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A Dozen To One: An Examination of Workers' Satisfaction in Menial Labor

By

Colin Larter

A Thesis* Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Sociology

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Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Colin Larter

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

Advisor

Committee Member

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods study explores the workplace experiences and employee satisfaction of menial laborers. Using an anonymous online survey, this thesis examines workers' experiences through the lens of K. Marx's and M. Seeman's forms of alienation. From the perspective that part of general satisfaction comes from the differences between what an employee value and what they actually perceive at their job, this study found quantitative evidence of the relationships between the need for pride in work and satisfaction. In the data analysis, satisfaction's predictability is measure both by the perceived experiences of workers but also in the difference in those perceived experiences and the employee's ideal experiences. From qualitative responses in the survey, this study also highlights the theme of apathy in the sentiments of many menial laborers.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the years following the 2008 recession, consumers have seen some of the largest economic changes in nearly all industries. One of the most prominent trends has been the rising concern for the need to increase the federal minimum wage. The federal minimum wage was established in 1938 by the Fair Labor Standard Act and by 1966 the federal minimum wage had been extended to most employees (US Department of Labor N.d.). Public demand for higher wages across varying markets has led many to ask what happened to make current wages so unpopular despite belief that the economy is currently strong.

According to the Harvard Business Review, the average yearly rate of inflation in the United States has been 1.8% but the inflation adjustment for wages since the 1970's has only maintained 0.2% (Harvard Business Review 2017). Therefore, while the economy has been growing, those putting the work in for that growth have been left behind on receiving the fruits of that labor. In the same vein, productivity, with the aid of computers and significant advances in technologies used in production and distribution, has increased by 252.9% since 1948 while hourly compensation has only increased by 115.6%. If wages were adjusted to account for inflation and increased production, U.S. minimum wage in 2012 would have been \$21.72 per hour. (Economic Policy Institute 2019).

With the stagnation of wages and the increased dependency on non-human resources that can replace the labor of human workers, organizations are increasingly investing in tools of industry and less on the people who actually use those tools to benefit everyday life. Compounding that issue, as automation and productivity advance, the need is lessened to continually increase a business's number of employees as that company

grows. In many cases, a business does not need to depend on its immediate economic surroundings or local human labor as it once did. As a result, those local labor markets are left behind in receiving similar financial stimulation. Moreover, as new potential employees enter the labor market, they are left without a previously available position creating a seemingly endless pool of potential employees eager to earn a much-needed income. This endless reservoir in which available employees may be found keeps employers from the need to advance and adapt to competitive wages (Harvard Business Review 2017).

Dissatisfaction in American society over work and financials is not a new concept. An analysis of data from the General Social Survey (Smith et al. 1972-2018) found that 26.5% of surveyed Americans were “not satisfied” with their financial situation. If more than a quarter of Americans are dissatisfied with their financial circumstances, it comes as no surprise that a recent trend of demand for higher wages has gained foothold and stirred similar trends in many industries (Harvard Business Review 2017).

During the production of this thesis, the world was shut down by the largest global pandemic in over a century. To prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus, many of the world’s governments forced non-essentials business to temporarily close or limit the number of people allowed in attendance. Bars, restaurants, movie theaters, and some police departments even stopped pulling over our nation’s most dangerous criminals, drivers with expired license tabs. The shutdowns put many on unemployment, and government began issuing relief funds to citizens most affected to ensure Americans would be able to afford food and housing. But as vaccinations rise, many areas are opening back up, and with it

support for American families is disappearing, regardless of their return to work. Many businesses that rely on low-wage or unskilled laborers have found it difficult to incentivize those employees to return to work. Some have blamed the temporary financial support workers have been afforded during lockdown (Kelly 2020) for providing Americans the option to live without having to risk the lives of themselves or their families. The relief stimulus checks were designed to support furloughed workers by offering them an intermittent payment on par with a lot of the United State's livable income. Workers faced the option to choose between not working while maintaining a livable income or working in a dangerous environment for less than a living wage (Riess and Silverman 2020). Some have returned to work but in different industries. Repurposing the skills and experience they developed elsewhere, many are avoiding smaller businesses unable to meet the financial or safety needs of their employees (Patton 2021). Many businesses have been pressured to increase their employees' base pay to match or compete with an income that allows their workers to afford both shelter *and* food.

But why are Americans dissatisfied with their work? We know that despite stagnated wages across differing industries, not all workers share the same amount of dissatisfaction. There is likely some factor at play other than simply compensation contributing to employees' workplace satisfaction. One element may be the work itself, particularly what a worker does, how they do it, and the environment of the workplace. To understand this dissatisfaction, researchers must first understand how to analyze and measure satisfaction, and in doing so they can measure and examine what it is that workers are expecting from their employment but not receiving. In this thesis I describe and

illustrate this separation of the importance workers place on certain aspects of their work and the reality of their workplace conditions that materialize as a form of alienation. The average worker might not feel alienated as social scientists understand it, but they can certainly be dissatisfied with their position if they feel unappreciated, unrewarded, disrespected, or expendable.

In this thesis I examine this disparity of the importance of certain aspects of the job with the reality of the work performed, management styles, employee experiences, compensation received by the employees. By looking at these processes in specifically menial labor positions, I seek to better understand why workers choose to stay in particular occupational positions that may pay lower wages, be less stimulating, or be considered degrading (Graeber 2018).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I review the different forms of alienation used in this thesis as well as related concepts that examine menial labor industries, those employed in them and how the employees experience or perceive satisfaction. Later, I will review some of the sociological literature on satisfaction, dissatisfaction and how some have conceptualized what makes a job good or bad. Because the aim of this study is not specifically about how employees are managed but how those employees are affected by the management, the focus is not the culture and policies of organizational leaders but on the experiences of the workers. This chapter will begin with Marx and M. Seeman's forms of alienation as they are the foundation of understanding the experiences of workers.

Marx's Conception of Alienation

From the perspective of Karl Marx, alienation in general can be understood as a condition in which:

“man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature, others, and he himself) remain alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation. Alienation is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object” (Fromm 1961:16).

In Marx's assertion, people are reduced to the status of workers for wages. They are only connected to each other through commodities, and in so much as we only sell our labor to others, we ourselves, become commodities. Of course, not all people need to sell their labor and not all those who work are alienated equally. Therefore, alienation can be viewed as a

spectrum in workers have very little to no control over the product or process of production and are effectively separated from other people to varying degrees in contrast to those at the top are alienated but not to the same degree or in the same manner. For instance, a janitor may receive little compensation or personal fulfillment from washing floors but can see the fruits of his labor in person and regularly. Conversely, a commercial artist might receive considerably more compensation for their work but may have little control or connection to the final product. This literature review starts by summarizes the four forms of alienation central to the focus of this study: alienation from process, alienation from product, alienation from self/ species being, and alienation from others.

Alienation from Process

We can draw from Marx's discussion that workers are isolated from the act of production. Because workers are removed from the act of production or provide such a small fraction of the production of goods or services that they are producing, most workers are not in control of the process that dictates how, when, or why they toil. This alienation from how labor is performed or how decisions are made in the process of production is the foundation of Marx's alienation from process (Marx 1975:275). By alienating a worker from the process of decision making and stipulating how work is completed without the input of that individual, they are estranged from the meaningfulness of the work to make the product. In the same way that the CNC machine makes many of the parts in our cars, the operator of that machine has no more in the role of production than the machine. Similarly, workers have just as much decision-making power in what they do as the CNC machine.

While much of Marx's theory was based on labor not unlike our CNC operator, this concept works just as well for workers in service industries. For example, a mechanic may replace the wheel bearing but may not own the shop, decide the secondary services done with the tune up, or even receive credit for the work performed. Workers who are coordinated by uncompromising company policy, performance metrics, or even the manager tasked with ensuring the smooth operation of a cashier line have little say in how their work is conducted. Sometimes these jobs are so simple in nature, such as a cashier, that the only reason they have not been replaced by machines is that the cost of installing self-checkouts is sometimes too high when there are still operational elements that require human interaction.

Another important element to include to be discussed in more detail later in the review of satisfaction is that much of the work rarely mentally. As much of the process of work is already decided before the employee ever joins the organization, the little amount of mental stimulation that a worker encounters generally comes from the other people in proximity to that employee or in problem solving when the pre-existing process fails to operate. Very little of the creative process that goes into the work comes from the worker. For our modern conception of work, what better place to find an example of Marx's alienation from process than in your local grocery store. When our hypothetical cashier encounters a customer, who has an issue with their favorite flavor of high-fructose corn syrup, that employee now has an, albeit limited, opportunity to use their skills and knowledge to fix the problem. Even so, the purpose of this release from the company policy's collar is to ensure that the cashier is eventually able to return to the operation of

the cash register. In this example, the mental stimulation was the unintentional result of a fault in process, not the intentional function of the job's responsibilities. Because the employee's duty is to compensate for the weaknesses of the machine, the employee is little more than a biological extension of the machine.

Alienation from Product

The second form of alienation that (Marx 1844:275)describes is the alienation of a worker from the product or the result of production. Marx (1844) argues that when a worker puts in time, effort, and the collection of experience into a product, that product becomes an extension of the worker; by selling this product the worker's labor becomes part of the commodity they have produced. By losing control and connection to their commodity they also lose part of what makes them who they are. As the source of that labor, the worker is also reduced to the status of a commodity.

The software engineer who writes a program for a client or an accountant who collects and organizes material for a business all suffer this same alienation. The issue arises when the worker does not have the freedom to control this production and resulting product. According to Marx, the timeless act of production is not inherently alienating but, by producing through labor a product that is not a part of its creator, the product and producer are no longer connected. Our hypothetical CNC operator that makes the knuckle for a car's wheel bearing may ensure that all of the new Fjord Fission's wheels stay attached to the vehicle, but what does the worker have to show for that other than a paycheck? Because the worker owns neither the machine they work on, truck that transports the part to the customer, or the company that sells the part to the customer, they are going to see

very little of the rewards for producing the part. They are alienated from both the product of their labor and much of the reward for manufacturing the product.

Alienation from Self or Species Being

The third form of alienation calls into question what it means to be human and the implications those questions have for the lives and behaviors of workers. Marx proposes that humanity is a creature that focuses on the individual as being a part of a larger species. Marx's (1844:275) concept of "species-being" proposes that people are only themselves when they are allowed to be a "free being." What does it really mean for the worker as they are working? If people are most themselves when they work toward the betterment of themselves and towards ends that they value with means that they have the freedom to choose, then those who cannot do so are estranged not only from their work but also from a self-fulfilling life.

