. The extent to which fun in the workplace leads to favorable work outcomes is a function of anticipatory appraisals and principal appraisals of fun events.
 2. The extent to which fun events will be related to favorable appraisals will be moderated by support for fun including manager support for fun and personal freedoms, in that appraisals of fun events will be more favorable when support is high.
 3. Characteristics of fun events including activity type, those involved, and voluntariness of the event will impact the extent to which the anticipatory and principal appraisals are positive versus negative and whether individuals are likely to engage in the fun event.
 4. Job characteristics including work demands, compensation, and the person's role will impact the extent to which the anticipatory and principal appraisals are positive versus negative and whether individuals are likely to engage in the fun event.
 5. Person specific factors including person-organization fit and positive or negative affectivity will impact the extent to which the anticipatory and principal appraisals are positive versus negative and whether individuals are likely to engage in the fun event.
 6. The extent to which individuals gain short-term benefits such as making a new connection, learning something new, or "earning points" with the manager is a function of the favorability of their principal appraisal of the fun event.
 7. The extent to which individuals gain long-term benefits such as social support and constituent attachment, creativity and mindfulness, and resiliency and optimism is developed overtime through the broaden-and-build process.
 8. The extent to which individuals will experience favorable retrospective appraisals of fun events will be a function of the short-term and long-term benefits gained from engaging in fun in the workplace.
 9. Favorable retrospective appraisals of fun events will lead to favorable anticipatory appraisals of future fun events.
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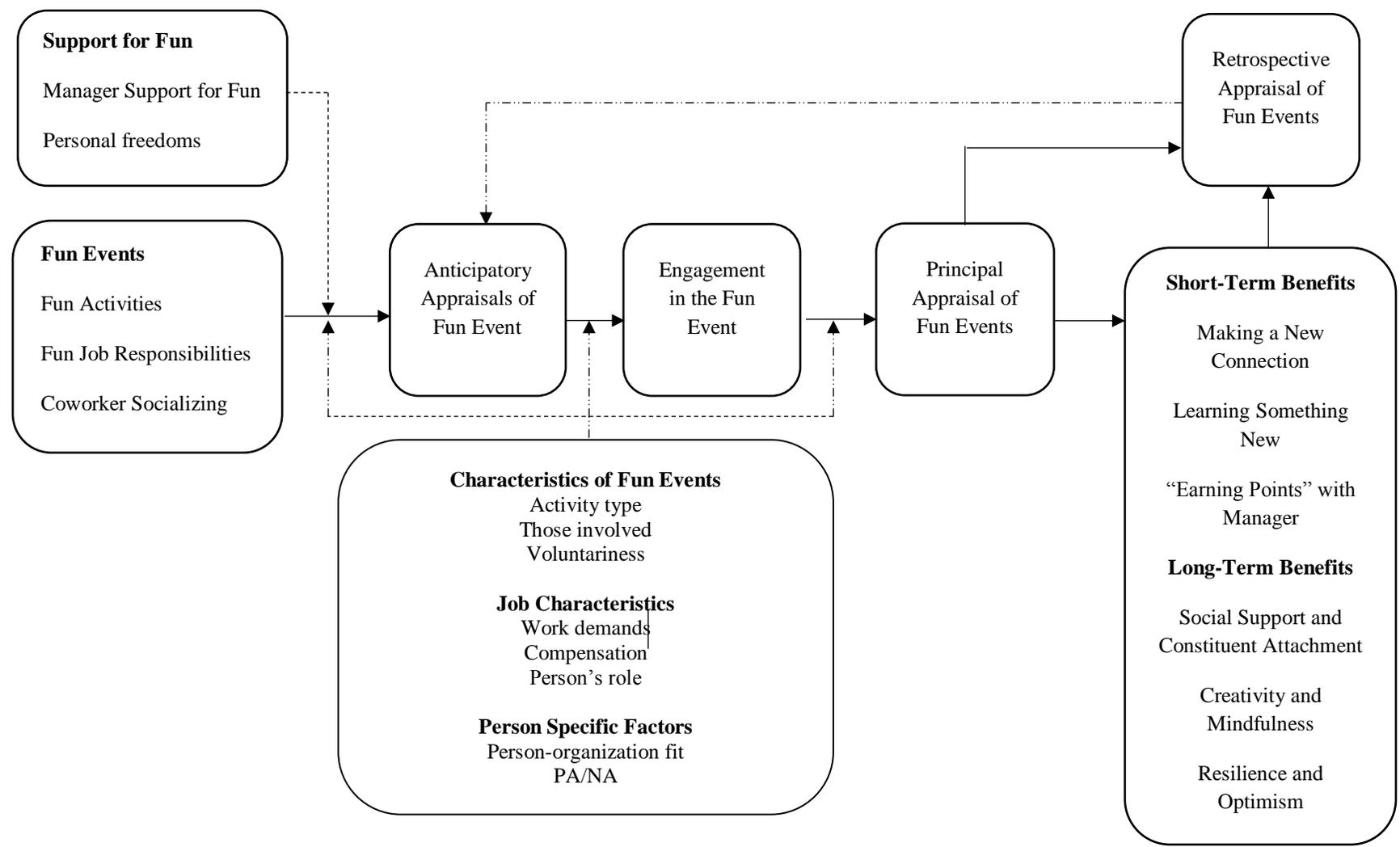


Figure 1. The Temporal Appraisal Framework of Fun in the Workplace