

*Training Transfer: Moving
Towards a View of Transfer
as a Personal Choice*

J. Kevin Ford
Michigan State University
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Training is among the principle factors in increasing efficiency and improving individual adjustment in industry. A well organized training program, based on a sound analysis of the job and applying well established learning principles, enables the worker to employ the most effective methods in the performance of his task.

(page 393; Viteles, 1932)

Today's Outline

1. What is transfer of training?
2. How is the landscape of workplace training changing?
3. Thought Exercise 1: Implications of changing landscape for understanding training transfer
4. What do we know about training transfer?
5. What if we viewed training transfer as a choice?
6. Thought Exercise 2: Choice to transfer in the context of a Police Executive Leadership Workshop
7. New directions for research: Personalization of transfer
8. Concluding remarks

Transfer of Training

- The extent to which the learning that results from a training experience leads to meaningful changes in work performance
- Positive transfer is more than a function of original learning in a training experience. For transfer to have occurred, learned behavior must be generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time.

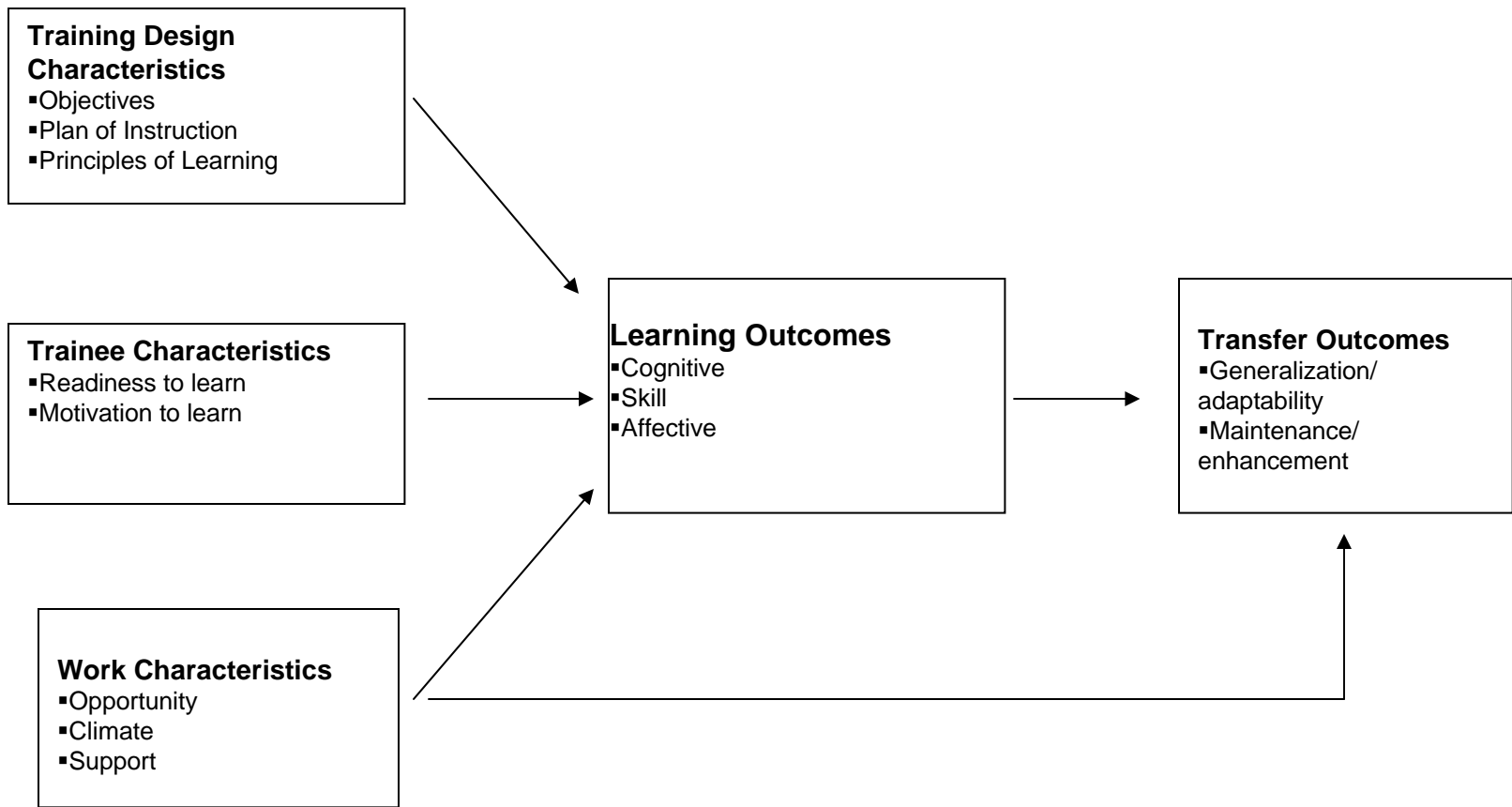
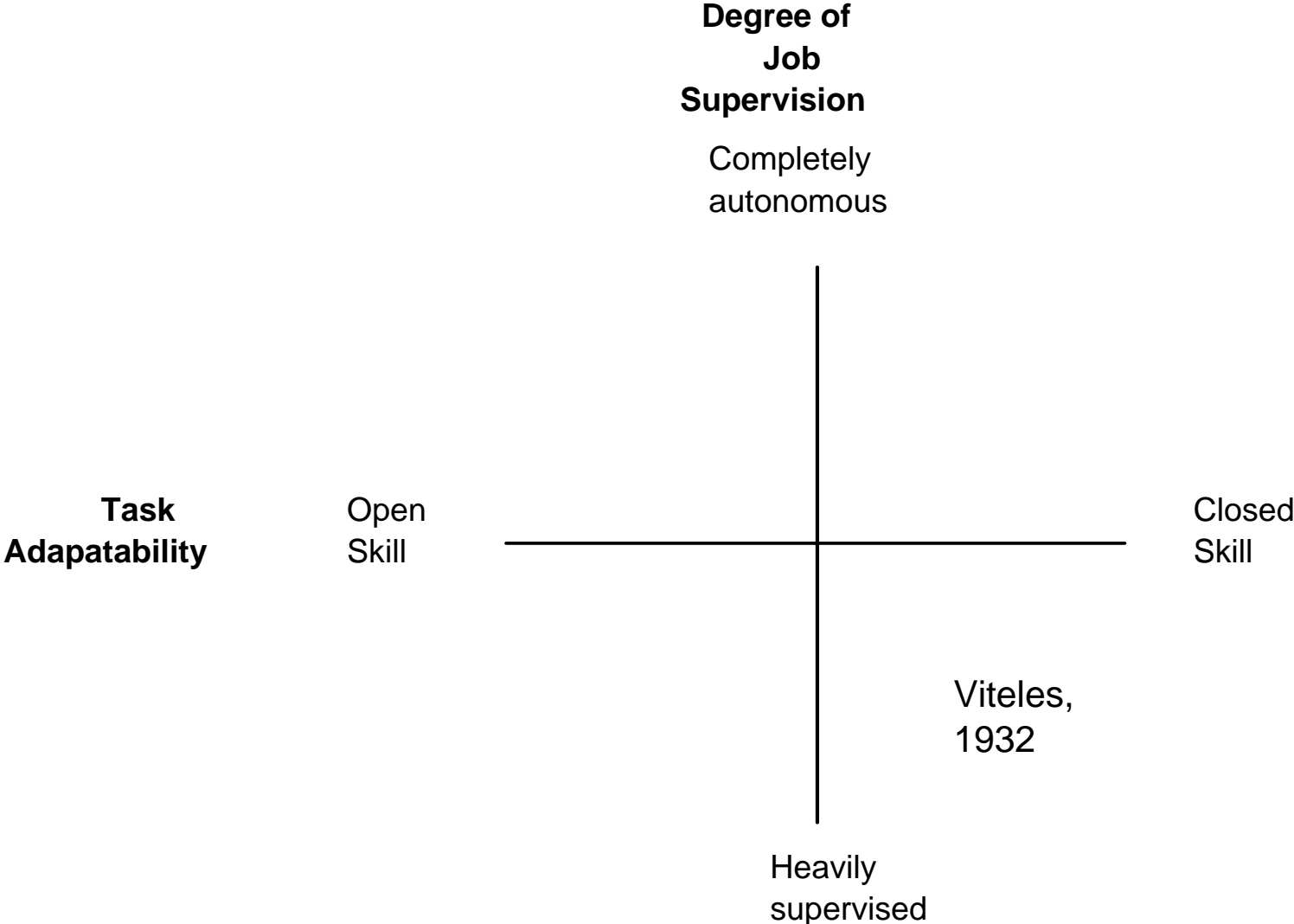


