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FLOURISHING VIA WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS: MOVING BEYOND INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT

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In a series of qualitative and quantitative studies, we developed a model of the functions of positive work relationships, with an explicit focus on the role that these relationships play in employee flourishing. Stories that employees told about positive relationships at work revealed that relationships serve a broad range of functions, including the traditionally studied functions of task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support, as well as less studied functions of personal growth, friendship, and the opportunity to give to others. Building on this taxonomy, we validated a scale—the Relationship Functions Inventory—and developed theory suggesting differential linkages between the relationship functions and outcomes indicative of employee flourishing. Results revealed unique associations between functions and outcomes, such that task assistance was most strongly associated with job satisfaction, giving to others was most strongly associated with meaningful work, friendship was most strongly associated with positive emotions at work, and personal growth was most strongly associated with life satisfaction. Our results suggest that work relationships play a key role in promoting employee flourishing, and that examining the differential effects of a taxonomy of relationship functions brings precision to our understanding of how relationships impact individual flourishing.

A growing body of literature highlights the importance of positive interpersonal relationships at work (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Ragins & Dutton, 2007). As organizations become flatter and increasingly utilize teams to accomplish tasks, work has become more interdependent and relationships are a more important part of the work context (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Grant & Parker, 2009). Much research has been done on specific types of work relationships, such as mentoring relationships (e.g., Kram, 1985) and leader–follower relationships (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Recently, scholars have called for a more complete understanding of work relationships in organizational life with a focus on positive, high-quality work relationships (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), defined by Ragins and Dutton (2007: 9) as "a reoccurring connection between two people that takes place within the context of work . . . and is experienced as mutually beneficial."

Although many characteristics exemplify positive workplace relationships, central to their definition are the beneficial functions they serve (Rousseau & Ling, 2007). To extend theory about positive work relationships, a more complete understanding of the functions they serve, or the direct benefits they provide, is needed. The social support and mentoring literatures provide a starting point, highlighting the benefits of receiving task and emotional support and career development through interpersonal connections (Kram, 1985; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996). These literatures view relationships through a social exchange lens (e.g., Blau, 1964); relationship partners exchange resources that are useful in some way, such as money, advice, or support. A key focus of this literature is on how resources help individuals cope with adversity (Feeney & Collins, 2015; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996). However, recent relationship theory (Feeney & Collins, 2015) suggests that relationships

also help people actively pursue opportunities for growth and development. Consistent with this theory, writings by relationship scholars observe that work relationships can be a "source of enrichment, vitality, and learning that helps individuals, groups, and organizations grow, thrive, and flourish" (Ragins & Dutton, 2007: 3) and can provide "an affirming and heady mix of supports and supplies" (Rousseau & Ling, 2007: 373). Thus, relationships may provide more than task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support, which have been the focus of prior research on work relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996). Examining work relationships through theoretical lenses of growth and development (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003) may reveal that they provide resources that directly support personal growth and development. Further, a view of relationships that shifts the focus from coping with adversity to supporting growth and development suggests that individuals may become less concerned about gathering and conserving resources (Hobfoll, 1989). In this context, relationships may provide individuals with an opportunity to *give* to others (Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003; Grant, 2007).

Support for taking a broader and more integrated view of workplace relationships is also suggested by changes in the way employees blend work and personal lives. According to *Forbes*, "professionals have to blend what they do personally and professionally in order to make both work" (Schwabel, 2014). As boundaries between work and nonwork identities become blurred (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013), work relationships are not only sources of instrumental work-relevant support (e.g., task assistance and career advice), they may also be a source of resources with implications beyond the work domain, such as personal growth and friendship (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Niven, Holman, & Totterdell, 2012). Because both theory and the changing nature of work point to a broader view of workplace relationships, our primary purpose in the present paper is to broaden and deepen understanding of the role that positive workplace relationships play in employees' lives, by examining the functions they serve and the impact that these functions have on individuals.

Thus, this research makes several important contributions. First, we extend understanding of workplace relationships by developing a comprehensive taxonomy of the full range of functions they serve. We analyzed critical incident descriptions of good workplace relationships, and found that the functions described were consistent with emerging theory that suggests that relationships promote growth and development and have implications beyond the workplace. In addition to the functions of task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support, work relationships also provided personal growth, friendship, and the opportunity to give to others, showing that work relationships offer more than instrumental, work-related resources. Second, we establish differential predictive validity for the expanded taxonomy of relationship functions. Adding relationship functions such as personal growth, friendship, and giving to others not only provides a more comprehensive understanding of the functions served by good work relationships, but also helps us to understand how relationships support outcomes indicative of employee flourishing. While traditionally studied relationship functions may be associated with general job attitudes, our expanded taxonomy of relationship functions may help solve the puzzle of how work relationships also directly support flourishing, allowing employees to achieve the highest levels of functioning and psychosocial health (Keyes, 2007). As such, we developed and tested theory linking relationship functions to flourishing-consistent outcomes such as finding meaning in work, experiencing positive emotions, and ultimately finding satisfaction in life (Keyes, 2007). This analysis showed that work relationships play a key role in promoting growth and development not only through the specific functions that they serve, but also through the flourishing outcomes they engender.

Third, we demonstrate the relative impact of each relationship function by studying them together. Doing so brings precision to the relationships literature, allowing us to determine the unique contributions of relationship functions that have often been studied in isolation. Finally, we make a practical contribution to the relationships literature by introducing and validating a brief but comprehensive scale designed to measure the full range of work-relevant relationship functions. Together, our theoretical and empirical work represents an important step in providing a broader view of the types of resources that positive work relationships can generate and transmit efficiently (Rousseau & Ling, 2007). Moreover, by focusing on outcomes that represent flourishing

and well-being, we present a more integrated picture of the role that workplace relationships can play in employees' lives.

STUDY 1: IDENTIFYING AND MEASURING RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONS

Despite the centrality of relationships in our work lives, we still have much to learn about the ways in which relationships are formed and maintained, the processes by which they develop and change, and the mechanisms by which they impact outcomes. Answering these types of research questions requires a clear understanding of the characteristics of good work relationships. Past research has focused on the overall quality of interpersonal interactions; the degree of trust, respect, loyalty, and felt mutuality that characterizes good work relationships (Ferris, Liden, Munyon, Summers, Basik, & Buckley, 2009; Ragins & Dutton, 2007, Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2012); and the structural features of good relationships (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Stephens et al., 2012). While these elements clearly distinguish good work relationships from bad ones, positive work relationships are specifically defined as being mutually beneficial and generative (Ragins & Dutton, 2007). In addition to satisfying a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), relationships produce resources such as energy, self-knowledge, and support that fuel growth and development and facilitate the exchange of resources (Ragins & Dutton, 2007; Rousseau & Ling, 2007). These descriptions of positive work relationships suggest that they may be characterized and differentiated by the resources that they provide and the functions that they serve. Consistent with functionalist theorizing in psychology (e.g., Cantor, 1994; Snyder, 1993), we suggest that the functions served by good work relationships, rather than their mere existence, best predict ultimate outcomes.

Work has changed considerably since task and emotional support were identified as the primary functions of relationships. Technology has blurred lines between work and other life domains (e.g., Barley, Meyerson, & Grodal, 2011). Additionally, work is increasingly seen as a source of meaning, growth, and energy (Ragins & Dutton, 2007). Given the expanded role of work in many people's lives and the increasingly relational nature of the workplace, we argue that positive work relationships today serve a wider range of functions than those identified by prior research. Recent theory on the functions served by relationships supports this view. In their theory on thriving through relationships, Feeney and Collins (2015) observed that previous research has focused on how relationships help individuals cope with adversities while ignoring the role of relationships in helping individuals actively pursue opportunities for growth and development in the absence of adversity. Feeney and Collins's theory on thriving through relationships is rooted in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), which proposes that relationships may serve as a safe haven in times of stress as well as a secure base that promotes growth and development. Thus, work relationships may serve functions related to opportunities for personal growth and development and provide resources that extend beyond the workplace, in addition to the more traditionally studied functions of task assistance, emotional support, and career advancement.

Given that theoretical developments and the changing nature of work suggest that work relationships may serve a broader range of functions than previously identified, we collected critical incidents to inductively gain a broader understanding of the functions served by positive work relationships. This methodology can be useful in building theory, in defining a conceptual domain, and in the development of measures because it provides a systematic way of collecting and analyzing the experiences of many individuals (Flanagan, 1954). By comparing lived experiences to existing theory and research (e.g., mentoring, see Kram, 1985; social support, see Cohen, Mermelstein, Kamarck, & Hoberman, 1985; meaningful connections, see Kahn, 2007), new insights can be gained. This initial qualitative work was inductive, with the purpose of developing a more complete taxonomy of relationship functions, which was then used to develop and test theory positing differential links between relationship functions and outcomes indicative of employee flourishing in Study 2.

Phase 1: Understanding Functions of Positive Work Relationships

Method. We used an online survey to elicit descriptions of good workplace relationships. Participants were 287 individuals, including MBA students (11%), human service workers (9%), employed adults drawn from the Mechanical Turk research participants database (20%), and employed undergraduate students (60%). Participants worked in various industries, including education, government, retail, banking, informational technology, health

care, human services, and manufacturing. The sample was 62% female, and the sample of relationship partners was 58% female. Our participants were drawn from all working-age groups (60% were less than 25 years old; 9% were 26–30; 15% were 31–40; 9% were 41–50; and 6% were more than 50 years old). Moreover, the number of stories we collected was quite large for qualitative research, resulting in more than 25 stories per age category, except for the "over 50" category, for which we obtained 17 stories. The age range of the partners in the relationships described was also broad (39% were less than 25 years old; 17%, 26–30; 21%, 31–40; 16%, 41–50; and 6% were over 50; 1% did not report this information).