This alienation can lead to dissatisfaction in the workplace. The previously mentioned mechanic might be satisfied with their opportunity to work how they like, but that same job that pushes them to work longer hours can perpetuate a feeling that the worker is not free. This subjective awareness of dissatisfaction is a result of objective alienation. How a worker perceives their alienated status, or whether they do at all, is dependent on how their work is organized. Work in which the labor is determined less by those performing the labor and more by groups that receive the profits of labor are traditionally more alienating to the worker in regard to process but are also alienating to their species being. If workers cannot dictate how they work, they cannot dictate how they grow as creators. It should go without saying that all work has an effect on workers. Whether the

mechanic has a sore back at the end of the day despite enjoying their work or the commercial artist who misses the freedom of choosing projects and deciding how they are displayed. The demand that labor be made profitable distorts not only the spirit of the product but the spirit of the producer.

Alienation from Others

Marx (1844:277) proposes that people are living their full potential when they are able to labor at their own design and at their own decision. He also asserts that this labor is also at most with who their labors are in efforts with others. But as workers that are put in positions where they must sell their labor, they are also put in a position where they are in competition with others. They must compete for higher wages, better jobs, or even more control at their preexisting jobs. This disconnect from others is what Marx asserts as alienation from others (Marx 1844:279).

Alienation from others goes further than simple competition between other workers. Employees are at odds with management as they work for more wages to have money for food and shelter, while management is at odds with employees for lower wages to have larger profits and continue their endless expansion of business. Employees are at odds with prospective employees because they recognize that management can terminate an employee and hire a new worker for less than they pay the older employee.

This same separation estranges employees from customers. As workers must sell their labors or risk starving themselves or their families, they must see customers as sources of income. In the same way businesses exploit the earnings of customers from their labor, employees are put in the position of being the hand that takes. By seeing everyone else as

someone to profit from, workers are alienated from who their customers are. Instead of being a complex product of everything they have done and been in live, employees are put in the position of rendering a customer down to the simple nature of someone who wants to buy a thing. That customer is no more important to the company and the employee, than the thing that customer is buying. Only as an afterthought is the customer a person to the employee when they deviate from their designated responsibilities. (Gini 2000:157)

Consider the hypothetical new product on the market. Its stated purpose may be to improve the lives of those who buy it, but the goal is to create a need within the customer so much that they are convinced they must buy it or suffer the loss of opportunity. The business's connection through the new customer is solely through the purchase of this item. Employees are tied to the customer through the uncontrolled production and sale of that item which will pay their wages, while the company is tied to the customer through the acquisition of currency from the customer. To both employees and owners, the customer is simply a source of money, and their status as a person is secondary if even relevant.

By consistently being at a competition with others, people are formed into beings that see others in opposition to themselves and so are alienated from others. While this level of alienation is certainly varied by individuals, we need only look to the news of this last year during the Coronavirus pandemic to see examples of how this can play out in public. Workers, forced to risk the lives of their family to ensure they have food and shelter, must ask customers to wear a mask. Some respond by accepting the mask request, others respond with violence, in some cases going so far as bringing firearms and shooting employees (Riess & Silverman, 2020). Some, not only alienated from the experience of

their customers as more than a customer, must contend with customers as immediate threats to their lives. While extreme, it highlights the experience of the individual worker and demonstrates how employees are placed in the position. We can also use the example of customers venting on servers at a restaurant or customer service employees in retail. Customers sometimes treat employees as extensions of the company or a spokesperson for company policy. Regardless of why some customers behave this way, the worker is dehumanized and alienated from others because of their status as a worker.

Seeman's Conception of Alienation

Seeman (1959) noted that some have criticized Marx's theory of alienation for being difficult to empirically test and how to measure what might seem like an abstract conceptualization of alienation. To address this perceived flaw and build upon Marx's theory, Seeman (1959) proposed an alternate derivation of the meanings and implications of alienation. Seeman organized alienation into five separate forms: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. By doing so he hoped to make alienation more directly measurable (Seeman 1959). Seeman's reexamination of alienation also takes the alternate standpoint of the actor in a social-psychological perspective while also focusing on how alienation is perceived by the worker. By distinguishing the psychological and subjective perception of the objective alienation, Seeman hoped to direct both his own research as well as future analysis of "(a) the social conditions that produce these five variants of alienation, or (b) their behavioral consequences" (Seeman 1959:192). In the spirit of this endeavor, I will breakdown each of

Seeman's alternate forms of alienation as well as their intersection with varying kinds of work settings and employee management.

Powerlessness

The first of Seeman's forms of alienation is powerlessness (Seeman 1959:784). This form is closest to Marx's concept of alienation as it seeks to understand the amount of control workers have to make impactful and lasting decisions. More simply put, individual alienated workers cannot expect to make changes in their life by changing their own behavior as they are too alienated from the means to do so alone. This perceived lack of internal control may or may not be congruent with the reality of the situation. What matters is that the actor believes that external forces have more control over their state of affairs than they do. This perceived power may be seen as their own or they believe this power to reside outside of their reach of control.

In the alienation of powerlessness, the expectancy of perceived control over both their work life and outside work environment is lowered (Seeman 1959:784). Effects that would influence this alienation would either serve to manipulate a worker's feeling of control or obscure that feeling's sources. Work environments that give individuals more freedom to work at their own pace or by allowing workers the opportunities to directly affect the compensation received for that work on a regular and consistent basis would considerably lower that worker's feeling of powerlessness. Allowing a salesperson to increase their pay by tying part of those earnings to the amount of revenue produced from personal sales, generally referred to as commission, gives that salesperson the illusion that they have the personal power and means to control what they make and how they make it.

On the other hand, positions in which duties are heavily structured like assembly line work, would increase feelings of powerlessness as individuals have less personal say in how work is conducted and are tied more to the function they performs rather than their status as free-being at work. By the objective alienation from the process and product of labor the worker experiences the loss of control of their labor and the lowered expectancy of control at work, powerlessness.

Meaninglessness

Seeman's second form of alienation, meaninglessness (Seeman 1959:786), ties closely with powerlessness as it continues to focus on the perceived ability of actors to make meaningful decisions relating to their life. In meaninglessness the focus shifts to the idea that individuals in a highly alienated position are less likely to be able to make meaningful decisions because they are: (a) unable to accurately identify or understand either external or available internal forces that contribute to the changes in their environment, and (b) incapable of making actionable predictions about future outcomes of behavioral actions or changes (Seeman 1959:786). This lack of environmental understanding is compounded by the lack of environmental control. If powerlessness is the notion that a person has little control over their environment, then the next questions to ask are: how does an individual react to this overbearing environment, and how does this affect their decisions? Seeman proposes that as individuals are progressively alienated, they are simultaneously less able to rationally understand the causes and effects of the events around them.

In examining powerlessness and meaninglessness, many have focused on powerlessness's intersectionality with Seeman's other forms of alienation. This was emphasized in a study of nursing personnel where Leonard Pearlin (1962) highlighted the importance of others within an organization playing an important role in the level of alienation felt by individuals. As individuals are socialized into a group's norms, they adopt and internalize beliefs central to the group's means and ends of actions (Pearlin 1962:323). Analysis of the data Pearlin (1962) collected showed that those who had fewer outside relationships with colleagues reported higher alienation scores. Pearlin (1962) also identified the need for leadership's presence in these groups in lowering scores of alienation. When workers form groups within their work environment, they understandably hold similar beliefs, goals, and means to ends. Within these groups, camaraderie ensures the group's cohesion, and internal issues are dealt with internally as they have the means and resources to do so.

When outside individuals or policies put pressure on the group, that stress creates a source of alienation for the group's members. These outside pressures can be mitigated or avoided by either giving the group access to outsiders who make decisions affecting the group or by having those outside individuals become members of the group. Pearlin (1962:323) noted, "When individuals are a part of the informal social structure of the hospital, they are more able to gain a meaningful sense of importance to their environment. Those without group ties, on the other hand, are more exclusively caught up by the formal organization, on which they can exercise relatively little impact." Pearlin emphasizes the importance of workers having a say in the operations of the organization they operate in.

As only those superior in authority to individuals generally have the power to make decisions about the operations of other workers, the primary source of alienation for many workers is that of their subordinates. The combination of a subordinate's physical or positional distance from a group and that authority's lack of understanding of operations resulting from clerical responsibilities, creates an opportunity for decisions that not only negatively affect a work environment but also the beliefs and feelings of the informal worker groups. By limiting the distance from subordinates, leadership can make better decisions for the organization while also reducing workers' alienation (Pearlin 1962:325).

When taking into consideration both powerlessness and meaninglessness, it clarifies why individuals who are highly alienated, might misattribute blame or responsibility for their less than desired status or financial wellbeing. Seeman (1959:786) referenced ethnic prejudice as a common example of responses. Within the workplace, workers might recognize this as resentment towards those who perform similar jobs but are compensated differently or go about their responsibilities at a different pace. Without an accurate perspective of the forces acting within an environment, bounded rationality would say that to place fault on a minority group that an individual has seen members receiving benefits would not be entirely irrational. With the added consideration that this same alienated worker has been given a politically constructed perspective that affirms these fears, the prominence of xenophobia is not so inexplicable. By believing they know the source of their problems and then receiving affirmation by perceivably more economically successful individuals and groups, a reassuring and tautological cycle of racism can quickly rise up, seemingly out of nowhere.

The prevalence of commonly held beliefs of mistrust of selective minorities can be a tool for elites to use to both mitigate the feelings of alienation among workers while simultaneously building beliefs of trust with the source of those beliefs. This prejudice draws a correlation between Marx's alienation from fellow humans and Merton's strain theory. As Merton notes, drawing on people's need to be a part of a community, "the very same society that produces this sense of alienation and estrangement generates in many a craving for reassurance, an acute need to believe, a flight into faith" (Merton, 1946:143). In the example of work, some may falsely believe that poor working conditions or lower pay is the result of inefficient workers or workers not like themselves rather than the management practices of their supervisors. In this sense that they lack awareness of their environment, they are also alienated from others. By misattributing blame on those they blindly believe are at fault, they highlight their lack of understanding of the situation, and their lack of understanding of other people.

Normlessness

If we accept that alienated populations have a low expectancy of attaining the capital needed to gain reliable perspective and information needed to make meaningful and substantial decision-making power, then a subsequent question arises, how do individuals react to the need to accumulate wealth when it is not available? Deriving from Merton's (1949) depiction of anomie along with a feeling of, and similarly named, normlessness, this form of alienation pertains to an individual's lowered expectancy of a return of time and financial investment from traditionally accepted means. "The technically most effective procedure, whether culturally legitimate or not, becomes typically preferred to

institutionally prescribed conduct” (Merton 1949:128). Seeman’s model relies heavily on Merton’s application of the concept of anomie and means of success. In the sense that people feel as though they can succeed through legitimate means, they evince less normlessness and less alienation from socially accepted processes and products of labor. Seeman (1959:787) proposes that with lowered expectations in traditionally legitimate means, the expectancy of illegitimate means increases.