Figure 4.1: A Model of Characteristics Affecting Learning and Transfer Outcomes
Note: Adapted from Baldwin and Ford (1988)

Changing Landscape of Training



From Yelon & Ford, 1999

Examples of Closed Skill Responses

JOB

Auto mechanic

Press operators

Airline representative

Lathe operator

Task

Change turn lights in a car

Produce computer parts

Check in passengers

Complete logout/tag out

Examples of Open Skill Responses

Job

Manager

Counselor

Programmer

Leader

Task

Motivating staff members

Dealing with emotional problem
of client

Creating a web based program

How to transform an organization

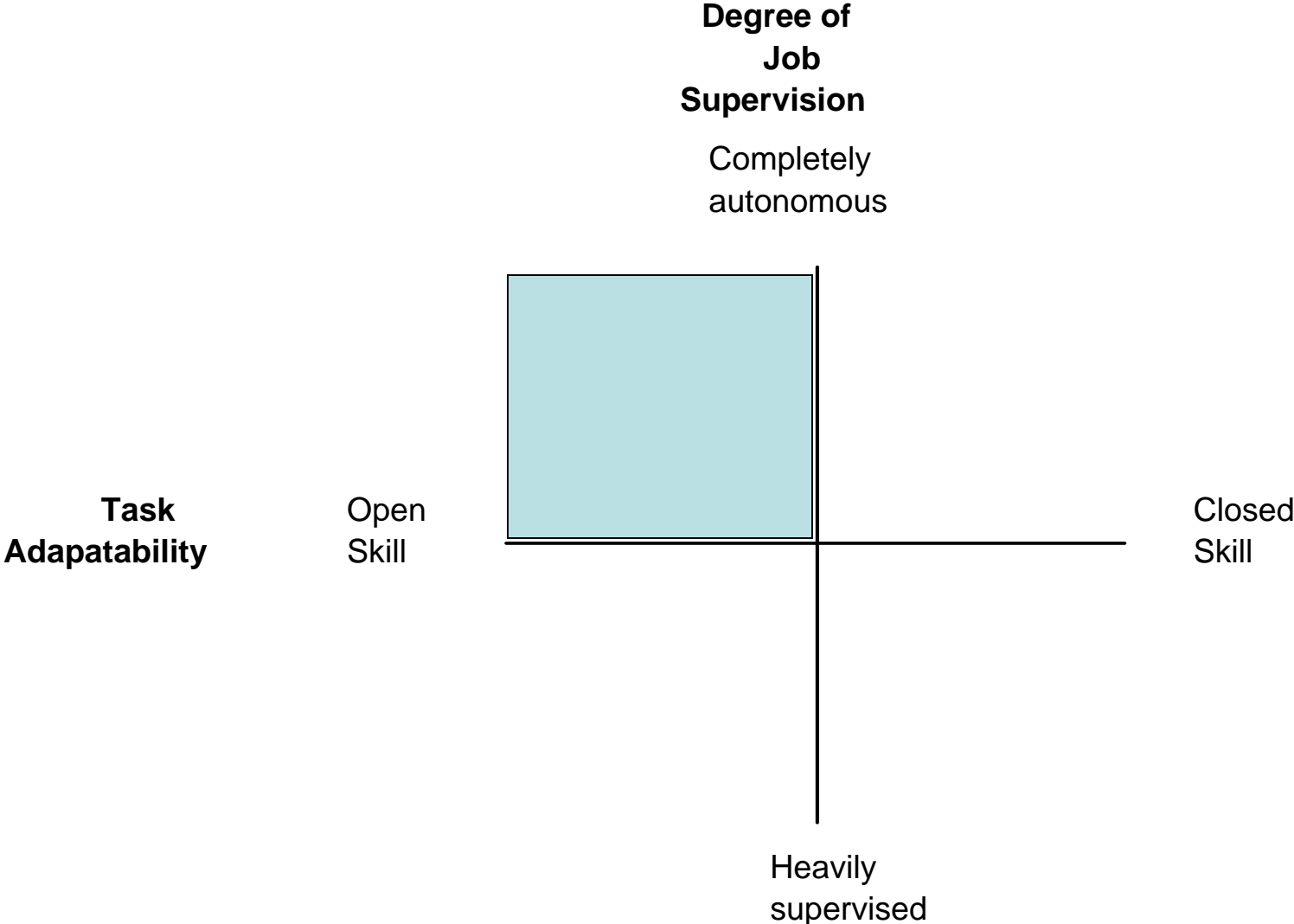
Assumptions of Highly Supervised Closed Skills Context