Participants described relationships with peers (52%), bosses (39%), and direct reports (9%). We asked respondents to think about a good work relationship they had currently or in the recent past. They responded to open-ended questions designed to gather general information about the relationship, to elicit specific stories that captured the essence of the relationship, and to assess why the relationship was seen as a good one. In the first group surveyed, respondents discussed the benefits they received from their relationships; hence, we revised the questions slightly to include a prompt specifically focused on benefits (see Appendix A).

Two authors coded 20 randomly chosen stories to identify relationship functions. Using ATLAS.ti (2005), each author independently identified functions reflected in the critical incidents and extracted text describing the functions. This resulted in two independent lists of functions. The lists were compared and differences in labels and categorization schemes were resolved by re-examining the data together and referencing the existing literature. With this initial list of functions as a starting point, the same authors coded 20 different incidents to determine whether additional functions would emerge. Revisions were discussed to achieve consensus on a final list of six relationship functions (see Table 1).

A codebook was developed that included a description of the content domain for each function, content excluded from that function, and examples and quotations from the data. Teams of six undergraduate psychology students were trained to use the codebook to identify functions present in the relationship descriptions. Coders assessed the extent to which each of the six functions was present, using a 4-point scale (0 = "*the relationship does not serve this function*" to 3 = "*the relationship strongly serves this function*"). Coders were instructed to exclude incidents that did not describe a dyadic work relationship, resulting in 283 coded stories. We computed intraclass correlations (ICCs) (Bartko, 1976; James, 1982; see Table 2). ICC(1) values, which indicate the percent of variance in ratings attributable to the incident, ranged from .38 to .61, and ICC(2) values, which estimate the reliability of the aggregated ratings, ranged from .79 to .90. Thus, ratings were aggregated across raters.

Results. Table 1 lists the six functions with illustrative quotations. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and correlations. Two functions described specific types of instrumental support—*task assistance* (i.e., "helped me get my work done") and *career advancement* (i.e., "helped me to advance my career by providing career-related resources"). Respondents also described their relationships as providing *emotional support* (i.e., "helped me cope with stress by listening to my problems and responding in a supportive way"). These functions are consistent with important functions of work relationships identified in previous research (Kram, 1985; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996).

We also identified three functions that are less prevalent in the literature on workplace relationships: *personal growth* (i.e., "helped me grow and develop by challenging and supporting me"), *friendship* (i.e., "spent time with me outside of work"; "was a companion"), and *giving to others* (i.e., "provided me with an opportunity to assist or support others"). Friendship was the most frequently observed function in our data ($M = 1.30$), whereas personal growth was the least observed ($M = .24$). Correlations between functions were generally low, indicating that coders were able to distinguish between the functions, and that employees varied in the functions they received from good work relationships. Moderate co-occurrence was found for personal growth and career advancement ($r = .33$); all other correlations between functions were less than .25.

Brief discussion. Our analysis of critical incidents identified six functions served by good work relationships. Consistent with the literature on social support (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996), positive work relationships provided both task assistance and emotional support. Moreover, as suggested by the mentoring literature (Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999), positive work relationships also provided the advice and sponsorship integral to career advancement. Our data verify the continued importance of these instrumental

TABLE 1
Relationship Functions

Relationship Function and Description	Example Quotations
Task Assistance—helped me get my work done by answering questions, providing feedback, or assisting with a specific task	**155:** My manager helps out a lot. Not only for me, but for everyone else. She will cook if there are a lot of orders, or she will run food for the waiters. She will even get things ready for us if we cannot find the time ourselves to do it. **703:** He aided me in very technical engineering questions, and I helped him deal with interpersonal struggles with customers. Neither of us were ever afraid of asking each other a "stupid" question. Even if we were under a deadline, we would always make sure to solve the other's problem if they asked.
Career Advancement—helped me to advance my career by providing advice or access to contacts and other career-related resources	**701:** A good episode would be at the time when I was deliberating my future in relationship with the company. I could either stay and grow within the company, I could accept another offer, or I could go and pursue an advanced degree. Normally, I would not share this kind of issue with anyone in the company. However, I felt fairly comfortable with this particular colleague and shared my concerns and got some good advice . . . **205:** I've even talked to her about finding other jobs . . . and she's even offered to help me by using some of her own connections!
Emotional Support—helped me cope with stress by listening to my problems and responding in a supportive way	**117:** She made the first couple weeks seem not as stressful as I thought they would be . . . Eventually, we were so close that we told each other about our struggles we were dealing with, and we relied on each other for advice and support. **706:** I've worked in stressful situations before, but nothing like what I experienced at this company. Z really helped guide me through the rough patches. She listened to me when I was frustrated and offered feedback (both constructive criticisms and supportive comments). She really helped me navigate through the minefield.
Friendship—became a friend or companion	**213:** We started doing things together outside of work, and with another one of our coworkers that we got along with very well, who started after us. We would go out to dinner, play Bingo, and, a couple of times, I went to her hometown for a weekend with her . . . It's great to have that relationship with her because we are able to vent about work and get to know each other outside of the work environment. **701:** Therefore, this work relationship extended far beyond just work—it was a much more personal one, more of like being friends that you can share anything with . . .
Personal Growth—helped me grow and develop as a human being	**706:** We talked a lot about everything, from work to religion to family life to anything else. She offered me new perspectives to multiple subjects. I feel that gaining those new insights helped me grow more as a person. **712:** When I sought advice, he would not give me the answers outright. He would ask me questions about my thoughts. He would have me look deeper and wider at the problem. I grew as a person in terms of my problem-solving skills, my leadership ability, and my own ideas about my abilities.
Giving to Others—provided me with the opportunity to assist, mentor, support, or care for the other person	**710:** Through this relationship, I was able to help Sarah recognize her abilities and encourage her to develop those further. I enjoyed helping her make difficult decisions, and felt privileged to help her grow professionally and personally. **119:** A few days later, his grandpa passed away, and immediately another coworker and I decided that we were going to go to his grandpa's funeral to be there for him . . . He was so grateful that we came. He came up and hugged us after the ceremony, and the look on his face meant more to me than anything in the world.

functions in today's workplace. But, they also suggest that work relationships serve functions that are not prevalent in the existing relationships literature.

First, work relationships served as a source of personal growth. Respondents described relationship partners who helped them grow and develop by challenging them, supporting them, or serving as role models of whom they might become. The personal growth function is consistent with Dutton and Heaphy's (2003) suggestion that work relationships should be viewed through identity and growth lenses because relationships shape both our work and personal identities. This function is also consistent with Feeney and Collins's (2015) call for more attention to the ways in which relationships promote opportunities for growth and development in addition to the ways they provide support during times of stress.

Second, our data revealed that work relationships are an important source of friendship and companionship.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Relationship Functions Coded from Critical Incidents

Function	ICC(1)/ICC(2)	*M*	*SD*	TA	CA	ES	FR	PG
Task Assistance (TA)	.50/.86	0.66	0.72	1.00				
Career Advancement (CA)	.58/.89	0.38	0.67	0.04	1.00			
Emotional Support (ES)	.55/.88	0.56	0.71	−0.10	−0.08	1.00		
Friendship (FR)	.61/.90	1.30	0.94	−0.22*	−0.11	0.22*	1.00	
Personal Growth (PG)	.38/.79	0.24	0.43	−0.05	0.33*	0.08	−0.02	1.00

Note: $N = 283$.
* $p < .05$

Respondents described people they enjoyed being around, whom they could share anything with, and whom they spent time with outside of work. Developing friendships at work is consistent with the increasingly blurred boundary between work and life (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Friendship ties, also referred to as "expressive ties" (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006), have been studied in the social network literature as characteristic of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Niven et al., 2012); however, we know less about the relative impact of friendship at work, especially when studied alongside traditional relationship functions, such as task assistance and emotional support.

In addition to benefits received by employees, we also identified giving to others as a unique function of high-quality work relationships. Participants described mentoring others to help them grow and develop, and supporting others through difficult times. This is an important finding because most research on coworker relationships focuses on benefits received, despite evidence that providing support to others may have even greater benefits than receiving it (Brown et al., 2003), and that giving to beneficiaries of work also benefits employees (Grant, 2007, 2008). Considering the traditional focus on relationships as a resource for coping with adversity, it is not surprising that giving to others has not been highlighted as a primary function of work relationships in previous research. In times of adversity, employees are likely to conserve scarce resources, reducing their focus on giving to others (Hobfoll, 1989). However, when theoretical attention shifts to understanding relationships in times of abundance and growth, giving to others is more likely to emerge as a function of work relationships. Our results suggest that giving to coworkers is an important function of good work relationships, and one that has not been studied alongside traditional functions associated with getting benefits from a relationship (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008).

Phase 2: Item Generation

Method. The next step in our research was to develop a scale to measure the six relationship functions. We developed a pool of 55 items, with 7 to 11 items for each function. To assess content validity and clarity, we used item assignment procedures (Anderson & Wilson, 1997). Seven graduate psychology students were given the items along with a list of the relationship functions and their definitions. They were asked to assign each item to one of six functions. They were also asked to rate each item's clarity (e.g., "The item is clearly written"), fit with the assigned function (e.g., "The item fits the category I assigned it to well"), and overlap with other functions (e.g., "This item overlaps with other functions") using a 5-point scale (1 = "*strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*strongly agree*"). In cases of overlap, the second function that fit an item was listed.