Given the mutual exclusivity between legitimate and illegitimate means, normlessness is dependent on powerlessness’s and meaninglessness’s development from objective alienation as they increase the likelihood of an individual seeking illegitimate means of sustaining a lifestyle. In a similar interpretation of alienation into illegitimacy, Goffman (1957) cited in Seeman (1959:788) suggests that when involvement is obligatory, alienation is misbehavior:

“If we take conjoint spontaneous involvement in a topic of conversation as a point of reference, we shall find that alienation from it is common indeed. Conjoint involvement appears to be a fragile thing, with standard points of weakness and decay, a precarious unsteady state that is likely at any time to lead the individual into some form of alienation. Since we are dealing with obligatory involvement, forms of alienation will constitute misbehavior of a kind that can be called misinvolvement.”

While Marx, Merton, and Seeman use varying definitions of alienation, the point remains that either by choice or by circumstance, lowered expectancy of success from legitimate can lead to expectancy of illegitimate means or rejection of labor entirely

When interpreted as a form of alienation, normlessness integrates the systemic exclusion of individuals into an overarching culture of either changing how people feel about alienating labor or changing how individuals labor to reduce our feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness. When unable to change how they feel about their labor as alienating, seeking means through illegitimate and outcasted labor is a more attractive prospect.

Isolation

Normlessness focuses on the expectancy of success with various forms of labor and in how they relate to a worker's values. Seeman uses isolation to refer to the assigning of "low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society" (Seeman 1959:789). Drawing both from Marx and Merton, this perspective emphasizes how individuals with values and beliefs not synchronous with capitalist ideology can often become discontent with the systematic state of affairs. Take the artist or the musician for example. They might value their ability to make people happy with their art over their ability to flip burgers at the local fast-food restaurant. An academic might desire to pursue the advancement of scientific research for no other reason than knowledge for knowledge's sake. But in a capitalistic society, unless that scholar is able to financially exploit their research as a means to profit, they are systematically required to devote less time to scientific pursuits and seek employment to pay life's obligatory bills. By being forced to

commodify their time, experience, and research, they are deprived of the societal value of their work and so that same work is devalued.

Seeman (1959:789) argues that individuals are aware of this devaluation and while they do not have control of their environment, they do have control over the means they use to maintain survival. In this examination of means, he focuses on the innovation to illegitimate means or isolates themselves “outside the environing social structure to envisage and seek to bring into being a new social structure” (Seeman 1959:789)

Self-Estrangement

Seeman’s (1959:789) final form of alienation, self-estrangement, is strategically different from the other and describes an individual’s acceptance of the system’s alienation methods and work within those restrictions. It could be proposed that most menial laborers fall in this class of workers that “is generally characterized as the loss of intrinsic meaning or pride in work... the essential feature of modern alienation” (Seeman 1959:790). Simplified, he means work that a laborer takes to provide nothing more than an income without any intention of achieving satisfaction from a job well done. In the psychological perspective of the worker, self-estrangement is the willing separation of the individual from what Marx would call their species being. In the analysis, self-estrangement is the culmination of the previous forms of alienation in that it exemplifies the ultimate form of modern simple labor; an employee who arrives at work to pull a lever that gives the employer a dollar and the employee a penny, solely for the purpose of having that penny.

It is from the perspective of self-estrangement that I am examining my target demographic: unskilled labor. Specifically, unskilled labor positions that are taken for the

sole purpose to generate an income. Most of these entry level positions require little to no prior formal training that cannot be given at the job site and do not relate to the particulars of individual companies. In many cases these positions are designed to be as simple and easily fillable as possible to ensure quick and easy integration of new hires. By focusing on wage based, menial labor positions, I can look at payment compensation and workplace environment without worrying how varying skills, experience, and education will muddle findings. This focus also allows the analysis of jobs that perform many of the functions and services that are vital to modern living and without those essential workers, our way of life would quickly begin to crumble.

In an analysis of self-estranged labor, the primary focus of my study is on the worker's satisfaction with their earned pay from employment. As Pearlin's (1962) study found, pay is a significant factor in an employee's alienation score as payment is the final, objective measurement of how an employer rewards their employee. High pay signifies an employer's appreciation for the worker's efforts as valuable for the organization; it informs the worker that their labor is important to the company's goals and hopefully reinforces an employee's decision to continue contributing towards the company. Low pay signifies that the work the employee does is of lesser value and informs them that the efforts contributed does less to further the goals of the company. By forming a structure of who gets paid more, the company has effectively determined who is more important and has made that hierarchy clear.

Because this hierarchy of pay is interpreted as determined by who contributes the most towards the company, those at the lower end of the pay scale are implied to contribute

less than those at the top. As most salaries and wages are determined by position or responsibilities, placing positions lower on the pay spectrum, implies that positions of lower pay are also of lower value to the company. When employees believe that they are not fairly rewarded or accurately represented in this hierarchy, they experience dissatisfaction with their employment (Pearlin 1962:322). This dissatisfaction is a reflection of their alienation and self-estrangement from the work they contributed. “It is not simply one’s actual career within the opportunity structure that is relevant to alienation, but also whether one experiences deprivation or gain from rewards of money, job mobility, and social status” (Pearlin 1962:323). For this reason, the focus of this thesis examines the intersectionality of self-estrangement and previous forms of alienation. By looking at specifically workers who work for the purposes of income alone in jobs with little to no secondary education required, this study can highlight the expectations of those who work these jobs and thus better understand the micro-level effects of alienation.

Satisfaction

The final section of this literature review pertains to satisfaction. In this section I will review various definitions of satisfaction as well as the theoretical perspectives that back those definitions. Concluding this portion of the literature review, I will structuralize how this study understands and examines satisfaction in its relation to Marxist theory.

Why Examine Satisfaction?

Paul Spector (1997) identifies two perspectives to examining worker satisfaction. Because the topic of worker satisfaction is a highly researched area, Spector separates the research into two distinct rationales: utilitarian and humanitarian perspectives.

Additionally, research into specific organizations and the workers' satisfaction can also be used to identify possible issues within an organization's functions.

The utilitarian perspective (Spector 1997:2) proposes that worker satisfaction is of significant interest to those seeking to understand satisfaction as means of increasing worker productivity. These studies seek to show the benefits of higher workplace satisfaction as they may be correlated to higher workplace productivity. The research with this perspective then follows to examine what makes a workplace more satisfying for the worker and thus make them a more efficient and productive employee, and thus, more profitable to the organization. In the utilitarian perspective, workplace satisfaction is not a goal, but a means to an end. The importance of a worker's satisfaction is second to the benefits that satisfaction may provide to the organization's production.

While backed by some theory, the proposal that higher satisfaction should result in higher performance is unexpectedly difficult to show. What has been shown is that the directionality might be reversed. Jacobs and Solomon (1977) found that job performance and levels of satisfaction were more strongly related when higher performance was rewarded. Similarly, Caldwell and O'Reilly (1990) found that when employees' abilities matched job requirements, they had higher levels of job satisfaction, implying that employees who were more able to perform effectively were more likely to be satisfied with their job. Combined these results could show that some part of satisfaction is caused by workers being given the opportunity to work under conditions that play to their individual strengths, allow workers to succeed more often, and that success is rewarded.

The correlations shown thus far might lend itself towards support of Marx's proposition of alienation of process and product. When employees are more rewarded for their efforts they are less alienated from the product of their labor, or at the very least the reward for their labor's production. Likewise, when employees are allowed to determine how the production is conducted and is done in a way that plays to their personal skills or talents, they are more likely to be successful in their labor to produce. All together these conclusions may be indicative of the limitation of focusing on a single perspective's contribution to the understanding of workplace satisfaction.

The humanitarian perspective examines the general wellbeing of a worker's experiences as a human within an organization. This perspective proposes that "people deserve to be treated fairly and with respect" (Spector 1997:2) and takes a more psychological approach to research. While these studies may also relate satisfaction to other variables, the primary focus is the understanding of how satisfaction affects the workers for the sake of personal fulfillment and psychological well-being. These studies may also examine how the work performed or demanded affects the worker outside of work and in their personal lives (Beatty 1996 ;Kelly and Moen 2020).

From the perspective of the worker first, social scientists consider the needs of that worker first and the job they perform for a company second, but at the same time researchers must look at the work performed not as what function the worker performs for the company but at what function the job serves to the worker. Many philosophers over the span of human history have contemplated the nature of work in our lives. Marx asserted that through the work people perform, they are able to be create and in doing so become

creators. In this sense, humans depend on opportunities to labor and produce to become a more fulfilled person. Heidegger (1962) cited in Gini (2000:5) proposes a similar idea that “You are your projects”. Both agree that what people do with their time in life plays a defining role in determining who they are and who they become as an individual. A person that enjoys working on cars and spends much of their time learning to tune cars and later opens and operates a garage would probably find pride and meaning in calling themselves a mechanic. They may also call themselves an engineer if they devise a pressure valve with no moving parts to make an engine more efficient. They might call themselves an educator if they teach others how to integrate these valves into other machines. Others may even call them a revolutionary inventor when this valve is later adapted to be used in jet propulsions systems making them more effective and less prone to failure. What we do with our lives defines us not only to ourselves but to the people around us and those who have only heard of us from others. We are defined not only by what we do but by what we have done, and through those projects we become an achieving full person. Without those achievements the worker has been reduced to less than a full person.

Because the focus of the humanitarian perspective is on the worker themselves, the perspective must first understand what it means for a person to be mentally or emotionally well. Consequently, this can be significantly more difficult to measure than the productivity of an organization’s employees or the growth of a company’s area of business. Much of what is used to measure whether or not a worker is in a position that is satisfying is based on the qualities of the job and the experience of the worker. For this reason, it is also important to understand what the definition of satisfied is for the researcher almost as much

as what it means to be satisfied for the worker. To meet this need, the following section will review some of the working definitions and theoretical background of defining satisfaction.

What is Satisfaction

Historically, many researchers have focused on approaching job satisfaction from the perspective of whether a job or position's duties met an employee's physical or psychological needs. This could have been from the idea that the traits of a job are inherently satisfying, whether the rewards such as pay or benefits provided the means to be satisfied (Wolf 1970), how a job that is considered satisfying to a worker is made less satisfied by the constraints of the institutional system or bureaucracy (Pearlin 1962), or some other amalgamation of work properties that make up what and how a person fulfills their responsibilities.

This study examines the satisfaction of workers in menial labor positions through the lens of Marx's and Seeman's forms of alienation, and so must first look at how jobs contribute to a human's drives. According to Marx, humans have both constant and relative drives (Fromm 1961). Constant drives are the motivations that persist in people regardless of the social contexts or cultural influences they live in. These could be the need to survive, to be social with other people, but for our research the most in focus is the need to labor. Relative drives are the motivations placed in people by the societal particularities people must live in. There could be the need to farm grain to give to the local lord, the need to work at a gas station to pay for rent, or even the need to raise miniature giant space hamsters to appease a celestial feline entity. From a Marxist perspective we might look at how a job

fulfills a person's drives. Does the job pay funds adequately enough to allow a worker to pay their landlord so that they may continue to live under a roof, or must they live in a van down by the river? Does the job give them the opportunity to use the skills they have chosen to develop over their lifetime in a manner that they have determined, or must the middle school math teacher flip burgers on the weekend so their students can have books?

Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

One of the most common ideologies in understanding satisfaction is to imagine satisfaction as a single scale variable, with good work being satisfying work on one end of a spectrum and dissatisfying work on the other. The difficulty with this operating thought is that it intrinsically ties the work's responsibilities with the systems the duties are performed in. Clinical psychologist Fredrick Herzberg (1966) cited in Gini (2000:55) proposes that to better understand meaningful work researchers should approach satisfaction and dissatisfaction as separate variables. In this mentality, satisfaction is a measure of how fulfilling the functions of a job is while dissatisfaction is based on the contexts in which that work is performed.

Imagine our enthusiastic mechanic from before. They find the work they do exciting and meaningful; they are able to take their passion and use the skills they have developed, and they are able to find enjoyment in the functions of their work. Unfortunately, while they do this, they are also required to file tedious paperwork, sometimes they have to deal with upset clients, and they find the hassle of disposing of chemicals to be exhausting. In this example the mechanic might say the work they do is highly satisfying but is also regularly dissatisfying. Similarly, a doctor might find saving

people's lives to be very satisfying but the constant running around of an emergency room to be dissatisfying. By looking at these variables as separate, researchers are able to study the work function's level of meaningfulness with some amount of separation from the additional burdens placed upon a worker.

To further clarify this Herzberg identifies two factors that contribute to the motivation in meaningful work: intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are those that motivate the growth and meaningfulness of work, such as the opportunities for the mechanic to develop new skills. Extrinsic factors, named to represent the external influence on the work, makes the functions and processes of the work less desirable, such as the mechanic having to spend hours trying to find a discontinued part that is not sold by their usual parts supplier. Efforts by policies or supervisors can alleviate some of this rise in dissatisfaction, such as being paid more for their time having or assistance that can reduce the effect of extrinsic factors, but they will never truly increase satisfaction; only decrease dissatisfaction.

Examining the dissatisfying factors that come from outside the workers control it is also be pertinent to discuss the theoretical similarities to Marx. Extrinsic factors are by their nature factors that are not a part of a worker's responsibilities that are meant to satisfy. Alienated labor in which the worker has less control over the process and product of labor grants less control of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors of work. As such, by being alienated from the processes of labor, the worker has less ability to reduce dissatisfying extrinsic factors or increase satisfying intrinsic factors. From the other side of the

perspective it would stand to reason the reduction of intrinsic factors would increase alienation as Marx would understand.

Satisfying Work

Examining work and attempting to identify what makes work satisfying or dissatisfying can sometimes be a difficult process to separate. To do this it might be best to also consider factors separately as we do with whether workers are satisfied or dissatisfied. This section will highlight possible sources of influence on what makes work satisfying as well as dissatisfying.

To many philosophers, what makes work satisfying has much to do with their particular fields. A Marxist approach might assess work with how the work facilitates an individual's drives (Fromm 1961:13). Some clinical psychologists might measure satisfaction with how well it matches a particular worker's personality typology asserting that satisfaction is most obtainable when a person's personality type and behavioral preferences are compatible with a job's requirements (Shack 1989) cited in (Gini 2000:46). From this perspective work that is aligned with the least amount of people's types, are less satisfying in general. While it would be absurd to say that people are all the same, it is clear to the average person that there are patterns in groups that would make some jobs more satisfying in general. So, what makes a job satisfying to the most people?

Based on thousands of happiness and satisfaction surveys the conclusion that, to be satisfying, work must be organized in a way in which workers are: given the opportunity to set and achieve goals set by themselves, able to decide how they work and what they do with work, given the opportunity to develop and grow skills through work, and given

needed time away from work (Michalos 1986). As previously noted, because much of who we are as people is derived from what we do, work should be a source of notable achievements and pride. Our hypothetical mechanic should be able to say, “look, I fixed that car’s brakes.” Without pride or purpose in work, people are detached from the work, or as Marx would say, alienated.

Work that does not regularly fit Michalos’s (1986) and other’s parameters of unsatisfying work might fall under what some have called unsatisfying or “bad jobs” (Gini 2000). Terkel (Gini 2000:12) describe these bad jobs as “too small for our spirit and not big enough for us as people. These jobs are devoid of prestige, are physically exhausting or mentally repetitive.” It is these jobs that this study draws on for sampling. By focusing on an industry of menial labor, rather than a particular industry of service, researchers can examine the effects of alienation rather than trends specific to those industries of service.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

In this chapter I discuss the methods of data collection, structuralize the population of focus so that others can analyze the industry further, and cover some limitations of the study. Discussion of how the data was analyzed can be found in Chapter Four.

Population

The target demographics of this study are menial laborers from various service industries, recruited through internet networks. The most likely source industries are from retail, warehousing, customer service, manufacturing, and other service industries. Ideally, participants derive three-fourths (Clark 1959:850) or more of their income from these jobs. Given the difficulty of estimating an individual's income from multiple sources and what percent comes from where, this percentage is more of an estimate and at the discretion of the participant. The exact number is not necessary but is included in the survey. Considering some people in these positions also have second or third jobs, I asked them only to respond in relation to their menial labor position. With the use of Qualtrics, I was able to reach a normally inaccessible population without the need to intrude on their privacy at work and allow them to participate at their convenience without the fear of employer scrutiny.

For the purpose of this study and analysis I have used multiple different terms in an attempt to illustrate the mosaic of jobs that while widely different in functional operations for the individual, are relatively similar for the purpose of their employer. The English language is significantly lacking in a word that communicates this study's focus group without negative connotation. For this reason, I have used both "unskilled" and "menial"

as two different words to reference the same category of work. Of the traits most important to defining these jobs, I propose the following five key features that could be used to clarify these positions.

First, that the function of the position is the operation of general duties that cannot be efficiently automated or that are so widely varied in responsibilities that to automate would make the organization inflexible to needs or changes. These functions can be as simple as restocking shelves or as complex as a line cook prepping the entrees' ingredients for the evening's dinner rush.

Second, these individuals perform duties that do not require extensive prior training through formal education or vocational experience, and of the training that is needed to do the job correctly, it is able to be taught on the job site. These jobs could include factory machine operators, warehouse inventory workers, delivery drivers, landscaping laborers, forklift operators, etc. While many of these positions may require some training for certification or licensing, they do not universally require extensive training or education such as an electrician or need a state registered license such as a commercial driver's license. I also use the term "unskilled" as a description for these positions. I do not mean to say that the workers in these positions are unskilled. I simply wish to convey that the positions they fill do not require widely recognized skills or knowledge sets and that the possession of these skills and knowledge sets are not formally recognized or made to benefit the worker's status, pay, or future advancement. The categorizing of menial or unskilled work lies more on the job position than with the worker as an individual. I also

include informal soft skills such as being good at working with other people because they are difficult to quantitatively measure for the purposes of marketability to employers.

Third, in the mosaic of these occupations, there is also a wide variety of physical demands. For the purpose of this study, I include workers who spend much of their work time walking, carrying, and being physically worked, but I would also include the cashiers required to work a till, call center reps talking on the phones, and retail workers performing a variety of tasks in their average workday. Although the physical demands can vary, the focus is that outside the needs of the immediate task, most functions are not mentally stimulating.

Fourth, while most employees are overseen by managers or supervisors, these supervisors are usually in place to ensure employees follow policy and that new policies are communicated and put in place. What manages many of these employees is not other people, but policies put in place by individuals far above them in occupational status. Thus, the focus is management through policy and because of this, most menial laborers do not have access to the people making policies and who is really deciding how they perform their duties (Pearlin 1962:315).

Finally, not all but most work for hourly wages. This focus on time spent working rather than actual processes completed or on innovation brought to the company is a major facet of many unskilled positions as it is difficult to measure how much each individual contributes over any given action. While not all the income from the position may be hourly, it is majority of the reward for doing the job's responsibilities from the employer. A server may receive tips, but those tips come from the customer and not the employer

whereas the salesperson may get commission from the company for a sale, they only do so because the customer made the purchase. Thus, the focus on hourly wages are the major representation and acknowledgment of accomplishment from the employer.

Variables

Our measurement of compensation satisfaction and alienation come from four sets of questions designed to give us multiple ways of examining the worker's perceived alienation and satisfaction.

The first set of are demographic variables such as sex/ gender, race/ ethnicity, age, and level of education. This section asks for basic information about their employment such as who their employer is, what their official position at the company is and if it accurately describes their work load, how long they have been with their employer, whether they have another job for income purposes, what their employment status is (full time, part time, seasonal, or independent contractor,) and how many hours they work on average a week.

The second set of questions is designed to ascertain what sort of compensations they receive from their employment while also asking questions about their opinions on their employment. Information on what they earn on average per hour, how many hours of work they are given, responsibilities they perform, as well as if they know what the local average pay for a position with similar obligations and skill requirements. Participants are also asked for information on secondary benefits received as a result of this employment. These could be in the form of insurance, retirement plans, discounts on services, usage of company services, paid time off, sick leave, and vacation days. Regardless of the nature or

usage of these benefits they must be formalized and explicitly stated by the employer. These benefits must also directly contribute to the positive improvement of the individual's quality of life by providing resources toward constant drives and relative drives required to sustain a modern lifestyle.

The third set of questions are a series of questions asking participants about the importance and perceived frequencies of various workplace conditions. For the primary measurement against satisfaction, participants were asked to respond to a series of statements and state how important and how frequently that statement was experienced. For example, participants were asked how important it was to them that they find fulfillment or have pride in the work they perform. This was asked on a scale of 1: extremely important 2: very important 3: moderately important 4: slightly important or 5: not important at all. Alongside this question they were asked how often they experienced each statement on a scale of 1: very frequently 2: frequently 3: occasionally 4: rarely or 5: never (See Appendix A1) Participants were given the opportunity to answer both sides of the statement before moving on to the next statement. The question of importance establishes the participant's judgement of the importance of the statement and the question of frequency would set the measurement for how often they experienced the statement. Using these measurements researchers can see the differences in work desires vs reality made to mirror the objective alienation and subjective perceptions of that alienation and objective alienation.

Operationally this also allows researchers to combine those measurements to determine the degree a participant's feelings of importance were met (0), exceeded (a

positive number), or failed to meet (a negative number). For example, a participant that said that finding fulfillment or pride in the work they performed was very important (2) but that they rarely (4) experienced fulfillment or pride in their work could be said to not have their needs met ($2-4=-2$). All three variables can then be used to compare the differences in various variables or to other variables such as income, job satisfaction, or gender. The variables of frequency and differences were used for model set one and model set two, respectively.