- Skills are simple to learn and to train
- Relevance to the job is obvious
- Everyone is expected to apply the skills in the same way on the job
- Individuals will obtain plenty of opportunity to use the skill immediately on the job
- The role of training is to minimize any individual differences

Assumptions of Autonomous, Open Skills Context

- Skills are complex to learn and to train
- Relevance to the job is not obvious
- Everyone is expected to apply the skills in their own way
- Individuals must be motivated to find ways to use the skill on the job
- The role of training is to encourage individual differences in the way training is applied

Changing Landscape of Training



From Yelon & Ford, 1999

Thought Exercise 1: What are the Implications of this Changing Landscape for Understanding Training Transfer?

- Difficult to know **WHAT** to measure
- Difficult to know **HOW** to determine **SUCCESS**
- Difficult to know **WHEN** to measure
- Difficult to evaluate if we have measured success accurately

What Do We Know about Transfer?

Baldwin & Ford 1988

Purpose: Critique of existing research and directions for future research

- The criterion problem
- Low complexity of tasks/focus on design
- Lack of conceptual frameworks to guide choice of trainee characteristics
- Limited attention to key work environmental factors

Baldwin, Ford, & Blume Chapter (in press)

Reviewed 140 empirical studies since 1988 that have cited the B & F article,

- More authentic training contexts
- More studies of interventions to enhance transfer
- More focus on pre and post training influences on transfer
- Far greater variety of measures and time intervals used to evaluate transfer

Meta-Analysis of Training Transfer (Blume, Ford, Baldwin & Huang, in progress)

- Individual differences matter (conscientiousness, experience, self efficacy)
- Work environment matters (support, climate, opportunity to use)
- How transfer is conceptualized and measured matters (use versus effectiveness; time interval since training, self versus other report)

Research Efforts to Study Choices People Make

- What if we think of transfer as a decision process that is ultimately up to the each individual trainee?
- How can we examine this personalization process of transfer?
- Previous studies that have nibbled on the corners

Ford & Noe (1987): Initial Step

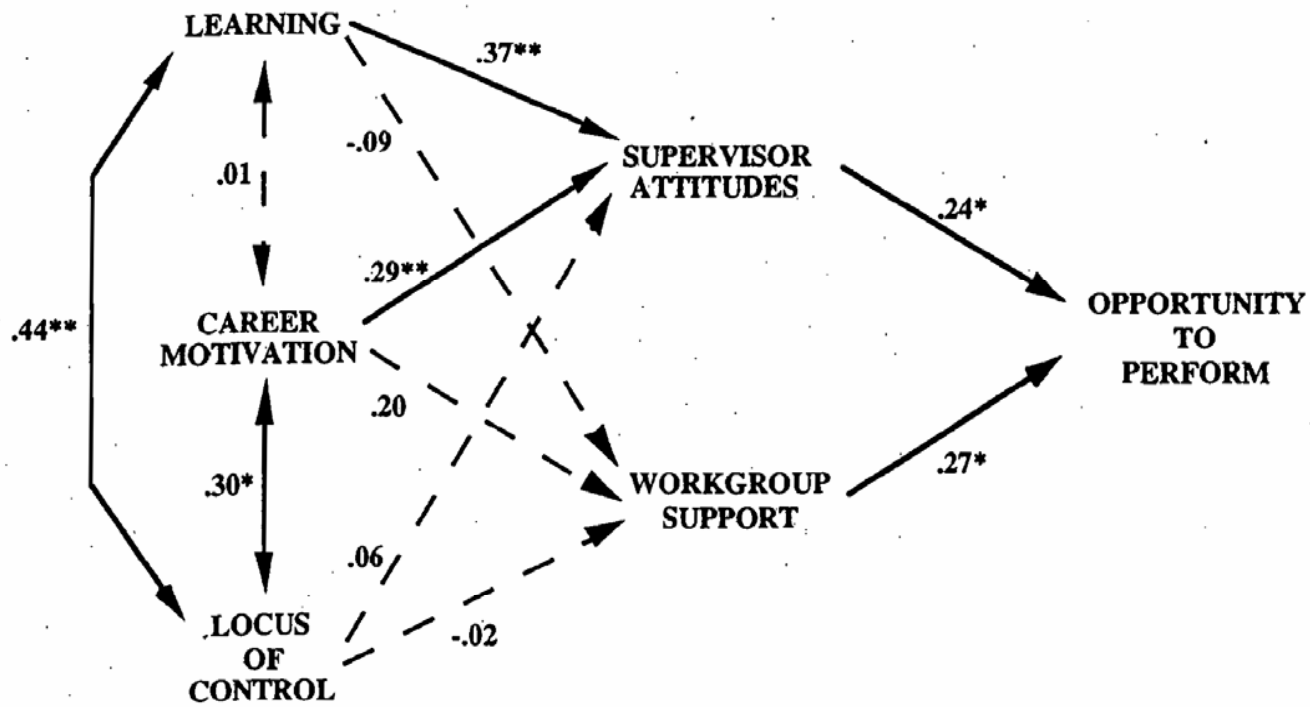
- Examined how attitudes towards training affected training need assessment ratings
 - The training programs I have attended have been useful for my development
 - I have been able to apply to the job what I have learned on the job
- Trainee attitudes impacted training need assessment ratings (e.g., low attitudes - less **need** seen for training on quality management)