Results. Using data from these procedures, we developed a scale with three items for each function. We selected items that met three criteria: (1) they were assigned to the correct function by at least six of the seven raters, (2) they received average scores on clarity and fit of at least 4.0, and (3) they had an average overlap score of 3.0 or lower. In cases in which more than three items met the criteria, we selected items that best matched the construct definition. The 18 items of the Relationship Function Inventory (RFI) and the data used to select them are presented in Appendix B.

Phase 3: Scale Development and Validation

In Phase 3, we examined the factor structure of the RFI. We expected the RFI to assess six distinct

relationship functions, but we also expected the functions would be moderately correlated. Relationships characterized by high levels of trust, respect, or closeness may serve multiple functions, resulting in co-occurrence of functions (Rousseau & Ling, 2007). Further, based on principles of social exchange (Blau, 1964), individuals who are the beneficiaries of work relationships that provide task assistance, career advancement, emotional support, friendship, or personal growth are likely to reciprocate by giving to others.

In Phase 3, we also examined the association between the RFI and related variables (Hinkin, 1995). Because relationships at work play an important role in shaping overall job satisfaction, we assessed the criterion-related validity of the relationship functions. According to seminal theories of job satisfaction (e.g., Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969), employees are more satisfied with their jobs when they receive resources they expect. Because five of the six relationship functions assess resources that employees may find beneficial (i.e., task assistance, career advancement, emotional support, friendship, personal growth), we expected them to be positively related to job satisfaction. Moreover, the literature on prosocial behavior suggests that people also have a need to help others (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Empirical research in the context of nonwork relationships has shown that providing social support may have even greater benefits than receiving it (Brown et al., 2003). Therefore, we expect that the opportunity to give to coworkers will also be associated with job satisfaction.

We further assessed validity by examining the incremental contribution of the relationship functions after controlling for coworker satisfaction. Smith et al. (1969) identified satisfaction with coworkers as one of five key facets of job satisfaction. We expected coworker satisfaction to be positively correlated with at least some of the functions we identified, but we also expected that the relationship functions would be distinct from coworker satisfaction in that they assess specific resources provided by work relationships rather than a general evaluation of coworkers. Thus, we expected that the relationship functions explain incremental variance in job satisfaction, after controlling for satisfaction with coworkers.

Hypothesis 1a. The six relationship functions are positively associated with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b. The six relationship functions explain unique incremental variance in job satisfaction, after controlling for the effects of coworker satisfaction.

Method. We surveyed 177 part-time and full-time MBA students at two Midwestern universities, one large and public and the other small and private. Of the 177 participants, 38% were 30 years old or younger, 44% were 31–40, 15% were 41–50, and 3% were over 50 years old; 63% were male. Of the participants who reported organizational tenure, 13% had been with their organizations for less than one year, 18% between 1 and 2 years, 32% between 3 and 5 years, and 37% for more than 5 years.

To measure relationship functions, we used the 18-item RFI (3 items per function, averaged to form a scale for each function). Participants reported the extent to which their current relationships with all of their coworkers provided the benefits listed in the relationship function items, using a 5-point response scale (1 = "*strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*strongly agree*"). Coworkers were defined as "anyone you work with who is not your direct supervisor." We assessed the internal consistency reliability of each subscale using coefficient alpha (task assistance, $\alpha = .82$; career advancement, $\alpha = .87$; emotional support, $\alpha = .86$; friendship, $\alpha = .86$; personal growth, $\alpha = .84$; giving to others, $\alpha = .88$).

Job satisfaction was measured with 5 items from the Brayfield–Rothe scale (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951; Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000). Sample items include "Most days, I am enthusiastic about my work" and "I consider my job to be rather unpleasant" (reversed), rated on the same scale used for the RFI. Items were averaged to create an overall score for each participant ($\alpha = .75$).

Satisfaction with coworkers was measured with the well-validated 18-item Job Descriptive Index–Coworker scale (Roznowski, 1989), which uses a 3-point rating scale (0 = "*no, the item does not describe my coworkers*," 1 = ?, "*I cannot decide*," and 3 = "*yes, the item describes my coworkers*"; e.g., Hanish, 1992). Sample descriptors include "stimulating," "boring," and "talks too much." Item scores were averaged to form an overall coworker satisfaction score for each participant ($\alpha = .86$).

Results. We used exploratory factor analysis (i.e., principal axis factoring with an oblique rotation [promax]; Conway & Huffcutt, 2003) to determine the number of factors underlying the 18-item RFI. Exploratory factor analysis supported a six-factor solution; all items had a single factor

loading over .60 and no cross loading greater than .20 (see Table 3).[1]

Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 4. Task assistance (M = 3.92) and giving to others (M = 3.91) were reported most frequently, with career advancement (M = 3.29) reported least frequently. Correlations between functions were low to moderate, and the pattern was consistent with plausible theoretical links between the functions. For example, the instrumental functions of task assistance and career advancement were correlated at .44, the socioemotional functions of friendship and emotional support were correlated at .49, and the growth functions of career advancement and personal growth were correlated at .42.

To provide preliminary criterion-related and discriminant validity evidence, we examined correlations between the relationship functions, coworker satisfaction, and overall job satisfaction (see Table 4). Correlations with coworker satisfaction ranged from .46 for career advancement to .10 for giving to others (average r = .30). Correlations with overall job satisfaction were slightly smaller (average r = .24), with moderate and statistically significant correlations for task assistance (r = .31), career advancement (r = .35), personal growth (r = .26), and giving to others (r = .39); emotional support and friendship were not significantly associated with job satisfaction.

To further demonstrate the distinctiveness of the relationship functions from coworker satisfaction, we used hierarchical regression (see Table 5). First, we regressed job satisfaction on coworker satisfaction and then entered the six relationship functions in a second step. We then repeated this regression but reversed the order of entry; relationship functions were entered first with coworker satisfaction added in Step 2. Coworker satisfaction explained 7% of the variance in job satisfaction when it was entered first, but did not explain significant incremental variance when entered in Step 2 (ΔR^2 = .01). When relationship functions were entered first, they explained 24% of the variance in job satisfaction. They also explained 18% of the variance in job satisfaction, after controlling for coworker satisfaction. Thus, Hypotheses 1a and 1b were supported.[2] Although four of the six functions (task assistance, career advancement, personal growth, and giving to others) were significantly correlated with job satisfaction, regression results showed that, when the functions were considered together, only giving to others (β = .28) and career advancement (β = .24) were significantly related to job satisfaction.

Brief discussion. In Phase 3, we provided evidence that the 18-item RFI assesses six distinct but related functions. As a set, these functions explained unique variance in job satisfaction, even after controlling for coworker satisfaction. This suggests that

[1] Although the RFI was used to assess functions served by relationships with all coworkers in the studies reported in this paper, to further establish the robustness of the RFI, we collected additional data in two new samples—a sample of 252 members of a large nonprofit agency in the Midwest United States and a sample of 76 employed students enrolled in a senior-level undergraduate class in a large university in the Midwest United States. In these samples, we asked respondents to first think of a specific individual at work with whom they have a good work relationship, and then to indicate whether that individual is their boss, their peer, or their subordinate. Participants completed the RFI with that particular target in mind. Hence, we had an opportunity to compare the factor structure of the RFI in different instruction conditions—thinking of coworkers in general (Study 2 sample), thinking of a specific coworker (137 participants from new samples), and thinking of a specific supervisor (148 participants from new samples). We used multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test measurement invariance of the factor structures in these three situations (coworkers in general, a specific coworker, a specific boss). First, to test for configural invariance, we ran an unconstrained model, allowing free estimation of the factor structure in each sample. Model fit was good ($\chi^2_{\text{unconstrained (360)}}$ = 590.94, $p < .00$; comparative fit index (CFI) = .98, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .06, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06), providing initial evidence that the three groups were configurally equivalent. Next, to further ensure that item loadings were equivalent across groups, we tested for metric equivalence. We constrained the model, forcing the same factor structure to fit to the data in each of the three samples. That also yielded a good model fit ($\chi^2_{\text{constrained (384)}}$ = 621.73, $p < .00$; CFI = .98, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06). Finally, we verified measurement invariance by the chi-square difference test, which was nonsignificant ($\chi^2_{\text{difference (24)}}$ = 30.74, p = .16).

[2] A reviewer raised the issue that the comparison of the RFI and Job Descriptive Index–Coworker Satisfaction might be impacted by the fact that our outcome—job satisfaction—and the RFI are measured on a 5-point scale, whereas Job Descriptive Index–Coworker Satisfaction is measured on a 3-point scale. Hence, we repeated these analyses using Job Descriptive Index–Work Satisfaction, which is measured on a 3-point scale, as the outcome variable. Results mirrored those reported in Table 5, providing further evidence that the relationship functions are distinct from broad satisfaction with coworkers.