These statement questions (See Appendix A2) were then divided into categories based on various relationships to theory. Some of these categories shared variables but were group based on theory rather than correlation. Based on theory seven groupings were formed: variables based on Marx's concept of alienation from process, variables based on Marx's concept of alienation from others, variables based on Marx's concept of alienation from species-being, variables based on Marx's concept of alienation from product and pay, variables related to supervisors, strongest variables associated with Marx's forms of alienation, and variables related to the values of the employer and employee. Based on significance, three of these were chosen for the final models.

The final set of questions were three qualitative response questions. This study included three such possibilities for participants to respond qualitatively in their own way. The first qualitative question addressed how a worker's position title could be more aptly named to represent the responsibilities and duties of the position. A quarter (27.1%) of participants stated that their job titled does not accurately describe or represent their responsibilities. While not covered in my later trends, this question reenforced the assertion

that many of these menial jobs come with a wide variety of responsibilities and that these duties are not regularly conveyed through the position title given to workers. This lack of clarity can not only make marketing past work experience difficult to prospective employers but can also provide the opportunity for employers to place more workload on employees as the need arises without the need to address or justify those new responsibilities.

The second question is a follow up to the question of whether the respondent would stay at the job if they did not need the pay. 81.6% of participants responded that they would not stay, and offered the opportunity to discuss why it is that they would or would not remain. As more responded that they would not stay, there is inevitably more responses explaining why but even the reasons why some would stay says a lot about their work and how they feel about their jobs. Those findings will be discussed in detail later in this section of the chapter.

The final question presented to participants before the completion of the survey was a free write option to say or discuss their thoughts. Participants were encouraged to share any comments about their overall satisfaction at work, about why they are in their job position rather than another, or any other thoughts on their experiences. This opportunity has provided this study with extensive data. Some responses were as short exclamations of distaste such as “Amazon sucks [sic]” while others wrote multiple paragraphs. The responses make it clear that many people want to talk about their experiences and that there is ample opportunity for researchers to listen.

Survey Method

The survey was conducted through the online survey service Qualtrics. Through Qualtrics, respondents will remain anonymous to both each other as well as to the researchers. Respondents were collected through online forums pertaining to employees in the positions of interest. Finding respondents through these forums assists with ensuring more respondents are of the desired demographic and are from a wider geographical sample. By accessing respondents through forums designated for these demographics and asking screening questions, researchers can ensure a sample less diluted by non-menial workers and some later control of data should respondents not fit into the preferred demographics.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data was conducted in three parts. The first is an assessment for overall trends and correlations relating to the sampled population. Using this data, researchers can assess the state of affairs of respondents. While not a fully representative sample of the population, this assessment is still indicative of the larger population of menial laborers. The second step of analysis used the correlations and expected relationships previously identified, to develop the final regression models. Variables for the models were selected based on groupings related to various theories (See Appendix A2). Models were then organized based on their ability to predict the various dependents. The final models were selected for their ability to represent the functionality of the most prominent model sets and relevancy to theory. Finally, the qualitative responses were used to provide context for quantitative models as well as highlight trends among the sentiments of respondents.

The final step uses the provided free responses to lend some understanding to the previously recognized trends and analyses. Inclusion of qualitative data allows for additional insight to explaining quantitative trends, be they from step one as overall trends of significance or step two with the effects of workstyles on an employee's lifestyle or perceptions of work.

Limitations

As with all research there are limitations resulting from how the study is conducted. With the online survey format, it is always a concern that respondents will not be of the desired demographic. In this case, I included the requirement that respondents include their position and the position's description. Another concern with sourcing from forums used to reach respondents, there is sometimes the opportunity for data that may be skewed toward a preexisting dissatisfaction with their position or with how they are compensated. While it may be the case that a preexisting dissatisfaction exists, the data will still provide insight into workers' experiences. There are some questions in the survey for them to not only express themselves in the Likert scaled questions but also in an available free response.

Another limitation to this study is that because the participant sources will most likely find this survey on an internet forum, the possibility for similar trends may develop if the forum is dedicated to a particular company or industry focus. While this may be a cause of concern, it should be clear that the focus of this study is on menial labor workers and less on workers in general. This study prioritized exploration of the field's trends over ensuring a fully representative sample. To access respondents with existing online forums,

the study will be non-random in its sample. This limitation will be covered in more detail in the findings chapter when discussing follow up studies.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will summarize the analysis process of data, provide an overview of the findings of the data, and discuss what that means for the goals of the study. The purpose of this study is to examine what work factors affect the general satisfaction of employees, be they intrinsic factors that increase satisfaction or extrinsic factors that can reduce or increase feelings of dissatisfaction. I will begin with the quantitative analysis of data on the effects and predictors of satisfaction then follow up with an analysis and discussion of the qualitative findings from the survey.

Demographics

I begin with a summary of the study's overall demographics and findings. From there I will discuss how a select few variables are divergent from the national average and possible implications or explanations. While the number of respondents to the survey was over two hundred, I deemed 177 suitable for analysis. The general breakdown for many of the demographic variables are not entirely in line with the national average. While this could be seen as a cause for concern, the purpose of this study was to focus on data related to menial labor rather than perfectly replicate U.S. population distribution. It should also be noted that because typical occupational categories of conventional survey data do not specifically target menial labor employment studied in this thesis, it is difficult to ascertain whether the data here is an accurate representation of this labor sector. In short, this study has been limited by both a non-random sample as well as a lack of an overall baseline to compare it to.

General Demographics

Gender: While not representative of the U.S. population, men accounted for over half of respondents with 98 men, 52 women, 25 non-binary individuals, and two that preferred to self-describe (See Appendix B1). Given that General Social (Smith et al. 1972-2018) reports little correlation between gender and financial satisfaction, finding that this data showed similar results was not surprising. Similarly, gender had insignificant correlation with income, financial and job satisfaction, desire to remain at job (See Appendix B8) or any of the various scales of alienation discussed later in this chapter.

Race: Much like gender, response reports of race did not match that of the U.S. population. The majority (62%) of respondents self-reported as white. As the General Social Survey found that race had no correlation with race, this study was not expected to find race correlated with any other variables in the data. As expected, analysis found no correlation with income, financial or job satisfaction, desire to remain at job, (See Appendix B8) or any of the various scales of alienation discussed later in this chapter. This demographic in particular would greatly benefit from further research in this labor industry.

Education: Demographic results in education were particularly diverse. Although not entirely representative of the U.S. average population, it is unlikely that an actual measurement of all menial laborers in the U.S. would be the same as the U.S. population. Given that this labor industry usually requires little more than a high school education and generally only serves an employee in offering added upward mobility or hiring prospects, it would make sense that the number of participants with more than a high school level of education would be lower than the U.S. population. Respondents reported that 53.7% of them held a high school level or less of an education, significantly higher than the 39.2%

U.S. average reported in 2017 (Anon 2020). Despite expectations that respondents of higher education would be less satisfied with menial positions, this study found that level of education showed a similar lack of correlations as race and gender (See Appendix B9).

Age: While it should be made clear that because the survey was dispersed through internet forums whose ages average between 25 and 29 (Lin, 2021), the average age found of 26.57 should be considered fairly consistent with the entry level job workers of menial labor in retail (Loprest and Mikelson, 2019). This survey received a wide variety of ages allowing for some correlations to be drawn (See Appendix X10). Closely tied with age, the estimated annual (.389) and hourly wage (.393) of employees shows that older workers of menial labor are earning more than their younger counterparts. They are also working more hours (.279). As the annual wage was adjusted for hours worked, it shows that regardless of how many hours older workers are clocking in, they are receiving a higher pay for their labor. Another notable relationship with age is its predictability of how long an employee would remain with an employer. Age has a strong correlation (.315) with how long an employee would like to remain with an employer and maintains a robust predictability that will be discussed later in the findings chapter. However, it should be noted that unlike Spector's (1997:25) correlation of age and job satisfaction, this study found no such correlation.

Job Satisfaction: Participants were asked their level of job satisfaction based on a scale of 1: very satisfied, 2: moderately satisfied, 3: somewhat satisfied, 4: indifferent, 5: somewhat dissatisfied, 6: moderately dissatisfied, and 7: very dissatisfied. Given that this study was on menial labor, an industry known for degrading, mentally unstimulating, and

low paying work, expectations were not high for overall respondents' levels of satisfaction. Participants reported that only a quarter (27.2) of them were at least partially satisfied with their jobs. While skewed towards dissatisfied, respondents showed a wide range of satisfaction levels without any one of them being overly concentrated (See Appendix B5). Based on correlations, both job and financial satisfaction showed a strong relationship (.361). Unsurprisingly, job satisfaction is positively correlated with whether a respondent would stay at their job if they did not need the pay (.555), meaning those with higher levels of satisfaction would stay more often even if they did not need the pay.

Financial Satisfaction and Financial Growth: Asked in a similar scale to job satisfaction, financial satisfaction asked participants how they felt about their financial situation. While not as strong as job satisfaction, financial satisfaction was most correlated with whether an employee would remain at their job if they did not need the pay (.309) and with how often they worried about being able to pay bills (.586). Participants were also asked to describe their financial situation as either growing quickly, growing slowly, stable/static, diminishing slowly, or diminishing quickly (See Appendix B4). Despite an industry known for lower wages and a global pandemic shutting businesses down, respondents' responses concentrated on stable/ static with only a slight skew toward slowly diminishing. It should be noted however that of the three respondents who reported that they would describe their situation as growing quickly, two were under the age of 20, living with family and have no bills to pay and the third was an outlier in nearly every category that they responded to with an income significantly higher than the U.S. national average.

Satisfaction Statement Data

The goals of this study were to ascertain the various effects on both job satisfaction and an employee's decision to remain at their place of employment. In this section of the findings, we will look at the primary models of predictability of various work conditions, their frequencies and how the difference between these frequencies and how much an employee values this condition affects their satisfaction. We will also look at how it can be difficult to account for all the factors related to an employee's desire to remain with a company in their position. The reasons for this will also be later discussed in the qualitative analysis of written responses from participants.

Model Set One: Satisfaction and Perceived Frequencies of Workplace Conditions

Model one (See Table One above or Appendix B30) of comparing the predictors of satisfaction with frequencies of work experiences examines the assembled variables of process as identified by Marx. Of these the variables measuring experiences involving supervisors, opportunities to advance, use and development of skills and the availability of clear and measurable goals at work.