Opportunity to Perform (Ford & Colleagues 1992 and 1995)

- What opportunities do Air Force Aerospace Ground Equipment personnel have to use trained skills on the job?
 - Breadth of experience
 - Activity level
 - Complexity of tasks performed

Large Variance in Opportunities

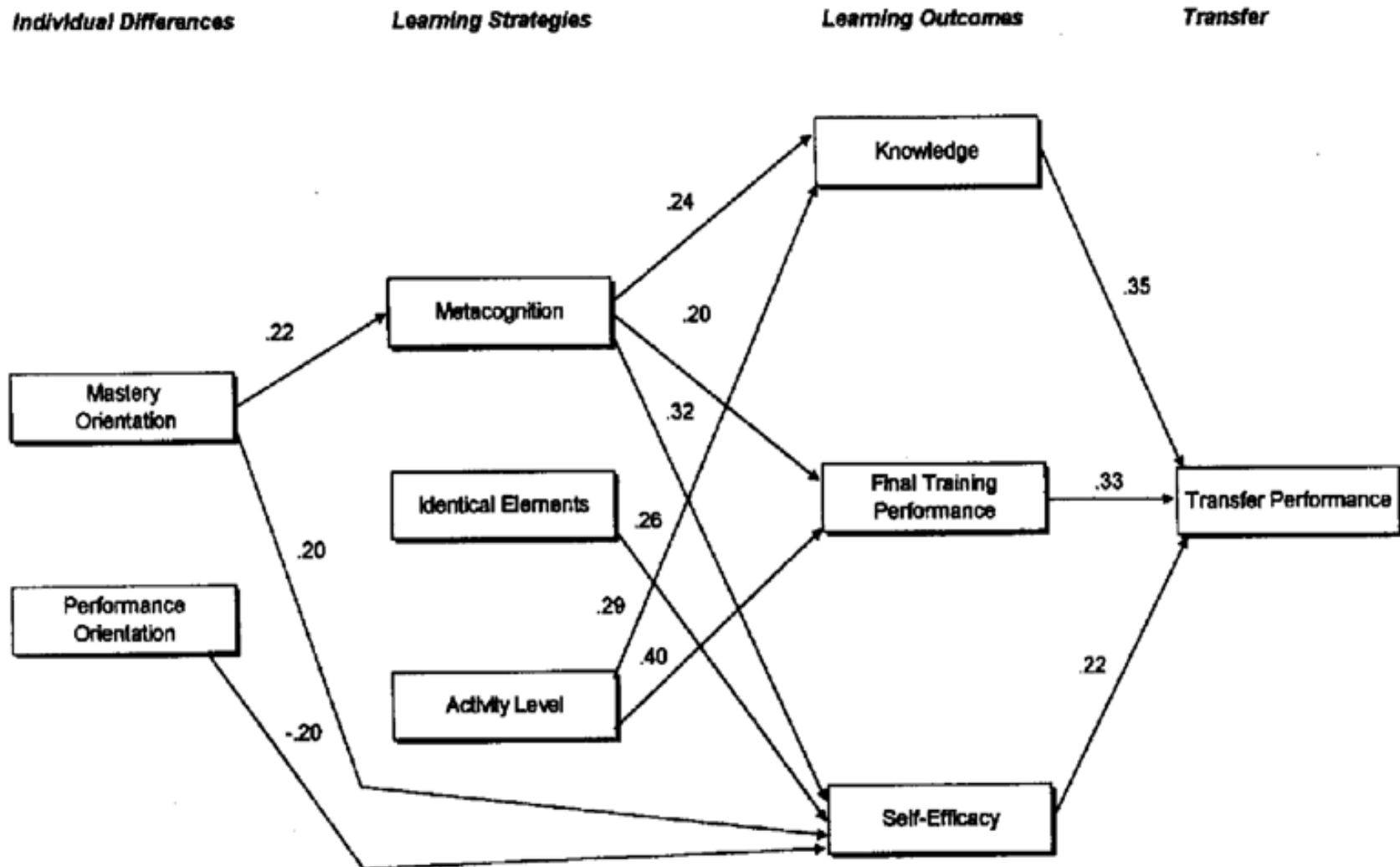
| | |
|---|-------|
| Perform generator inspections | 76.1% |
| Adjust engine fuel system components | 59.8% |
| Perform compression tests | 15.9% |
| Remove or install wheel assemblies | 84.2% |
| Perform hydraulic test stand periodic inspections | 22.1% |