TABLE 3
Principal Axis Factor Analysis (Promax Rotation) for Relationship Function Inventory Items

Item	Factor Loadings					
	Giving to Others	Friendship	Career Advance	Emotional Support	Personal Growth	Task Assistance
My coworkers help me get my work done.	.07	.04	−.08	.02	.05	**.75**
My coworkers answer questions I have about my job.	−.19	−.04	.15	−.03	.07	**.69**
My coworkers are always willing to give me a hand with my work.	.10	−.02	.01	−.03	−.08	**.89**
My coworkers discuss my career plans with me.	.03	.02	**.69**	.16	−.10	.07
My coworkers give me opportunities to build my career.	−.01	.06	**.82**	−.09	.09	−.01
My coworkers help me identify opportunities for development that will advance my career.	.03	−.03	**.87**	.02	.00	.02
My coworkers help me cope with stress.	.07	.09	−.05	**.73**	.02	.06
My coworkers allow me to vent my frustrations.	−.02	−.11	.06	**.86**	−.03	−.03
My coworkers help me release tension.	−.05	.07	.01	**.83**	.06	−.04
My coworkers are my friends.	−.04	**.80**	−.11	.05	.02	.15
I spend time with my coworkers outside of work.	.04	**.80**	.11	.01	−.05	−.15
My relationships with my coworkers are more than just work relationships.	−.04	**.90**	.03	−.06	.01	−.02
My coworkers help me grow and develop as a human being.	.01	.04	−.09	.05	**.80**	.01
My coworkers push me to become a better person.	.03	.07	.10	−.11	**.78**	−.01
My coworkers help me develop life skills and competencies, such as becoming a better listener or being more patient or solving problems better.	−.01	−.12	.02	.08	**.78**	.02
My relationships with my coworkers give me the opportunity to assist others.	**.81**	.11	−.04	.06	.01	.01
My relationships with my coworkers give me the opportunity to mentor and support others.	**.83**	−.04	.04	−.04	−.04	.03
My relationships with my coworkers give me the opportunity to give something back.	**.88**	−.08	.03	−.03	.06	−.06
Eigenvalue	6.46	2.32	1.61	1.37	1.37	1.10
% variance explained	35.88	12.90	8.94	7.61	7.58	6.12

Note: $N = 177$. Numbers in boldface indicate dominant factor loadings.

the relationship functions are not simply an alternative way of evaluating overall relationship quality. Rather, they assess resources and benefits that come from good relationships, that can be used to satisfy employee needs, and that positively impact employees' evaluations of their jobs.

Of the six relationship functions, the opportunity to give to others was most strongly related to job satisfaction. This corroborates insights from our critical incidents that good work relationships not only provide valuable resources, but also fulfill the need to give to others. This may be because giving to others creates a sense of mutuality (Stephens et al., 2012), which strengthens positive relationships. Career advancement was also significantly related to job satisfaction. This finding suggests that relationships with colleagues play an important role in promoting employee growth and development. Although career advancement was the most infrequently experienced function ($M = 3.29$), employees lucky enough to have coworkers who supported their climb up the career ladder were more satisfied with their jobs.

It is important to note that the role of career advancement in job satisfaction may be heightened in this sample of MBA students, many of whom are pursuing the MBA specifically for the purpose of career advancement; they may value this relationship function more highly during their present career stage. For this reason, in Study 2, we used a diverse sample of working adults drawn from a wide range of industries to further explore the nomological net of the relationship functions. Additionally, we address another central purpose of this research, which was to theorize and test a unique pattern of relationships between the relationship

TABLE 4
Study 1, Phase 3: Descriptive Statistics and Variable Intercorrelations

	M	*SD*	TA	CA	ES	FR	PG	GO	Cow Sat	JS
Task Assistance (TA)	3.92	.74	**.82**							
Career Advancement (CA)	3.29	.92	.44*	**.87**						
Emotional Support (ES)	3.63	.84	.34*	.40*	**.86**					
Friendship (FR)	3.58	.90	.17*	.35*	.49*	**.86**				
Personal Growth (PG)	3.56	.71	.40*	.42*	.37*	.33*	**.84**			
Giving to Others (GO)	3.91	.75	.36*	.36*	.26*	.19*	.38*	**.88**		
Coworker Satisfaction (Cow Sat)	2.13	.45	.43*	.46*	.26*	.24*	.29*	.10	**.86**	
Job Satisfaction (JS)	3.44	.77	.31*	.35*	.09	.02	.26*	.39*	.26*	**.75**

Note: $N = 177$. Internal consistency reliabilities (coefficient α) are in boldface on the diagonal.
* $p < .05$

functions and specific outcomes, bringing precision to the relationships literature. Specifically, we examined how relationships promote employee flourishing. As such, one of the key contributions of our expanded taxonomy of relationship functions is that the newly identified functions provide unique insight into how relationships engender outcomes such as meaningfulness, positive emotions, and life satisfaction.

STUDY 2: RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONS AND EMPLOYEE FLOURISHING

The primary purpose of Study 2 was to examine the unique effects of the six relationship functions on outcomes indicative of employee flourishing (Keyes, 2007). Most research on work relationships has examined the association between broad measures of relationship quality and general employee attitudes (e.g., Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006), but it is also important to examine differential associations between specific relationship functions and a wider range of outcomes. Whereas some broad outcomes, such as job satisfaction, may be associated with multiple relationship functions, other outcomes may be uniquely associated with only one, or a small subset, of the functions. By developing theory about which functions are most strongly associated with each specific flourishing outcome, we extend the literature on work relationships, adding precision to our understanding of the ways that workplace relationships affect employees. This approach also allows us to compare the potential benefits of lesser-studied functions (personal growth, friendship, and giving to others) in the context of the more traditionally studied functions (task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support).

Traditionally studied functions, such as task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support, may predict basic job satisfaction, but the functions of personal growth, friendship, and giving to

TABLE 5
Study 1, Phase 3: Regressing Job Satisfaction on Satisfaction with Coworkers and Relationship Functions

	DV = Job Satisfaction			
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Coworker Satisfaction	.26*	.14		.14
Task Assistance		.08	.12	.08
Career Advancement		.19*	.24*	.19*
Emotional Support		−.09	−.09	−.09
Friendship		−.13	−.12	−.13
Personal Growth		.07	.08	.07
Giving to Others		.30*	.28*	.30*
R^2 (ΔR^2)	.07*	.25* (.18*)	.24*	.25* (.01)
F (df)	$12.95_{(1, 175)}$	$8.16_{(7, 169)}$	$8.86_{(6, 170)}$	$8.16_{(7, 169)}$

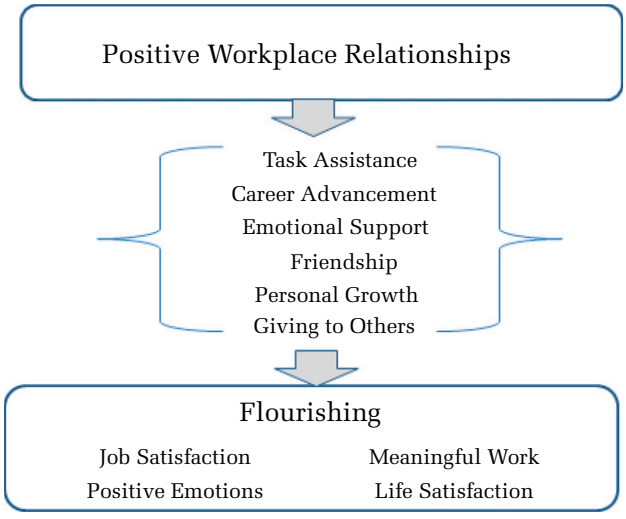
Note: $N = 177$. Values in the table are standardized regression coefficients.
* $p < .05$

others are likely to be especially relevant in predicting outcomes that capture employee flourishing. Employee flourishing occurs when employees experience high levels of well-being and are fully functioning (Keyes, 2007). In his research on flourishing and mental health, Keyes (2005) identified a number of indicators of flourishing, including positive emotions and positive psychological functioning. Given the expanded conceptualization of positive work relationships that we developed in Study 1, we suggest that positive workplace relationships are indirect and distal predictors of employee flourishing via the functions they serve (see Figure 1). It seems likely that relationship functions are not only associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, but also support employee functioning at its highest levels. Hence, we develop theory to suggest that personal growth, friendship, and giving to others predict outcomes indicative of positive emotions at work and positive psychological functioning (e.g., work meaningfulness, life satisfaction), providing evidence that functions that are consistent with a growth and development perspective ultimately lead to outcomes associated with individual flourishing. Finally, Study 2 provides additional validity evidence for the RFI, by confirming its factor structure in a diverse sample of working adults.

Theoretical Development

Meaningful work. When people are at peak levels of functioning or flourishing, they see their lives as meaningful and valuable, finding purpose in life (Keyes, 2007). Of the six relationship functions, we expect that the opportunity to give to others will be most strongly associated with employees' perceptions that work is meaningful. Meaningful work is "work experienced as particularly significant and holding more positive meaning for individuals" (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010: 95). Judgments of meaningfulness are shaped by the extent to which work is consistent with one's values and identities (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010). When work is consistent with employees' identities, it becomes an opportunity to live out cherished values and enact an authentic self (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). However, perceptions of meaningfulness are not solely based on individual fulfillment. Work may also be perceived as meaningful when it is accomplished in the context of a valued group. When work is done as a part of a group or organization, identification with the group and a sense of belonging also contributes to perceptions of meaningfulness (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010).

FIGURE 1
Role of Positive Workplace Relationships in Employee Flourishing



Although a great deal of research has investigated the factors that shape perceptions of meaningfulness at work, we know little about the role of dyadic interpersonal relationships (Rosso et al., 2010). Recent research suggests that connections with beneficiaries of one's work are motivating because they highlight the prosocial impact that work can have on others (Grant, 2007, 2008). This research has focused on beneficiaries of one's work as a source of meaningfulness, but giving to coworkers may also reinforce perceptions of meaningfulness. When describing the experience of giving to others in their critical incidents, respondents noted their pride in the impact that they had on coworkers. For example, one respondent observed, "I enjoyed helping her make difficult decisions, and felt privileged to help her grow professionally and personally." Similarly, Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008) found that formal employee support programs may be associated with stronger affective organizational commitment because they provide employees with the opportunity to assist coworkers, which reinforces their identity as caring people. Building on this research, we propose that informal opportunities to give to coworkers through interpersonal relationships will increase perceptions of meaningfulness.