As shown, opportunities to advance constituted the most significant predictor of satisfaction among all seven variables. As for the strength of opportunities to advance, we might best understand advance as a sort of aggregate for the others in the set. As anyone who has held a job could tell you, the steps toward advancing in the organization usually requires the development of various job-related skills and the support of management, as they are usually the individuals interviewing and offering placement in higher positions. Without the skills needed for the new position or the ability to learn those new skills, it can be considerably more difficult to obtain that new position. Similarly, without supervisors being aware of and willing to acknowledge a worker's accomplishments and proficiencies, it is considerably more difficult for new positions to be open to workers. As an employee develops skills and the trust of their superiors, they may be in the position to be offered a higher job posting. As such, it poses that many of these variables might be measuring the same concept, just that opportunities to advance measures them more clearly on a large application. These redundant variables were removed to retain two process variables in a second, more parsimonious model that included additional Marx's concepts.

Model Two comparing the predictors of satisfaction with frequencies of work experiences examines the assembled variables of Marx's alienation concepts. As previously discussed, opportunities to advance has shown itself to be a good indicator of process, opportunities to find fulfillment or pride is used as a measurement for species being, and opportunities to form friendships and relationships with others is a measurement of connection to others. Supervisor's awareness of contributions is also included for showing the effects of the control and recognition of creative aspects of the job.

Model Two shows the strong correlations and significance of opportunities to advance, opportunities to find pride, and opportunities to form relationships at work. Note the robustness of opportunities to advance when put alongside two other very strong variables which will remain with opportunities for pride in the final model. Both of these variables are very strong indicators of satisfaction, something we will continue to see both in measuring against what is important to workers and in qualitative responses.

Model Three of comparing the predictors of satisfaction with frequencies of work experiences focuses on the effects of comparing the values of the company and the worker, and variables related to pay. If economists' relative pay model is to be believed then we should find that pay relative to profits generated and pay relative to quality of work performed are significant predictors of satisfaction (Card 2012:2981). Measurement of regular opportunities for a raise was included to provide for the argument that competitive pay may have a significant effect on job satisfaction.

While neither is truly a strong predictor, a worker's values match their employer's shows both a stronger correlation (.215) than the employer's values matching the

employee's (.184). In this case, neither is stronger a predictor than actual opportunities to receive a raise. In the case of menial labors, it may be more important that workers receive a pay that keeps up with inflation and the pay of competing job opportunities than how it may be based off the actual work performed. This may be a direct prediction or an indication of the negative effects of obscuring the actual amount of work and profits generated by most employees.

As mentioned earlier, a significant relationship between basing pay off of work factors rather than social factors, would lend some credibility to the relative pay model of economics that says one of the stronger indications of job satisfaction is whether or not a worker's pay is less than, more than, or equal to others that perform a similar function. Not only are these variables' significance weak when compared to non-Marx variables, they are among the weakest predictors when applied in the final model. A note should be made of the contrastingly weaker R-squared value of this model indicating that it represents a less complete picture of the predictors of satisfaction. Even the significance of opportunities for a regular raise is made more apparent in the final model when compared to other more effective models.

Model four is the cumulative comparison of all previously measured variables. In this model, note the robustness of both opportunities to advance and opportunities to find fulfillment and pride in work while seeing the variables measuring community and opportunities for a raise fall out of significance.

Understanding the falling out of opportunities for a raise might be best examined by looking at what happens when employees receive a promotion. Generally, it is expected

that when an employee receives a promotion to advance in the organization, that advancement is accompanied by a raise in pay. It could possible that when measured alongside opportunities to advance that opportunities for a raise become less significant as the raise may have to come from the promotion. This model also shows that the significance of opportunities for workplace relationships falls out when compared to the rest of the variables. Theoretically when a worker has opportunities to find pride and fulfillment in work they are also given the freedom to conduct more work as it suits them. Part of doing this work as they please, probably includes allowing for the time to be social with people at work and so the significance of community relationships is lost when freedom allows for pride in work.

Concluding this set of models, this study found that significance in predicting work satisfaction through measuring opportunities to find pride or fulfillment in work and the opportunity to advance in the organization. These measurements are both significant and robust in a model with a sound R-squared value. Even in positions of menial labor it stands to reason that people would like to be able to not only find fulfillment in the work they perform, perhaps by using what they know to assist customers, be able to navigate the systems of their company with exceptional proficiency, or be able to create or deliver a product that will make others' lives more meaningful. It also means that while wanting to find pride, they also want to advance with the organization. Whether that means more responsibility, more pay, or even a more stable and long-term work situation, people want to move up in position in work. This may also show that they are growing as people. Given that what we do as workers is a signifier of who we are as people, moving up in a company

may also represent an advancement in who we are as people through status or accomplishments. It may also stand to reason that those who have advanced in a company may not be finding significant satisfaction, but by advancing they may be reducing factors that contribute to dissatisfaction.

Model Set Two: Satisfaction and the Discrepancies Between Importance and Perceived Experiences.

As discussed earlier the variables of discrepancy between the importance of and the perceived experienced workplace conditions is derived from subtracting the value of perceived frequency of workplace conditions and the importance of those conditions for the participant. The discrepancy measuring between four and negative four denotes how their need are met. A positive number means their hopes are exceeded, a negative means their needs are not met, and a zero signified that their standards are just met; neither fall short nor are exceeded.

This set of models uses the same independent variables except that instead of variables of frequencies, variables of discrepancies were measured against satisfaction. While the first set measured the predictability of satisfaction from the frequency of workplace conditions, this set measures the predictability of satisfaction from the discrepancy of workplace conditions from the desires of the participants. Although it is a rough estimation of sorts, this study's perspective that the difference between what an employee finds important versus what they perceive as control of workstyle is that this difference could be used as an index of the objective-subjective experience of alienation from process.

With this in mind, the second set of models developed was identical to the previous with the exception that it measured not only the frequency of experiences, but the importance of that experience to the worker against satisfaction. As the variables used for this set of models (See Table Two above or Appendix B31) follows the same rationale as the first set, I will skip the reasoning for each group and move to summarize and discuss the findings.

Given the frequency in which many participants reported the importance of receiving clear, measurable, and obtainable goals and the considerably lower frequency in which those respondents reported that they experienced respectable goals (See Appendix B22), it may come to little surprise that the average respondent's importance of clear, measurable, and obtainable goals was not met. While not a significant find in the first set of models, respectable goals becomes more significant when placed in relation to how consistently those ideals are not met.

As found in the last set of models, opportunities to advance was a consistent predictor of satisfaction when compared to other measurements of Marx's process, although as I will discuss later, it is not as significant when compared all the variables in model four. This significance remains in the second model as it remains robust when measured alongside the rest of variables based on Marx's concepts.

Unlike in the previous set of models, only advancement and pride were found to be significant in predicting satisfaction. The importance of being able to find fulfillment and pride in your work was consistently high and so this significance came through in determining satisfaction. When compared to the rest of the assembled variables meant to

represent Marx's concepts, the predictability of satisfaction when considering the difference in perceived and experienced opportunities or pride has and will remain robust and consistent.

The third model in the set identifies the significance of the difference between the importance of receiving a regular raise and when participants actually experience this. Given currency's tendency to inflate over time, it should be understood that employees would expect their pay to increase comparably. What we find when examining the responses of participants is that while it is a high priority for employees, it is not a high priority for employers to give these opportunities to their workers (See Appendix B13). Much like the discrepancy of needs for clear, measurable, and obtainable goals, the trend of receiving opportunities for regular raises is widely not met. This overall failure to meet the standards of their employees creates a significant variable when measured against satisfaction, but only so far as when compared to the other means of determining pay or the directionality of values. As seen in the final model, the discrepancy of expectations for raises falls out of significance, potentially as a result of the function of pay itself.

Theoretically, pay is not meant to be a satisfying factor of work, it is merely an extrinsic factor used to reduce dissatisfaction. In the final model, the significance of raises is more than likely diverted into the other variables such as opportunities to advance or clear goals. Considering in many of these positions even a marginal raise has such a substantial impact, the opportunity to improve their life outside work may be more important than simply getting a promotion in the company. When neither is made available,

it stands to reason that not getting a raise has more an effect on job satisfaction than not getting a promotion.

In the final model of the set, we see a noticeable difference compared to the first set of models. When the importance of a work trait is considered, the opportunities to find pride at work is slightly more significant than before while both goals and the values of the company become more important.

Goals: When considering what affects job satisfaction, consensus is that the quality of the work performed has a considerable effect on how people perceive their work. An employee that can point to an accomplishment at work and say “I did that, and I did it very well” is more likely to be satisfied at work. But in a work environment in which it can sometimes be difficult to see the impact of performance or measure the contributions of an individual person, having clear, measurable, and obtainable goals becomes a vital tool to show employees how well they are doing. If these goals are unobtainable, employees will continually feel as though they are failing. If these goals are not clear, they may feel as though they are simply spinning their wheels in place without being able to spend any dedicated or meaningful effort to any one cause. If these goals are not measurable there is no way for employees to say their accomplishments are actually substantial or that the efforts they put in to work were well spent. By setting clear, measurable, and obtainable goals, employees are more equipped to perceive their accomplishments as tangible, meaningful, and able to be repeated or improved. We can see this operationalized more effectively when seeing the disparity between ideals and reality.

Values: Another aspect of considering satisfaction and sources of dissatisfaction is the company culture in which a worker spends their time. Part of that company culture is dictating what is and what is not allowed for freedoms at work, another part is what sort of assistance a company offers its employees around work, but overall these aspects reflect much of what we could call quality of life policies. Quality of life policies are a reflection of a company's values and so while some companies may push employees to model their values off of the company's, what can matter more for satisfaction is if the company's values mirror that of the employees'. If the values of the company is comparable to the employee, then it is more likely to be a more accommodating and comfortable place to work. Imagine working at a job that is both morally and ethically divergent from your own beliefs, that would certainly be a source of tension and dissatisfaction.

Respondents attributed a consistently wide-ranging importance on the importance of the company's values, with the exception that far fewer reported that it was not important at all. In contrast the frequency of experiencing this trait was less varied. The majority of respondents reported that they rarely or only occasionally felt as though their company held similar values as their own. Only six reported that they felt they experienced it very frequently. The same disconnect found in raises and goals stood out in the values of companies while also showing a positive correlation with satisfaction.

As noted in earlier models of this set, opportunities for advancement in positions was consistently significant until model four in which it was just on the cusp of $p < .05$ significance. This lesser significance highlights the wider response value placed on advancement. While most value the ability to advance, many may not be as emotionally

committed to the position given the lack of meaningfulness in the work. Without a desire to further invest themselves in the company, the importance of advancement is lessened. It may also be that the perception of many advanced positions related to menial labor are not worth the increase in workload or responsibility as they may not give the added availability of new intrinsic factors improving satisfaction. Perceived lack of improvements of work conditions after a promotion may be creating a lack of confidence in promotions and so results in more variance in the importance of opportunities to advance.