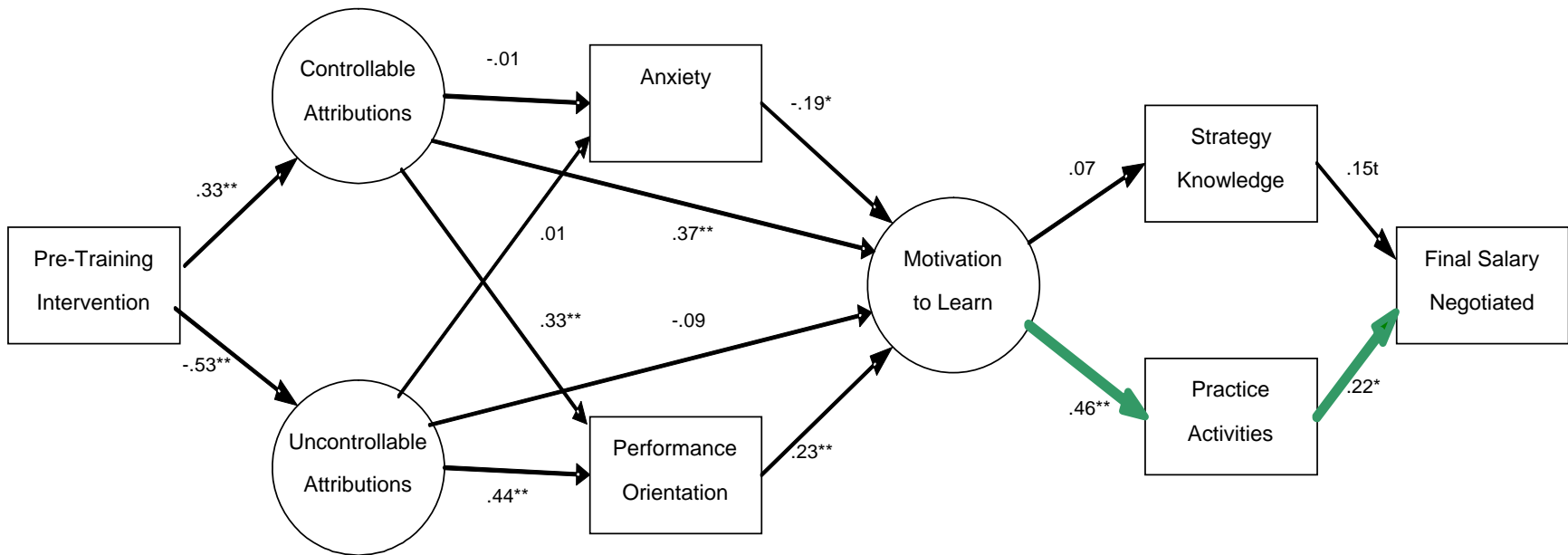
* $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$

Figure 3. Mediated Model results.

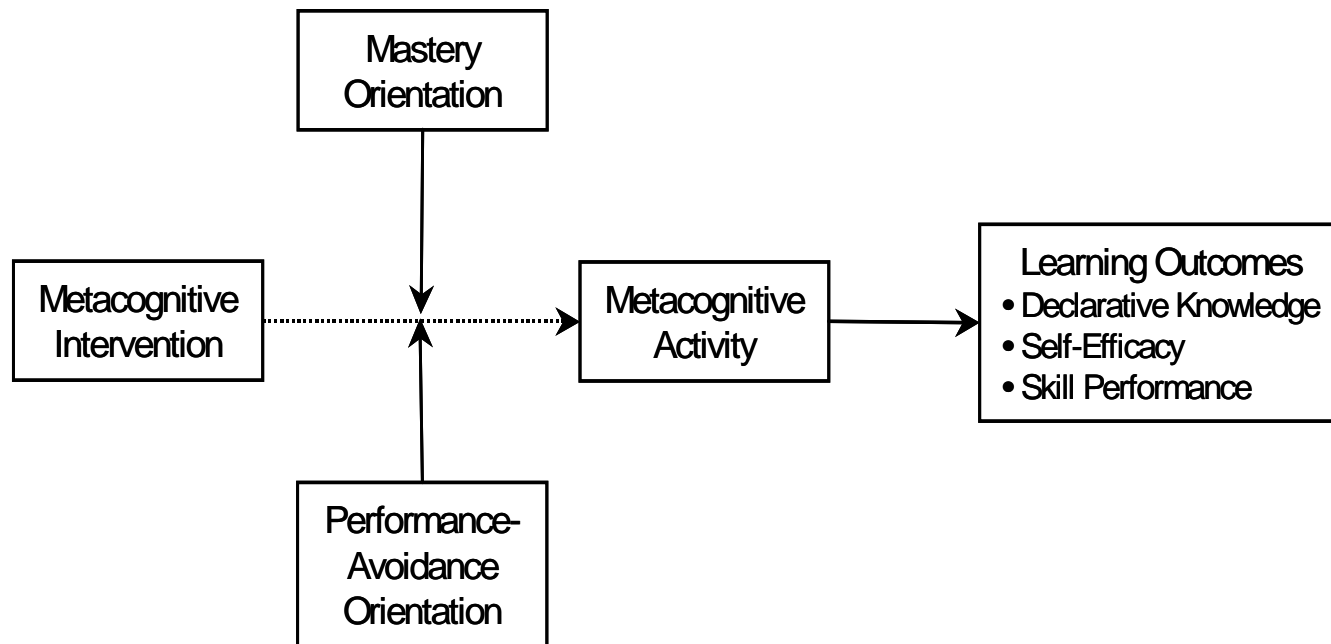
Ford, Smith, Weissbein, Gully & Salas (1998)