Conversely, we do not expect functions associated with gaining benefits to affect perceptions that work is meaningful. It is possible that receiving resources such as task assistance, career advice, or emotional

support will help employees achieve goals at work. However, receiving these resources may also indicate to employees that they need help in overcoming challenges and meeting work goals, thus posing a threat to self-esteem (Deelstra, Peeters, Schaufeli, Stroebe, Zijlstra, & van Doornen, 2003). This is problematic because self-esteem has been posited to be a necessary foundation for meaningful work (Rosso et al., 2010). For these reasons, we expect giving to others will be the relationship function that is most strongly associated with perceptions of meaningfulness at work.

Hypothesis 2. Giving to others is positively related to perceptions of meaningful work.

Positive emotions at work. Positive emotions are another important component of flourishing (Keyes, 2007). In the broader social psychological literature, the link between social relationships and positive emotions is well documented (e.g., Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Clark and Watson (1988) found that socializing is more commonly associated with positive affect than any other life activity. Argyle (2001: 71) even went so far as to state that "social relationships have a powerful effect on happiness and other aspects of well-being, and are perhaps its greatest single cause." Theoretically, the link between social relationships and positive emotions can be explained in several ways. As we have posited throughout this paper, social relationships provide resources that may contribute to the happiness and well-being of the recipient. However, even when relationships do not provide direct resources, they may satisfy human's enduring need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Both resources provided by work relationships and satisfaction of the need to belong may lead to positive emotions at work.

Despite the prevalence of evidence linking social relationships with positive affect, happiness, and well-being, the mere existence of social relationships and frequency of contact with others are not strong correlates of positive affect and subjective well-being (Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2006). Instead, close relationships that satisfy the need to belong are more likely to contribute to happiness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Such relationships are characterized by frequent and affectively pleasant interactions that are based on concern for each other's welfare (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Intimacy theory also suggests that high-quality relationships—those in which partners feel close and connected, have the ability to reveal central aspects of the self to each other, and perceive that partners are responsive—are more likely to engender positive emotions (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Specifically, Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, and Ryan (2000) found that feelings of relatedness associated with positive affect came from feeling understood and appreciated, talking about something meaningful, or sharing fun activities.

Given the evidence that certain types of relationships are more likely to be associated with positive emotions, we propose that two of our six relationship functions will engender positive emotions at work. First, friendship represents the type of close relationship that has previously been associated with positive affect (Thoits, 2011). When work relationships develop into friendships, partners are more likely to be willing to reveal central aspects of the self and are more likely to perceive that partners are responsive. Friendships go beyond typical coworker relationships, with partners being more likely to spend time outside of work and exhibit active care toward one another. Further, friends are likely to share fun activities together. Because of this, friendships are often pleasant, providing an important source of positive emotions at work (Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2006). When talking about relationships that had developed into friendships, participants in our critical incidents study noted that they were able to "get to know each other outside of the work environment," and described the relationship partner as someone "you can share anything with."

Second, when studied together with other relationship functions, we also propose that giving to others is likely to be associated with positive emotions at work. It is relationships in which individuals both receive resources and also have the chance to give back that are most likely to engender positive emotions, because of their mutuality (Ragins & Dutton, 2007; Stephens et al., 2012). Further, giving to others may allow individuals to satisfy a need and validate their identities as caring people (Grant et al., 2008), which may also lead to the experience of positive emotions. Given this, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3. (a) Friendship and (b) giving to others are positively related to positive emotions at work.

Life satisfaction. Another important component of human flourishing is experiencing satisfaction with one's life (Keyes, 2007). Because work is an important domain in many people's lives (Judge & Watanabe, 1993), being satisfied at work contributes to satisfaction in life. Thus, relationship functions, such as task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support, may be positively related to life

satisfaction because of their positive impact on job satisfaction. However, these indirect associations between relationship functions and life satisfaction are likely to be distal and weak. Relationships that provide functions easily transferred to other life domains may have stronger and more direct relationships with life satisfaction (e.g., Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). For example, personal growth may contribute not only to work but also to the development of life skills and competencies that extend outside the work domain. As one of our critical incident participants noted, work relationships can provide insights into family or religious issues in addition to building work competencies. These nonwork-related areas of growth may directly impact life satisfaction. Further, friendships that begin at work may also extend outside of the work context, providing support in other life roles that has a positive impact on life satisfaction. Therefore, we expect the personal growth and friendship functions to be more strongly related to life satisfaction than work-relevant functions such as task assistance or career development.

However, it is not only what we get from work relationships that influences life satisfaction; the opportunity to give to others fulfills the need to help others and reinforces a core personal identity as a caring person (Grant et al., 2008). While this may make work more meaningful, as noted above, reinforcing core personal identities may also lead to fulfillment outside of the work domain, which contributes directly to life satisfaction. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 4. (a) Personal growth, (b) friendship, and (c) giving to others are positively related to life satisfaction.

Method

Participants and procedures. Participants were drawn from the Study Response Project (http://www.studyresponse.net/index.htm), an online data collection service that links researchers with a diverse group of adult research participants. This database has been used in prior studies (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Umphress, Bingham, & Mitchell, 2010), in part because it includes workers from a wide variety of organizations and occupations. Selection criteria for participants in this project were 300 individuals who were (a) employed for 32 hours per week or more, (b) married to or living with a partner who was also enrolled in Study Response, (c) between the ages of 18 and 65, and (d) U.S. or Canadian residents. Focal participants received two online surveys. The first included the relationship function items, positive affectivity, and demographics, and the second (sent approximately one month later) included the outcome measures: job satisfaction, work meaningfulness, positive emotions at work, and life satisfaction. We also sent an online survey to the partner about three weeks after the first focal survey and a week before the second one, thus separating partner reports from those of focal participants. Partners reported on focal participants' job satisfaction, work meaningfulness, and life satisfaction. Survey links were sent directly to the intended recipient (focal participants and partners) by Study Response staff.

Of the 267 participants who completed our first survey, 252 (94%) completed the second survey. We received partner surveys from 227 partners (90%), resulting in a matched sample (both participant surveys and partner survey) of 210. Data collected via anonymous Internet surveys may include some degree of careless or inattentive responding, though the true magnitude of the problem is hard to establish (Johnson, 2005; Meade & Craig, 2012). To address this concern, we adopted a proactive approach and incorporated two instructed response items into each survey. Each instructed response item told respondents to select a specific response (e.g., Please select "*Strongly agree*" for this item). This procedure gave us a 96% probability of catching careless respondents (see the formula in Meade & Craig, 2012).

Of the 210 pairs, 41 participants and 30 partners missed at least one of the instructed response items, resulting in 59 pairs in which at least one person missed an instructed response. It is likely that some missed instructed responses represent common measurement error, such as accidentally clicking on the wrong response. Nonetheless, we took a conservative approach and analyzed only data from 151 participant pairs who responded correctly to all instructed items. Of the 151 participants, 53.0% were male; 24.5% were 30 years old or younger, 42.4% were between 31 and 40 years old, and 33.1% were 41 years old or older. With regard to education, 7.3% had a high school diploma, 15.9% had some college coursework or an associate's degree, 49.0% had a bachelor's degree, and 27.8% had an advanced degree.

Measures. We measured relationship functions with the 18-item RFI, using the same instructions and response scale as in Study 1, Phase 3. As in Study 1, participants rated the extent to which their current relationships with all of their coworkers provided

the benefits listed in the relationship function items, using a 5-point response scale (1 = "*strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*strongly agree*"). We assessed the internal consistency reliability of each dimension using coefficient alpha (task assistance, $\alpha = .72$; career advancement, $\alpha = .89$; emotional support, $\alpha = .84$; personal growth, $\alpha = .87$; friendship, $\alpha = .85$; giving to others, $\alpha = .80$).

Job satisfaction was measured with five items from the Brayfield and Rothe (1951) scale, as in Study 1, and was completed by both participants and partners using a 5-point response scale (1 = "*strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*strongly agree*"; self, $\alpha = .83$, partner, $\alpha = .80$). Partners were instructed to think about how the participant felt about his or her job. Partners' responses provide an independent observer assessment of the focal participant's self-reported states and feelings, and past research has shown that such assessments are accurate (Judge et al., 2000). Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent scales were also included on the partners' survey.

Work meaningfulness was measured with the 3-item scale from the psychological empowerment measure developed by Spreitzer (1995). Spreitzer reported high test–retest and internal consistency reliability in two samples, as well as good convergent and discriminant validity of the scale. Other research has also used the scale successfully (e.g., Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). A sample item is "The work I do is very important to me." A 5-point response scale (1 = "*strongly disagree*" to 5 = "*strongly agree*"; self, $\alpha = .92$, partner, $\alpha = .89$) was used.

To represent the full range of positive emotions that employees might experience at work, we used adjectives drawn from the existing literature. We started with five mood terms drawn from the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (Diener et al., 2010). However, because that scale tends to focus on low to moderate arousal positive emotions, we added four additional mood adjectives that represent "activated positive affect" (Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008: 437). This allowed us to capture low and high arousal positive emotions, both of which have been associated with well-being and flourishing (Diener et al., 2010; Shirom, 2011). In all, participants responded to nine positive emotion terms: "pleasant," "good," "positive," "joyful," "happy," "vigorous," "lively," "full of pep," and "active." They were instructed to think about how frequently they experienced these feelings at work on a 5-point response scale (1 = "*very rarely or never*" to 5 = "*very often or always*"; self, $\alpha = .92$). This scale was not included in the partner survey, as partners cannot observe participants' emotions at work.

To measure life satisfaction, we used the 5-item Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Sample items included "In most ways, my life is close to ideal" and "The conditions of my life are excellent." Consistent with the original scale, a 7-point response scale (1 = "*strongly disagree*" to 7 = "*strongly agree*"; self, $\alpha = .91$, partner, $\alpha = .92$) was used.