Table 3. Linear Regression Estimates for the Effects of the Predictors on Remain Time Based on the Perceived Frequency of Work Conditions

Variables	Model 1- Process			Model 2- Marx's Concepts			Model 3- Other/ Seeman			Model 4- All Variables		
	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig
Supervisor Input	.417	.772	.067	.590			.498	.837	.079	.553		
Supervisors Know Contribution	.518	.861	.084	.549	-.098	.565	-.016	.863	.642	.912	.104	.483
Supervisors Acknowledge	-1.348	.801	-.202	.095					-1.308	.846	-.193	.125
Advance	-2.454	.652	-.367	.000	-2.226	.648	-.339	.001	-2.471	.729	-.368	.001
Make Use of Skills	-.927	.524	-.158	.080					-1.006	.589	-.171	.090
Improve Skills	-.118	.623	-.018	.850					.082	.689	.012	.905
Receive Clear Goals	.048	.608	.008	.937					-.097	.670	-.015	.885
Fulfillment / Pride					-.663	.564	-.119	.242	-.167	.701	-.029	.812
Friendship with Others					.300	.530	.048	.573		.583	.614	.344
Values match Company									-.788	.974	-.122	.420
Company Values Match You					.698	1.027	.109	.498	.698	1.027	.109	.498
Pay Relative to Quality					-1.440	.666	-.263	.032	-1.346	.698	-.240	.056
Pay Relative to Profit					.831	.690	.140	.231	1.078	.733	.179	.144
Regular Pay Raise					-1.049	.663	-.158	.116	-.164	.694	-.024	.814
Cases				131			134		134			128
Adjusted R Square				.150			.142		.046			.134

Model Set Three: Remain Time

The final model set (See Table Three above or Appendix B32) uses the same fourteen variables as the first sets of models. This set however shows the significance of these variables in predicting the amount of time a participant hoped to remain at their place of employment. The survey asked respondents on a sliding scale how many years they wished to remain at their position with their employer. This number between zero and fifty was then used as the dependent variable in a linear regression in the same way job satisfaction was used in the previous sets and frequency variables (as used in model set one) as an independent variable. In this set we find some similarities alongside some stark differences as well as a significantly lower R-squared across all models in the set. This lowered R-square and less significant results will be discussed later as well as what may be better predictors of how long a worker would like to remain at their job.

As found in previous models, experienced opportunities to advance was particularly significant in predicting the desired remain time of participants. In fact, in the final model it was the only variable to remain significant when measured alongside all other thirteen variables. This might be best understood when examining what it means when a worker is offered an advancement. When a person is offered a raise, it means that not only has the worker shown themselves to be capable enough for the higher position, but that their superiors find them suited for the position's additional responsibilities. It also indicates that the employer wants that employee to remain with the company longer and that they are willing to invest further in that employee's future with the company. In short, it is a declaration that management acknowledges the employee's contributions, values

their development, and that the employee's future with the company is secure. This is most likely why nearly all the other variables in the model set are reduced in significance, advancement is the aggregate of an employer's desire to keep that employee around. An employer that wants to keep their employee around should, theoretically, do what they can to keep that employee's interest.

But looking at this model set, there are very few variables that come close to giving us a good picture of what drives employees to remain with their employer. Why is that? It is mostly likely that the same reasons employees are satisfied or dissatisfied with work are not always the same reasons they want to stay. What makes an employee satisfied with work is primarily based in their experience at work, but their desires to stay also have to include factors from outside work. Factors like job market, local and regional economics, commute times, housing costs, access to food and modern essentials, even factors like how close their job is to their child's daycare can play a role in determining how long a worker wants to remain with their employer.

The limitations of an anonymous online survey only allow for so much data and because social scientists rarely have the luxury of quantifying each worker's entire life researchers can only measure predictability with what is gathered. With this in mind I have assembled the most significant variables gathered in predicting the amount of time an employee wants to remain with their company. Keep in mind that it is almost a certainty that many of these variables are not a cause of remain time, but that are highly correlated with strong predictors of remain time. This regression model (See Appendix B29) is the result of testing various variables against the remain time dependent variable.

To start, the most significant variable is how satisfied a worker is with their job (same variable used as the dependent variable in previous models). We can imagine that someone who is actually satisfied with their job is likely to put up with the possibility of being paid less or having some additional dissatisfying forces if it means they get to stay at a place that satisfies them. Second, are the experienced frequencies of opportunities to advanced. As discussed previously it is likely that a place that has declared the future of an employee's time with a company as secure, the employee will probably remain in the secure position rather than a position that pays more but has an unknown amount of stability. Third was age. This is most likely measuring what comes with age rather than age itself. Older workers tend to have more financial obligations, from kids, to student loans, or even house or car payments. With age comes debt, and with debt comes the demand to pay off that debt. A secure job gives the worker the possibility of paying off their various debts without worrying about having to compete with younger workers preferred by employers.

While no longer significant in the final model, satisfaction of their financial situation and the annual income both remained significant until the inclusion of age. It would stand to reason that someone who is financially secure enough would choose to remain with the company they are satisfied with as the job serves as their means of maintaining that security. It is also likely that the reason that these two variables became less significant is that, as noted in the discussion of demographics, older workers are paid more than younger employees. Annual income and financial satisfaction's significances are reduced by the inclusion of age as a sort of aggregate of one or both variables. While

not in the final model, average hours of work a week was also fairly significant up until annual pay. Alone this may mean show that employees who are given more hours are being told by management that they want them at work more and so are given full time status, or at least full-time hours.

Even with the inclusion of the variables in the new model, the complexity of what effects an employee's decision to stay with a company remains vague and unclear. What variables used to measure work satisfaction, are probably not the best variables to use when predicting what effects, the desire to stay at a job. Thankfully, what collected quantitative data could not reach, qualitative data provides us with firsthand experiences and perceptions as to what may affect this predictability.

Qualitative Findings

Originally, this study was primarily based in studying satisfaction in menial positions through a quantitative approach. In the process of designing and implementing the study, I found it important to not only give the respondents the opportunity to represent themselves and their peers not only through their responses to pre-planned questions, but through open response written sections.

Though these questions the participants would be able to speak with their own voice to their experiences in menial labor, provide them some added opportunity to share their feelings of these experiences, but also possibly to give them a listening ear that would be genuinely interested in their thoughts; something many retail veterans know is rare outside of coworkers. This inclusion made this study more of a mixed methods study. Although I expected these responses, the sheer magnitude of both number of responses and the detail

many put into these responses was surprising verging on the point of overwhelming. There was a time when I considered changing the study to a qualitative analysis. Instead, I settled on a mixed-methods approach that would provide us with the opportunity to scratch the surface of both areas and possibly inspire later research.

Although the purpose of these qualitative responses was intended to simply provide an outlet for respondents and some qualitative explanation for quantitative findings, I believe it would be negligent to leave out the qualitative findings but also be a disservice to those who make our lives possible if I left those findings out. This is a demographic of disadvantaged workers and aside from their significant relevancy to Marxist theory, it would be unethical to keep their voice out of the discussion. To that end, I have included those findings here. For those who have worked a job in this field, the findings might not come as a surprise but may offer some additional perspective or structure to some feelings and experiences. There is something to be said about the self-actualizing effect of reading what you have thought and experienced on paper and knowing that you are not alone in those experiences. As such, I present a few themes found in this unexpected bounty.

Finding Satisfaction in Meaninglessness and Community

An interesting theme found through much of the qualitative responses was the prevalence of those who genuinely enjoy the work they do in menial jobs. While it would be unrealistic to assume that everyone in these positions dislikes them or even that they are all working these jobs because they have no other ambitions, it is important to understand why they enjoy these jobs. These responses point to the diversity of why some appreciate the nature of these positions' responsibilities.

Many employees enjoy what they get to produce with their time, whether it be an actual product or the assistance in service to others. One CNC machine operator reports that he enjoys the work he does as he is sometimes able to make products that others will use but has difficulties with extrinsic factors at work from management. These factors reduce who he is alienate his laboring self from his personal self. Instead of laboring to create a product he is reduced to parading around for others

I enjoy machine work, especially if the product is something with some kind of utility. The only time I don't enjoy working is when management starts telling me how to do my job, or to drop whatever I'm doing to show off for the higher-ups like a trained dog. Sometimes I get to see the finished product and I feel some pride in knowing that I had a hand in making something that is useful. (Male, 25, Manufacturing)

While he may not maintain direct connection to the product of his labor, he still holds a sense of pride over his production that can be used to make someone's life better. But at the same time, he finds this work meaningful and satisfying, he feels dissatisfaction about supervisors disregarding his expertise and knowledge by telling him how to better perform the job he knows how to do. In this instance, our CNC operator understands that he is alienated from the product of his labor but still tries to maintain an attachment to it. Not through physical possession, reward for the sale of it, or even the status of its production, but merely the self-recognition of the item's creation. Even then, he knows he only played a part in its creation, and that portion is perhaps unclear to the new owner and others. While it may only be the operation of a machine, this worker attaches some of his

worth and the value of his labor to the production of the item, and this pleases him. Another speaks of enjoying simpler work and just enjoying a job well done as their source of satisfaction.

I genuinely enjoy the actual work in retail...I think there is a quiet dignity to it and a satisfaction to be had from a job well done (Female, 28, retail)

Similarly, when responding that they would stay at their job even if they did not need the pay, others mentioned that they enjoyed the work because they were good at it. As discussed earlier (Jacobs and Solomon 1977), employees that perform better at work report higher levels of job satisfaction, so in some cases many that find themselves able to excel at some of the responsibilities involved in a menial position, should report higher levels of satisfaction. Given the lack of mental stimulation involved in menial work it is less likely that workers will find the work of menial labor satisfying but that does not mean that none will.

In examining the responses of those who enjoy the work they do because they are good at it or because they simply enjoy a job well done, it sometimes helps to look at what the various products are of some labors. In the last and next example, the product is not a tangible item, but a service. This service is sometimes the assistance in helping people find what they are looking for, sometimes it is ensuring the items are available for purchase, while other times it is troubleshooting problems that occasionally arise in using simple systems to do complex operations. The product these employees produce is the continuation of the sale process. By knowing they played a part in ensuring the customer's experience was positive, they can see their product created. While certainly alienated at

times from the process of their labor, they are at times less alienated from the fleeting product of their labor and so find themselves momentarily less alienated from themselves. In finding satisfaction in “a job well done,” she shows that not only is her species being dependent on the quality of work, but that she finds satisfaction from that.