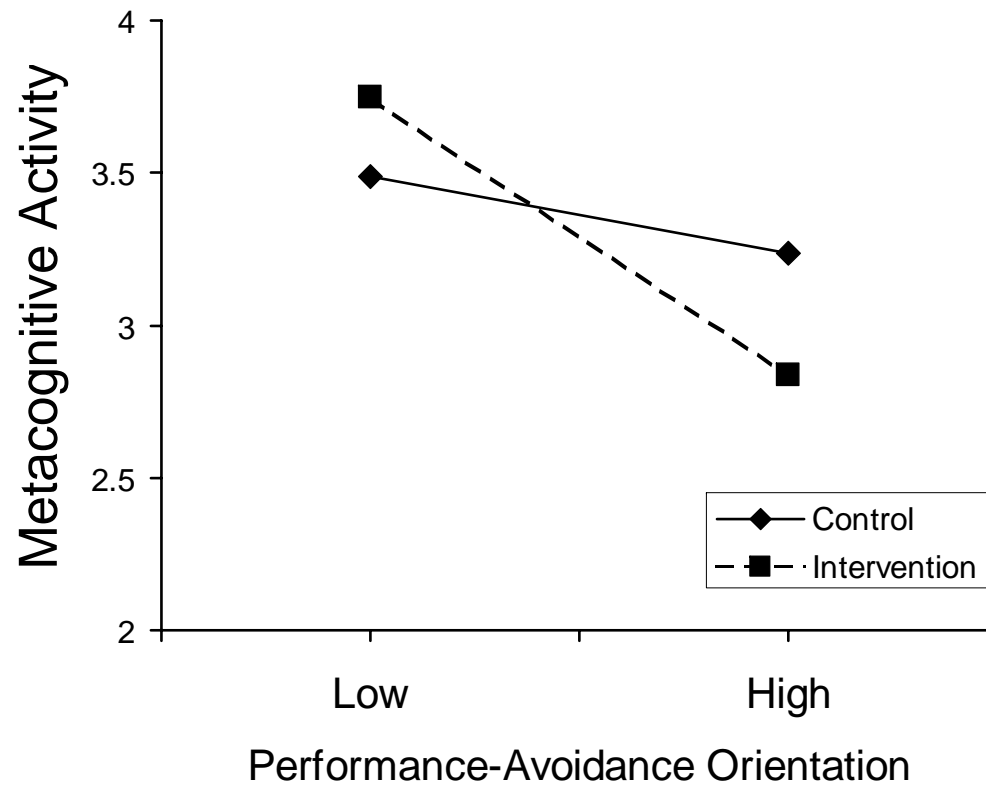
Weissbein, Ford & Schmidt (2002)



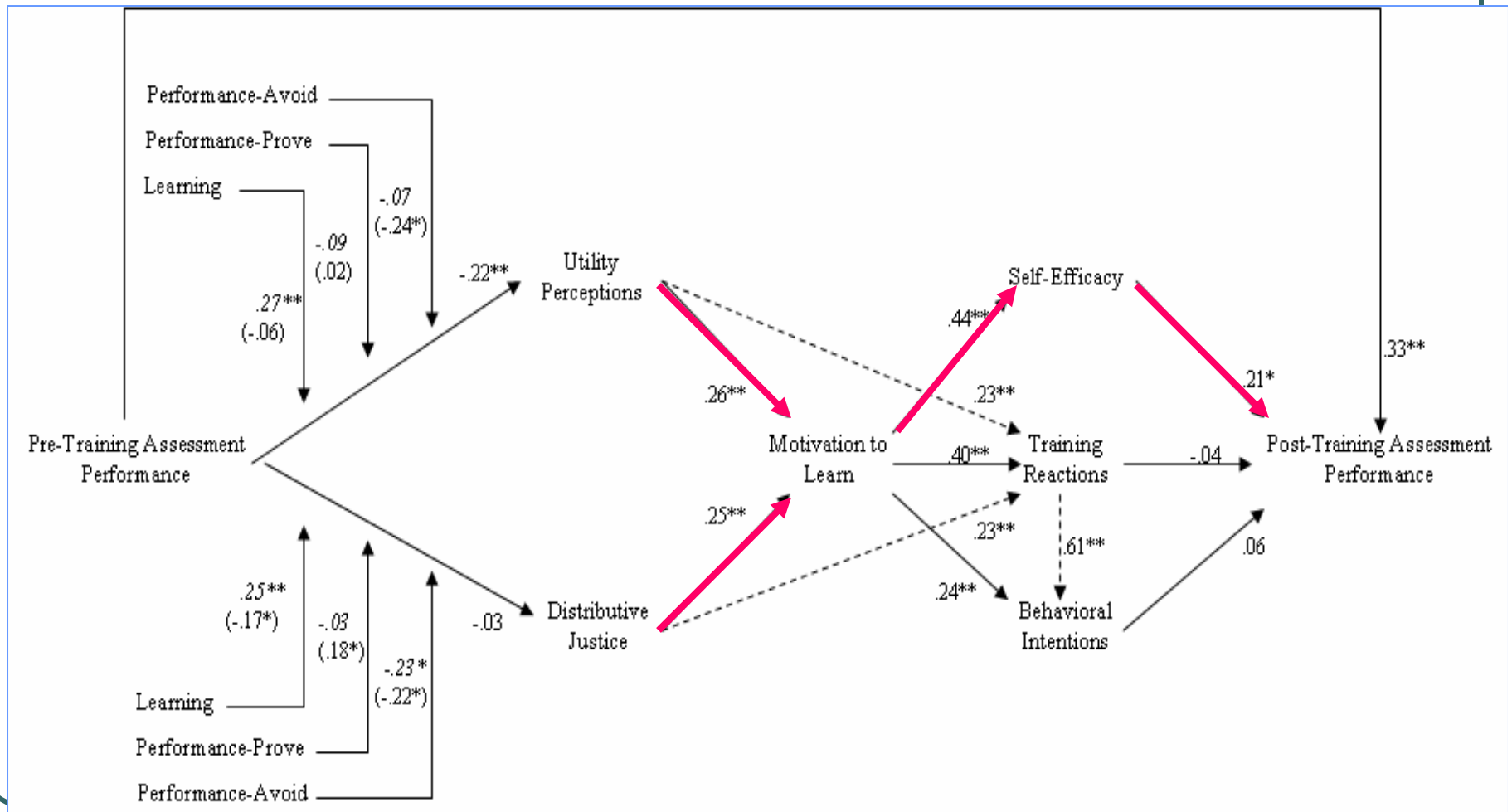
Schmidt and Ford (2003)