Because trait positive affectivity may both facilitate the formation of good work relationships and affect some of our outcome variables (e.g., job satisfaction; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & deChermont, 2003) we controlled for it in our regression analysis. We assessed trait positive affectivity using the 10-item positive affectivity scale from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Respondents were instructed to indicate the extent to which they generally felt each emotion or feeling listed (e.g., interested, excited) using a 5-point response scale (1 = "*very slightly or not at all*" to 5 = "*very much*"; $\alpha = .91$).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are presented in Table 6. As expected—given that they were intended to measure the same construct—self and partner reports of job satisfaction, meaningfulness of work, and life satisfaction were highly correlated ($r = .76, .74, .73$, respectively). Therefore, the average of self and partner ratings for these dependent variables is used in all analyses. As in Study 1, the relationship functions were also correlated with each other (range $r = .43$ to $.67$). We conducted a CFA to confirm the structure of the RFI. Results indicated that the six-factor structure derived in Study 1 also fit the data well in this sample ($\chi^2 = 264.63$, $df = 120$; SRMR = .06, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .08). Two alternative five-factor measurement models, in which conceptually similar functions were combined into a single factor, were also tested. A model with career advancement and personal growth combined into a single factor was a significantly worse fit to the data ($\Delta\chi^2 = 134.10$, $\Delta df = 1$), as was a model with a single factor for friendship and emotional support items ($\Delta\chi^2 = 170.21$, $\Delta df = 1$).

The primary purpose of this study was to provide additional evidence that the relationship functions we identified are consequential for employees, especially in terms of promoting individual flourishing. In the

TABLE 6
Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Variable Intercorrelations

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Sex	.53	.50	–									
2. Age	2.09	.76	−.03	–								
3. Education	3.00	.90	.07	−.23	–							
4. Positive Affectivity	3.59	.72	−.11	.17	.20	**.91**						
5. Task Assistance	3.91	.70	.09	−.05	.22	.33	**.72**					
6. Career Advancement	3.17	1.07	−.03	−.15	.31	.42	.48	**.89**				
7. Emotional Support	3.66	.85	−.09	−.01	.23	.27	.53	.43	**.84**			
8. Personal Growth	3.45	.88	−.08	−.16	.25	.42	.59	.67	.60	**.87**		
9. Friendship	3.51	.94	.01	−.12	.14	.34	.43	.56	.53	.62	**.85**	
10. Giving to Others	3.81	.77	−.14	−.05	.25	.49	.46	.55	.48	.62	.56	**.80**
11. Job Satisfaction—Self	3.62	.84	−.11	.01	.08	.39	.45	.29	.42	.37	.31	.42
12. Job Satisfaction—Partner	3.50	.83	−.03	−.04	.00	.33	.38	.19	.23	.25	.18	.30
13. Job Satisfaction—Average	3.56	.78	−.07	−.02	.04	.38	.44	.26	.34	.33	.26	.38
14. Meaningfulness—Self	3.93	.86	.00	.15	.08	.57	.40	.44	.32	.48	.39	.59
15. Meaningfulness—Partner	3.93	.83	.01	−.01	.11	.48	.38	.42	.22	.41	.28	.50
16. Meaningfulness—Average	3.93	.79	.01	.08	.11	.57	.42	.46	.29	.48	.36	.59
17. Positive Work Emotions	3.52	.73	−.08	.11	.04	.66	.37	.44	.34	.46	.46	.43
18. Life Satisfaction—Self	5.15	1.29	−.24	−.12	.22	.47	.27	.36	.34	.45	.39	.37
19. Life Satisfaction—Partner	4.92	1.34	−.04	−.09	.20	.41	.32	.45	.26	.46	.31	.29
20. Life Satisfaction—Average	5.04	1.22	−.15	−.12	.23	.47	.32	.44	.32	.49	.38	.35

interest of bringing precision to relationship theory, we examined the unique associations between relationship functions and specific outcomes. Table 7 presents results of a series of regressions in which we regressed each outcome on all six relationship functions; positive affectivity was included as a control.

As in Study 1, we found that the relationship functions explained significant variance in job satisfaction even after controlling for positive affectivity; however, the individual predictors were slightly different in this sample than in Study 1. In this sample, task assistance was the only significant predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = .31$). The relationship functions explained significant variance in meaningful work. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, giving to others was the only significant predictor of meaningful work ($\beta = .34$).

Hypothesis 3, which predicted that friendship and giving to others were the functions most likely to be associated with positive emotions at work, was partially supported. Positive emotions at work were

TABLE 6 (*cont.*)
Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Variable Intercorrelations

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
11. Job Satisfaction—Self	**.83**									
12. Job Satisfaction—Partner	.76	**.80**								
13. Job Satisfaction—Average	.94	.94	**.89**							
14. Meaningfulness—Self	.60	.59	.64	**.92**						
15. Meaningfulness—Partner	.49	.65	.61	.74	**.89**					
16. Meaningfulness—Average	.59	.67	.67	.93	.93	**.93**				
17. Positive Work Emotions	.68	.54	.65	.64	.50	.61	**.92**			
18. Life Satisfaction—Self	.58	.39	.51	.47	.42	.48	.60	**.91**		
19. Life Satisfaction—Partner	.50	.45	.50	.50	.52	.54	.57	.73	**.92**	
20. Life Satisfaction—Average	.58	.45	.55	.52	.50	.55	.63	.93	.93	**.94**

Notes: $N = 151$. Scale reliabilities are on the diagonal in bold. Sex: 0 = female, 1 = male. Age: 1 = 30 or younger, 2 = 31–40, 3 = 40 or older. Education: 1 = high school, 2 = two-year degree or some college coursework, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = master's degree, 5 = doctorate/JD/MD.
Correlations $> |.17|$, $p < .05$; and correlations $> |.21|$, $p < .01$

TABLE 7
Study 2: Regression Results for Relationship Functions

	Job Satisfaction	Meaningful Work	Work PE	Life Satisfaction
Positive Affectivity	.23*	.32*	.55*	.32*
Task Assistance	.31*	.14	.07	.00
Career Advancement	−.08	.09	.05	.12
Emotional Support	.12	−.09	.01	.02
Friendship	−.02	−.04	.21*	.07
Personal Growth	−.05	.07	.07	.26*
Giving to Others	.16	.34*	−.06	−.09
F (df = 7,143)	7.98*	18.29*	21.29*	10.31*
R^2	.28*	.47*	.51*	.34*
ΔR^2 for RFI	.14*	.15*	.07*	.11*

Notes: N = 151. Work PE = Positive Emotions at Work. Job Satisfaction, Meaningful Work, and Life Satisfaction combine self and partner reports; Work PE is assessed by self reports. Slight differences in this pattern of relationships were found when using only self or only other reports of the dependent variables. Regression results for self and other reports are available from the first author upon request.

* = $p < .05$

significantly associated with friendship (β = .21), but not with giving to others. As predicted in Hypothesis 4, life satisfaction was significantly associated with personal growth (β = .26); however, neither friendship nor giving to others was a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

Since our goal was to better understand unique relationships between the relationship functions and our flourishing outcomes, we also conducted relative weights analyses to examine the relative contribution of each function (see Table 8). Results revealed a clear pattern of differential effects. Of the six relationship functions, the most important predictor of job satisfaction was task assistance. Giving to others was the most important predictor of meaningful work. Friendship was the most important predictor of positive emotions at work, and personal growth had the strongest impact on life satisfaction. Thus, although our hypotheses were not completely supported, clear evidence of differential outcomes of the relationship functions was found. It is also notable that the three relationship functions that have not traditionally been included in taxonomies of relationship functions explained the highest percentage of variance in outcomes indicative of flourishing.

Post hoc analyses. Based on reviewer questions about the effects of gender and age on our results, we conducted several post hoc analyses. First, we reran Table 7 regressions with age and gender as controls (along with positive affectivity) and found no substantive changes in the results. Second, we created a set of interaction terms representing the interaction between each of the six relationship functions and gender. This block of interaction terms did not significantly impact any of our dependent variables. Finally, we created a set of interaction terms representing the interaction between the six relationship functions and age, which was assessed categorically: 30 and under, 31 to 40, and over 40 years of age. The

TABLE 8
Study 2: Relative Weights Analysis

	Job Satisfaction	Meaningful Work	Work PE	Life Satisfaction
Positive Affectivity	25%	32%	53%	33%
Task Assistance	***32%***	11%	6%	6%
Career Advancement	4%	11%	9%	16%
Emotional Support	13%	3%	4%	7%
Friendship	4%	5%	***12%***	10%
Personal Growth	7%	11%	9%	***22%***
Giving to Others	16%	***28%***	7%	6%

Notes: N = 151. Work PE = Positive Emotions at Work. Job Satisfaction, Meaningful Work, and Life Satisfaction combine self and partner reports; Work PE is assessed by self reports.

block of interactions explained significant variance in life satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .08$, $p < .01$); age moderated the effects of both personal growth ($B = .66$, $p < .01$) and emotional support ($B = -.46$, $p < .05$) on life satisfaction. As shown in Figure 2, personal growth has a slightly negative relationship with life satisfaction for those 30 and younger; however, the relationship is increasingly positive at older ages. Conversely, the relationship between emotional support and life satisfaction is positive for those 30 and younger, and negative for those over 40. Although the block of interactions did not reach significance at traditional levels for job satisfaction ($p = .14$) or positive emotions ($p = .08$), age significantly moderated the effects of personal growth and emotional support on these outcomes as well, with the pattern of results similar to those for life satisfaction. There were no significant age effects in predicting meaningful work; giving to others was a significant predictor across ages.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