Oh No!



Bell & Ford (2007)



New Directions: Decision Making Frameworks for Understanding this Personalization Process

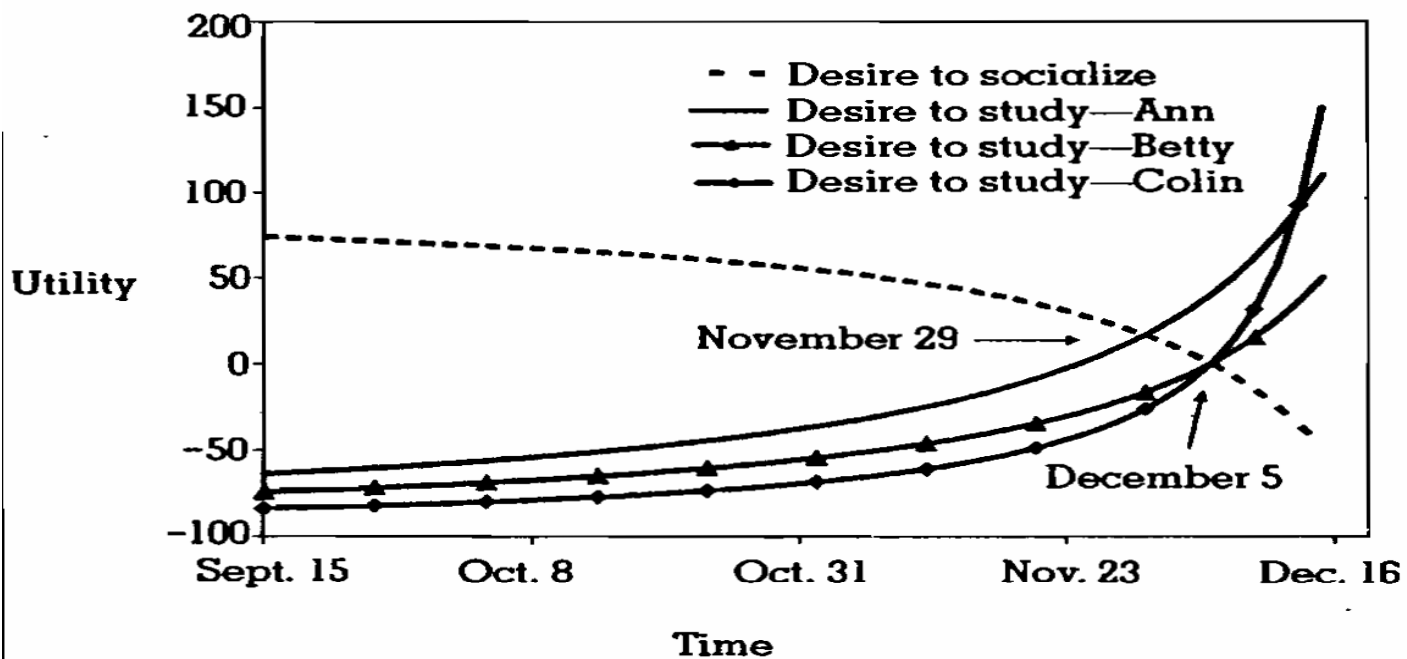
- Research on transfer has tended to focus on under what conditions do trainees transfer training – assume if given the right conditions, individuals will transfer knowledge and skills
- Decision making literature provides frameworks on why individuals do not make a decision or in essence choose to not take action – even when the conditions are “right”

Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT) - Steel (2007)

- Non action has value when other competing demands for time have more value (procrastination)
- Non action often has value especially when outcome is uncertain (delay in acting)
- This “non action” tendency can come between implementation intentions and actual behavior

FIGURE 4

Graph of Three Students' Utility Estimation for Socializing Versus Writing an Essay over the Course of a Semester That Ends December 15



The Psychology of Doing Nothing: Forms of Decision Avoidance – Anderson (2003)

- Decision avoidance: pattern of behavior where individuals avoid making a choice by postponing it or seeking an easy way out that involves no action
- While delays in acting often transform into lost opportunities and not meeting personal goals, individuals still often persist in seeking default no action, no change options

Principles of “No Decision”

1. Positive prior outcomes (believing performance has been good) increases tendency for the status quo
2. Anticipation of regret (worrying that trying out new skill may not succeed) is likely to favor inaction
3. Decision makers tend to associate action with more potential regret than inaction
4. Hurried up decisions produce more inaction and higher anticipation of regret
5. People tend to weigh potential losses greater than potential gains leading to preference for inaction