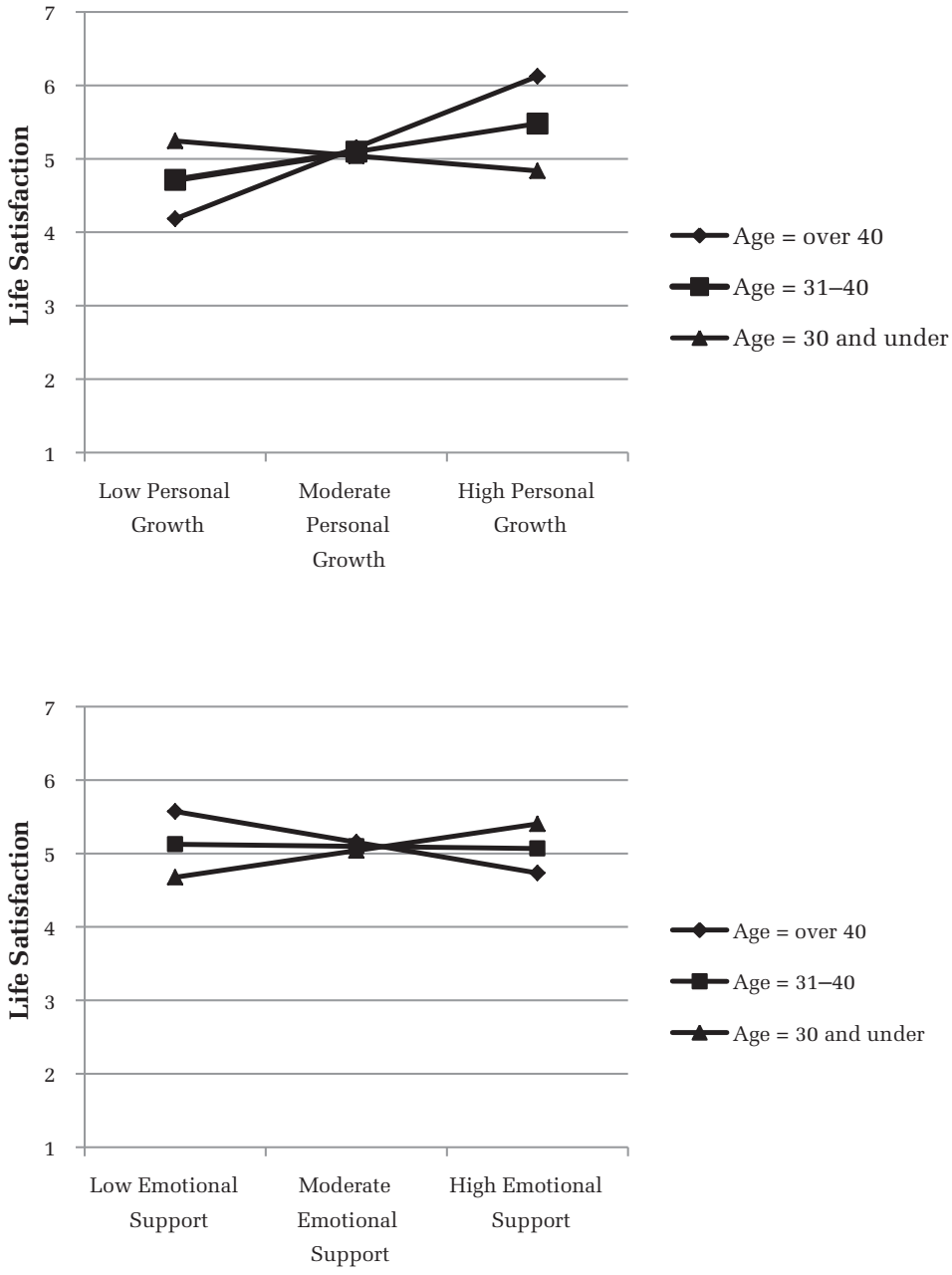
Work relationships may be among our most significant. These relationships provide work-relevant resources such as task assistance, emotional support, and career advancement, but our critical incidents showed that—consistent with theory (Feeney & Collins, 2015; Kahn, 2007; Ragins & Dutton, 2007)—good work relationships also support personal growth, are a source of friendship, and provide the opportunity to give to others. We expected to identify additional functions of good workplace relationships because the world of work has changed. An increasing reliance on relational means of organizing and increasingly porous work–life boundaries set the stage for work relationships to serve a broader range of functions than in the past. Further, recent theory (Feeney & Collins, 2015) suggests that relationships not only help us cope with adversity, but also provide opportunities for the pursuit of growth and development. Thus, we expected and found that relationships in today's workplace are likely to provide more than instrumental benefits; they also support growth and development and ultimately promote individual flourishing.

Our critical incidents provided direct support for an expanded taxonomy of work relationship functions. Developed inductively, but consistent with theory (e.g., Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Feeney & Collins, 2015), our taxonomy of relationship functions provides evidence that traditionally studied functions such as task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support continue to be important in today's workplace. All of these functions are positively correlated with outcomes that are indicative of employee flourishing. In fact, task assistance accounts for the largest percentage of variance explained by the functions for job satisfaction.

However, our respondents also described work relationships that supported personal growth, served as a source of friendship, and provided opportunities for giving to others. With this expanded taxonomy of relationship functions as a foundation, we developed theory predicting which relationship functions were most likely to be associated with meaningful work, positive emotions at work, and life satisfaction, outcomes that are broadly representative of employee flourishing. Consistent with the idea that identities are created, enacted, and revised in the context of relationships (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), we found that relationships serve the function of promoting personal growth, going beyond providing advice and opportunities for the development of a professional identity and extending to shaping and nurturing the individual as a whole. Of the six relationship functions, personal growth explained the largest proportion of variance in life satisfaction, showing that work relationships have effects that extend beyond the work context. More research is needed to fully understand the types of relationships that are most likely to promote personal growth and the implications of this relationship function for organizations as well as individuals.

As the boundary between work and personal identities becomes less clear (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013), work relationships also are seen as a key source of friendships. Friendship was the most important predictor of positive emotions at work, another key indicator of employee flourishing, even after controlling for trait positive affectivity. This suggests that having friends at work is associated with feeling positive, happy, or pleasant beyond the dispositional factors that influence such positive emotions. As positive emotions are a key component of employee flourishing, having friends at work is a key driver of employee well-being. However, positive emotions also have beneficial effects for organizations, increasing divergent thinking, and broadening thought–action repertoires (Fredrickson, 1998; Isen, 2008). Social psychological studies of interpersonal relationships highlight the benefits of friendship, which is considered by some as the best indicator of the closeness of a relationship (Bove & Johnson, 2001). Additionally, social networks research has provided some insight into the role of friendship ties

FIGURE 2
Post Hoc Analysis of Age as a Moderator



in facilitating positive outcomes in the workplace (e.g., Balkundi & Harrison, 2006). However, more research is needed to fully understand the role that work friendships play in concert with other relationship functions to shape outcomes both inside and outside the workplace.

Having the opportunity to give to others was another function that clearly emerged from our critical incidents. Most research on work relationships has focused on the resources individuals *get* from their relationships (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008), though research suggests that giving to others has far-reaching effects such as reduced mortality (Brown et al., 2003) and increasing motivation (Grant, 2008). Our results extend this line of research by showing that when employees have the opportunity to give to coworkers

at work—in the context of good work relationships—benefits accrue to employees. Giving to others was the most important predictor of employees' perceptions that their work is meaningful, establishing giving as a key determinant of employee flourishing. It is important to note that perceptions that work is meaningful also benefit organizations through increased employee motivation (Spreitzer, 1995). Future research that examines how different types of giving (e.g., giving task assistance, giving friendship) may differentially impact outcomes is needed to extend our understanding of this important relationship function.

Our post hoc analyses revealed interesting results in that we found that personal growth is most important for flourishing (life satisfaction, job satisfaction, and positive emotions) for older workers. The opposite trend was found for emotional support, which positively predicted job and life satisfaction for younger workers, but was negatively related to these outcomes for older workers. These results suggest that future research examining how the role of the relationship functions changes with age is needed. Moreover, given that we found some differences in the relationship functions associated with job satisfaction between our MBA (Study 1) and our general worker (Study 2) samples, the age effects we found may actually represent effects of career stage. In these data, we are not able to separate out the effects of age and career stage, but we encourage future research building on our findings in this area. It is also worth noting that giving to others was a consistent predictor of meaningful work across age groups; this effect did not differ significantly with age.

In sum, our research advances theoretical understanding of relationships at work by highlighting the breadth of functions that work relationships provide. The functions that emerged from our analysis of critical incidents not only enabled us to provide a more comprehensive taxonomy of relationship functions, but also specifically helped us understand how relationships contribute to employee growth, well-being, and flourishing. We used this taxonomy as a foundation to bring precision to the relationships literature by developing and testing theory that suggests links between individual functions and specific outcomes. Our studies suggest that much is lost when we focus only on the direct work-relevant benefits of workplace relationships. The impact of work relationships extends well beyond job tasks, influencing employees' perceptions of work meaningfulness, the emotions they experience at work, and their general life satisfaction. These findings hold using self and partner ratings of outcomes and when controlling for positive affectivity, which is associated both with good relationships and flourishing, as well as when controlling for age and gender.