Implications of Decision Avoidance and Procrastination for Training Transfer: Thought Exercise:

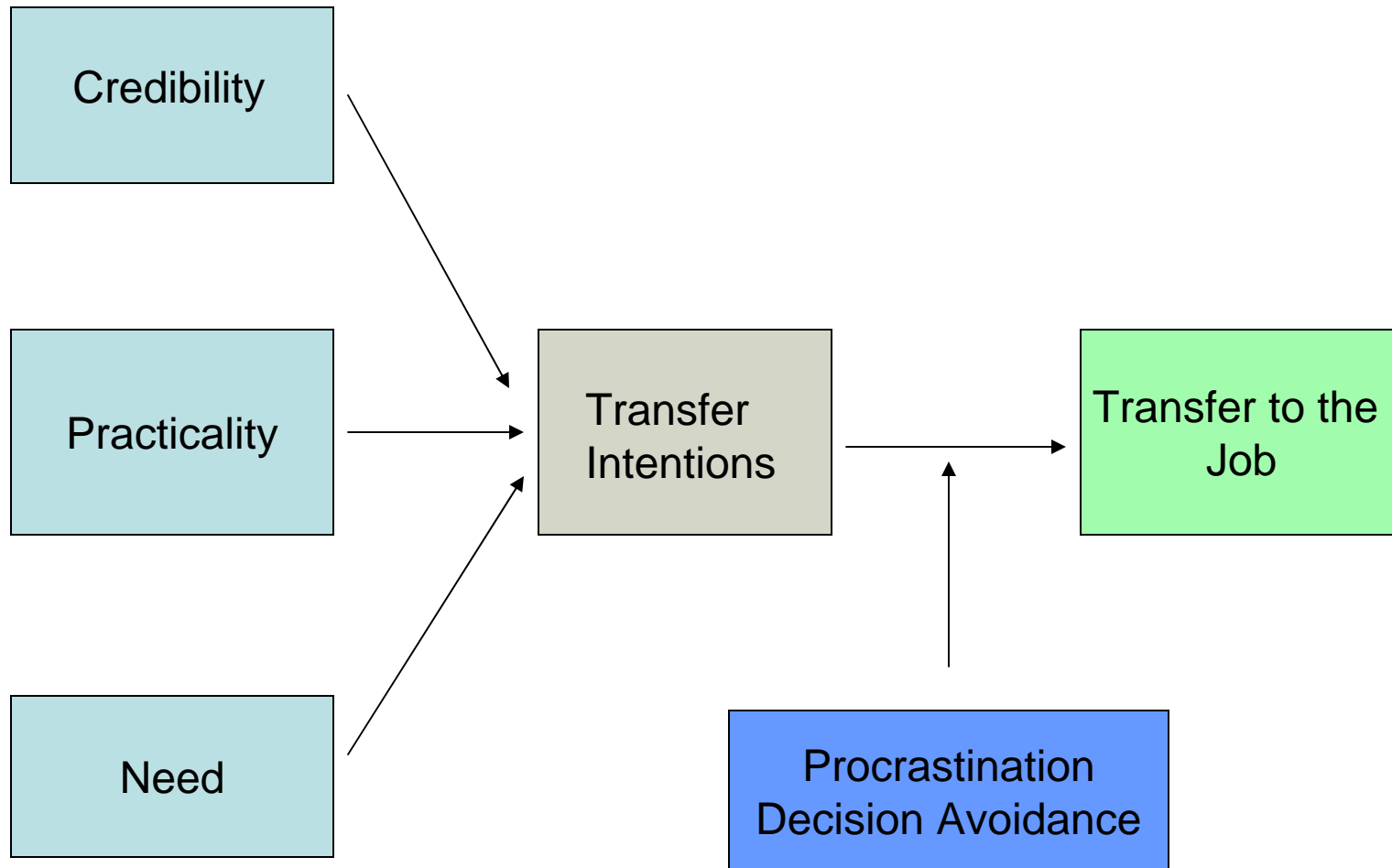
Review Police Executive Leadership Workshop Material

Consider questions at the bottom of the page

How could concepts of procrastination and decision avoidance affect training transfer in this situation?

Understanding the Choices People Make (Ford, Yelon, & Quinn, in progress)

- Investigate credibility, practicality and need for different modules of a training workshop
- Examine relationship of these three factors and intentions to transfer
- Examine link of intentions to transfer (what really happens) as moderated by measures of procrastination and decision avoidance factors



Trainee Perceptions

- *Credibility:*
The evidence for the use of the assessment techniques I learned about today is convincing.
- *Practicality:*
I can take the ideas discussed today to fit the situation in my workplace.
- *Need:*
I feel like I must use the techniques presented today on the job.

Procrastination

1. I often find myself performing tasks that I had intended to do days before.
2. I generally delay before starting on work I have to do.
3. In preparing for some deadlines, I often waste time by doing other things.
4. I usually accomplish all the things I plan to do in a day.
5. I am continually saying "I'll do it tomorrow."

Current Steps

- Survey responses to what they have done on the job
- Personal interviews to capture what they did and why
- Collect physical traces – developmental plans for subordinates, succession planning document, assessment reports etc.

Final Comments: The Bottom Line

1. Customization/personalization of training transfer is the norm not the exception – trainees are active participants in this process
2. There are a number of choice points pre, during, and post training that can affect the likelihood of transfer
3. Decision making frameworks can provide useful conceptual frameworks for understanding this conscious decision making process on the part of the trainee
4. Start doing exciting research to understand transfer!

Thank You!

Questions?