Practical Implications

In addition to advancing theoretical understanding of work relationships, our research on the functions served by good work relationships also has practical implications. Our results suggest that organizations that foster the development of workplace relationships in which employees have the opportunity to give and get resources from one another will benefit. Although our study does not directly address this issue, it suggests that organizations may want to consider workplace schedules and designs (e.g., colocation), which may impact the extent to which employees develop the types of positive relationships that accrue the benefits we studied here. Our results also imply that organizations with reward structures that pit employees against one another, rather than nurturing cooperation, may lose out on the subtle and less directly measureable benefits of high-quality work relationships. Indeed, when employees develop networks of positive relationships, they are more likely to share information and positive emotions, benefiting individuals, teams, and the organizations for which they work (Baker & Dutton, 2007). Finally, research in both psychology and medicine provides a growing body of evidence that the types of flourishing outcomes we studied (meaningful work, positive emotions, and happy lives) are associated with better health. Thus, it is plausible that, when organizations support workplace relationships that provide the benefits in our taxonomy, they may benefit not only through employee engagement, lowered turnover, and better sharing of resources, but may also experience reduced health care costs. Importantly, our research also shows that the focus of relationships should not be solely on what one is getting from work relationships. The opportunity to give to others is not merely an input into the social exchange process, but a valuable end in itself.

Limitations and Future Research

This research has some limitations, which provide a springboard for future research. First, although our data ordering is consistent with our theory and we controlled for individual differences, we are not able

to test the implied causal associations because our data are cross-sectional. Indeed, it is plausible that there is reciprocal causality between relationship functions and employee outcomes such as the ones we studied. For example, broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 1998) suggests that positive spirals may emerge, such that positive emotions may result in the development of social resources (high-quality work relationships), which then engender more positive emotions. Future research using longitudinal panel designs is needed.

Second, to develop the taxonomy of relationship functions, we asked participants to tell us about one positive work relationship; some participants thought of a relationship with a boss, while others thought of a relationship with a peer or subordinate. Participants were more likely to mention friendship, emotional support, and task assistance in stories about peers, career advancement in stories about supervisors, and giving to others in stories about subordinates. Despite these trends, each of the six functions emerged across the three relationship partner categories; hence, in Phase 3 of Study 1 and in Study 2, we focused on the functions obtained from coworker relationships in aggregate. The moderate correlations between the functions suggest that these functions tend to cooccur; that is, higher levels of one function are associated with higher levels of other functions. However, we do not know whether employees tend to experience all of the functions in the context of a single relationship, or if it is their pattern of high-quality work relationships that matters most. We did collect additional data to show that the RFI has a similar structure when the target is a single coworker, a set of relationships, or a relationship with a supervisor. Nonetheless, additional research is needed to develop theory that explains how functions served by a single work relationship impact outcomes, and to empirically determine if the outcomes of the functions served by a single work relationship differ from the outcomes of the functions received from coworkers in general. Further, we need to know more about whether the impact of the functions served by direct report and supervisory relationships are similar to the impact of those functions when they are provided by coworkers. In addition, we did not consider the extent to which work and nonwork relationships serve redundant functions. It is plausible that, when nonwork relationships provide functions such as friendship, personal growth, and the opportunity to give to others, these functions are less important in workplace relationships because they are redundant. But, it is also possible that obtaining these functions in both work and other domains has additive effects.

Future research is also needed to more fully explore the nomological net around the relationship functions. We did not explore the factors that may serve as antecedents of relationship functions in this research, although other research on positive relationships provides some insights on this. For example, trust is often cited as a characteristic of good work relationships, and, as Rousseau and Ling (2007: 377) argued, "Some resources can only be produced and offered in trusting relationships." Drawing from theory developed by Dutton and Heaphy (2003), we also predict that individuals are more likely to find friendship, personal growth, and the opportunity to give to others when their relationships have higher emotional carrying capacity, resilience, and openness to new ideas. In the same way that the functions differentially predicted outcomes, they may have differential antecedents as well.

Additionally, we need to know more about the mechanisms by which relationship functions promote higher levels of satisfaction, more positive emotions, and perceptions of meaningfulness. Our theory suggests that examining these functions through an identity lens is beneficial; it is possible that the functions we identified combine to influence the ability to develop and enact a positive identity at work. Kahn (2007: 277) noted that good relationships among people "enable them to feel valued and valuable, seen and witnessed, cared for and appreciated, productive and engaged." We need to know more about the characteristics of good relationships that facilitate the development of positive identity, the conditions under which good work relationships impact identity, and the processes by which good relationships promote self-knowledge, self-esteem, and other nutriments of positive relationships (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010; Roberts, 2007). It is likely that in-depth interview studies will be needed to fully understand the mechanisms by which good work relationships impact positive identities. Observational studies might also reveal additional functions served by good work relationships and provide insight into the mechanisms by which they impact individuals.

Finally, given the increasing focus on relationships characterized by abusiveness and incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Tepper, 2007), future research is needed to investigate the types of functions served by negative workplace relationships. It is possible that even negative relationships serve basic functions, such as providing task assistance.

Further, in the long term, negative work relationships may have the by-product of building skills in dealing with difficult people, thereby providing personal growth. Examining the functions served by both positive and negative workplace relationships is a promising direction for future research.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that positive work relationships serve a more complex set of functions than previously recognized. We show that, in addition to the traditional functions of task assistance, career advancement, and emotional support, work relationships also promote personal growth, provide a source of friendship, and provide the opportunity to give to others. As such, relationships not only have the potential to increase job satisfaction, but they also promote perceptions of meaningful work, engender positive emotions at work, and support life satisfaction; they support employee flourishing in ways that benefit both individuals and organizations. Considered as a whole, this research advances our understanding of workplace relationships and the functions they serve, as well as providing a practically useful tool—the RFI—for assessment of these functions.

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APPENDIX A: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS USED TO COLLECT CRITICAL INCIDENTS

We are interested in the types of relationships that people form with others at work—for example, relationships with bosses or coworkers. The purpose of this survey is for you to tell us about a good relationship that you currently have or have had in the past with someone at work. Even though we are interested in work relationships, your interactions in the relationship may have occurred either during work hours or after work.

When you complete this survey, we ask that you do NOT use real names. You can refer to the individual you are describing as "my boss/coworker" or "she/he." Please take a moment right now to think about a good relationship that you have now or have had in the past with someone at work. By relationship, we mean any association, connection or affiliation, but we want you to think about one that was particularly good.

First Round	Second Round	Prompts for Critical Incidents
X	X	Please tell us about the work relationship that came to mind. Usually, the best way to get started is by simply writing about the relationship—how it got started, what it is/was like, why you consider(ed) it a good one. Please do not use names, but do provide detailed information. We would like lots of information about this relationship, so write whatever comes to mind. More is better!
X		Please tell us a bit more about the relationship. What else would we need to know to fully understand your relationship with this person?
X	X	Now that you have provided a general sense of the relationship, we would like you to think of a specific example or episode that captures the essence of the relationship. In this section, we would like you to tell us about a specific situation or example of something that happened in the relationship. Be very specific. What was the context? What happened?
X		Please describe another specific example or episode that captures the essence of this relationship.
	X	We know that work relationships can serve many purposes and fulfill many needs. We are interested in what benefits or rewards you may have gotten from this relationship. We don't mean only concrete or tangible benefits. We are also interested in how the relationship affected you, what it contributed to your life or your career, or how it made you feel. Think about what you got out of this relationship. What functions did it serve for you? What needs did it fulfill for you?
X	X	Now we would like to have you think about why this is/was a good relationship. What is it about this relationship that made it come to mind as a particularly good one? (Minor rewording in round two: "We would like you to describe what this relationship was like. What were the characteristics of the relationship that made it a good one?")

Appendix B
Item Statistics from the Assigning Procedure in Study 1, Phase 2

Item	Correct Assignment	Clarity Rating	Fit Rating	Overlap Rating
Task Assistance (average)	*1.00*	*4.66*	*4.71*	*1.76*
This person helps me get my work done.	1.00	4.71	4.71	1.86
This person answers questions I have about my job.	1.00	4.57	4.57	2.00
This person is always willing to give me a hand with my work.	1.00	4.71	4.86	1.43
Career Advancement (average)	*1.00*	*4.71*	*4.86*	*1.57*
This person discusses my career plans with me.	1.00	4.43	4.71	1.71
This person gives me opportunities to build my career.	1.00	4.71	4.86	1.29
This person helps me identify opportunities for development that will advance my career.	1.00	5.00	5.00	1.71
Emotional Support (average)	*0.95*	*4.28*	*4.76*	*2.24*
This person helps me cope with stress.	0.86	4.14	4.86	2.71
This person allows me to vent my frustrations.	1.00	4.57	4.71	2.00
This person helps me release tension.	1.00	4.14	4.71	2.00
Friendship (average)	*1.00*	*4.52*	*4.95*	*1.81*
This person is my friend.	1.00	4.00	5.00	1.86
I spend time with this person outside of work.	1.00	4.71	4.86	1.43
My relationship with this person is more than just a work relationship	1.00	4.86	5.00	2.14
Personal Growth (average)	*0.95*	*4.52*	*4.67*	*2.29*
This person helps me grow and develop as a human being.	0.86	5.00	5.00	1.57
This person pushes me to become a better person.	1.00	4.00	4.43	2.29
This person helps me develop life skills and competencies, such as becoming a better listener, or being more patient, or solving problems better.	1.00	4.57	4.57	3.00
Giving to Others (average)	*1.00*	*4.62*	*4.90*	*1.67*
This relationship gives me the opportunity to assist someone else.	1.00	4.86	5.00	1.43
This relationship gives me the opportunity to mentor and support another person.	1.00	4.86	5.00	1.29
This relationship gives me the opportunity to give something back.	1.00	4.14	4.71	2.29