I love my job[,] and I’m good at it (Female, 31, Retail)

In this particular respondent’s case, she reported “very satisfied” with both her job and financial situation. She also reported that despite having significantly lower pay than a competitor, she was satisfied with the pay. Perhaps it is the overwhelming number of secondary benefits (healthcare, 401k, discounts). In this example it might be more important to look at her reports from the perspective of separating satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Consider her factors of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, she enjoys her job so she could be said to have high levels of satisfaction. She might have some factors increasing her levels of dissatisfaction but other extrinsic factors like pay and secondary benefits serve to reduce dissatisfaction. Perhaps her position is more stimulating than the average menial job or she simply enjoys the work duties given. She would (and does) report a high level of satisfaction. Because she is given a fairly high pay (1.83 standard deviations higher than the study’s mean) and a slew of secondary benefits, she should report a low level of dissatisfaction unless the extrinsic factors outweigh the added benefits of the job. She also reported that this job was her only form of employment but only accounted for 34% of the household income. This example may be a significant deviation from what was found for most participants, but it is still valuable in demonstrating how treatment from management and job responsibilities can work together to make an employee expressively

satisfied. Even more so, it also shows that there is more to satisfaction than difference in pay among peers, as some economists would have us believe (Card 2012).

Of the questions this study sought to answer, the question of why individuals stay as these positions seemed to be the most diversely answered in qualitative responses. Of course, many said that they would not stay if they did not need to, but some said that they would. Reasons for staying ranged from enjoying the nature of the work to focusing on the community of workers they worked with. In this section I discuss how some workers have managed to find some personal satisfaction in the work they identify as menial or less mentally stimulating while others cite their attachment to the relationships they have formed.

Community, relationships with coworkers, and the desire to be around others seemed to be one of the most stated reasons mentioned by participants as to why they would stay at their job regardless of their financial needs. Of the 31 written responses as to why a participant would stay at their job even if they did not need the money, thirteen cited their coworkers, the people, or social interactions as a positive reason for staying.

I am a student during covid times, so any social interaction is nice, even if it is just appointment scheduling! (Female, 21, Customer Service)

For this student, their loss of regular social interactions has been a detriment to their life, but through the brief conversations they have with customers and coworkers, they are given the social element back in their lives. While it could be argued that seeing most others in regard to whether they are a source of money or not has a dehumanizing effect on workers, it is clear that for many, human interaction is an important element in work.

Friendly atmosphere and coworkers. Understanding and capable bosses (Male, 21, Retail)

Many others wrote about the importance of how their relationships with coworkers has positively affected their perceptions of work. Given the correlation between an employee's desire to stay at a position and their opportunities to form relationships at work (.287), it is clear that despite work that may not be inherently stimulating, others may bring a sense of meaning to the work. Although it should also be noted that this quote was the singular example of a participant citing a positive influence of management on desires to stay at a position. Even then, it should be noted that the respondent reported that management "never" acknowledges employee contributions.

Both of the previous examples cite their connection to others as being important to them. As many retail jobs involve at least some duties related to customers and other workers, it stands to reason that some would find relationships with those they work with or as an opportunity to be social. As these relationships are initially dependent on and regularly reinforced by the work environment, connection to others is first and foremost the relationship of coworker. Perhaps this will grow into something more but without the context of work, the relationship would almost certainly be a different experience. As workers create who they are as individuals through their work, they also create who they are in the group. Through the context of being a coworker first and whose individuality is tied to their responsibilities at work, these workers are alienated from the full range of relationship dynamics. Some of this can certainly be good, but to for those who cite these relationships as the only positive aspect of their work, it can be a heavy burden to put on

someone else. This construction of labor in which workers depend on their coworkers as a means of making it through the workday, is alienating them from others as complex whole beings. They do not labor together to accomplish a product; they labor near each other to accomplish a profit margin.

I wouldn't say that it's Amazon levels of bad, but it's certainly not a great place to work either. Honestly the only good thing about it is some of the co-workers. (26, Non-Binary, Warehouse)

This feeling of comradery with others in an openly negative work environment provides some with the strength to put up with dissatisfying extrinsic factors. Another notes the difference between the positive experiences with coworkers and the negative experiences with management.

I'm currently staying in this job position because of the relationships I have formed with my fellow coworkers ... The management at my workplace, however, is horrible. My supervisors emphasize how important communication is between our team, and yet don't keep us well informed. (18, Female, Customer Service)

While this woman may have positive experiences with her coworkers, she has also experienced the hypocritical behavior of management. She is able to maintain a relationship with her peers but as a result of predatory management, finds it difficult to form that same relationship with supervisors. Unequal treatment by management is a very likely source of dissatisfaction for many workers. She also reported that her management "never" offers opportunities for a raise, "rarely" consider input from employees and "rarely" acknowledges their employees' contributions. Despite mistreatment by

management, it seems many employees find solace in working with others who are under similar mistreatment. Although she says that the reason she stays is because of her relationship with others, it should be noted that if she did not need the pay, she would “not” stay with her employer.

Noting the difference in access to information and control of work, this employee is alienated from the opportunity to experience or perceive their supervisors as little more than a piece of a system that makes her job more difficult. She is in direct competition with her supervisors for access to information that makes her labor more productive and less alienating. The language she uses shows that her supervisors know how important information is at the job yet refuse to share it, thus holding the process of production hostage in one hand while wagging a finger of chastisement with the other.

On the other side of the spectrum, some noted that while their management might be less-than-desired, management’s lower standards of work allow them more freedom to disconnect from work.

Why I'm still working this job: for as terrible as store management can be, they're ultimately very forgiving with scheduling, leaves of absence, no-shows, et cetera. They probably wouldn't be if my store in particular wasn't chronically understaffed, but corporate probably won't give us a competitive pay rate until my state forces them to. (Male, 27, Retail)

As this respondent and a few others noted, some employees appreciate more relaxed standards to work. Given the need for bodies to fill these positions some employers are forced to give their employees more freedom at work, and in doing so the workers may

receive some short-term benefits. While these practices of facilitating employee laxness sometimes results in added pressure on other employees, that pressure should ethically be put on the employer to either fill the positions or pay the other employees to fulfill the duties missed. Should the responsibilities be left undone or be placed on other employees, the work and performance of others will be reduced and as discussed earlier, result in an increase in employee dissatisfaction. This external influence outside of the employees' control can create feelings of inadequacy for those who blame inward or feelings of apathy who see blame outward.

By creating a position that can be filled by anyone, the incompetency of management has also created the opportunity for employees to reclaim a semblance of power in deciding how and when they work. This worker knows that he can take a day off from work when he wants to because the management cannot get rid of him as there is no one who will work for less than him. While not true actualization of process, he has been given more informal power over how he works, albeit at a considerable cost to himself, his coworkers, and their labor.

A related trend that can be seen in much of their responses, is that for many who would stay at their job if given the freedom to live without the need for pay is the sense that they have to work. There is sometimes little impression that they have conceived of a world in which they could do anything but work.

I need something to do man, the work isn't terrible and I like most of my coworkers
(Male, 24, Retail)

While it is probably not the case, he speaks as though he cannot imagine anything to do if he wasn't working retail. What he may be feeling is that the only socially acceptable form of work is that of the employed work. As mentioned earlier, we as humans are constructed by what we do. We draw on what we do with our time and labor to define who we are as people. If all we have been taught is how to come to work every day and stock shelves, retrieve carts from a parking lot, and help customers find inventory (as reported in earlier question), then what sort of person does that create. Perhaps he has hobbies outside of work but from his alienated state, that is all they are able to become; hobbies. They are diversions from what he has been made into by the work he has been put into. Echoing the theme two other respondents said:

I wouldn't have anything else to do (Male, 19, Retail)

It is a way to get out of the house, something to do. (Male, 18, Retail)

Perhaps it is the fact that they are younger or that the pandemic has pushed many to reserve leaving home for only the essentials, but as all three respondents have reported that their finances are either slowly or quickly diminishing, they seem to be putting in full time work for less than effective reward.

Despite the unsatisfying nature of the work many people find some parts of their job to be satisfying to them enough that they would choose to stay at their job regardless of economic fortunes. Whether it is because they genuinely enjoy the work they perform, because they are good at it, because they enjoy the social opportunities the work provides, or because they have nothing else to do, some people want these jobs because of the work itself.

Defensive Apathy

While some may find some personal satisfaction from different intrinsic factors in their work, others have taken a different perspective. In what may seem reminiscent of Merton's strain theory, are those who have rejected the idea of their menial work being tied to who they are as an individual. This may mean that they do not care about the results of their professional work or it may mean that they care about the results but only so much as it allows them to bring home a paycheck. Let us talk about how this is expressed by employees and then we will discuss why they may feel this way.

To be honest, I don't really care what happens at my work - I just want it to be a nine to five. I want to show up, do my work, go home and enjoy my life. Instead, I am perpetually working. Non-stop, every single day I am woken up from phone call from work. I am working 60 hours a week, I have not been able to take a vacation in years, and my performance reviews say I don't work enough. (Male, 22, IT)

In this example, the respondent is fairly clear and open about his perceptions of work. For him, work is a paycheck. This is a spot-on example of what Marx states is alienated labor. He either gets no pleasure from his work or the weight of negative extrinsic factors creates so much dissatisfaction that he has relegated work something he must do because his life demands it. For him there is no meaningfulness in his work. That sentiment serves as a perfect example of Seaman's self-estrangement; his work provides nothing more than the pay he uses to live the rest of his life, and from the sounds of it, it provides him with little time outside work to live that life. Even more than being a neutral

requirement for living his job, and management, is actively suppressing his opportunities to expand his knowledge of tech services. His job is not only getting in the way of his life, but his job is getting in the way of his job. That hindrance, and probably other factors at work, has resulted in him only caring about putting in payable hours, not hours of productivity.

Based on the language used in his comments it seems as though these extrinsic factors are from the policies put in place by management to measure worker productivity, such as metrics and policies put in place by management to ensure continued productivity, such as the verbal abuse. Another possible source of extrinsic factors pushing some to feel the need to distance themselves emotionally and mentally from their work is the noticeable lack of support from management on the need to complete work.

What makes me dissatisfied still though is the lack of actual mask enforcement, the short staffing, and the unrealistic expectations that things should be done properly in no time. It leads many to do sloppy work because being fast like a machine is more valued than being meticulous or at least accurate. I get conflicting instructions to make sure items aren't placed over the wrong price (so customers don't complain) while at the same time I get admonished for being "too slow" and not "moving with a sense of urgency." It means it's impossible to do my job 100% correctly which leads me to have less pride in the work I do. (non-binary, 21, retail)

In this example, our retail employee cites difficulties from both management's inadequacies and the unobtainable goals set by management to complete jobs while also attempting to avoid contracting a virus that has killed millions of people. This experience

of being told that they are not performing as they should be on a consistent basis and that knowing the reason for poor performance is a result of mismanagement, their superiors have ensured that they know they aren't doing well and that they aren't allowed to improve it. Additionally, a portion of this mismanagement is caused by their management not knowing how to do their employee's job as mentioned in a later quote. Knowing that the source of policies and decisions is from a person who does not know how to do the job (because that individual, or their peers, has never done that job) can create added reasons to disconnect worker's perceptions of performance and their own labors to produce that performance. This refusal to allow an employee to improve and perform well has a direct effect on that employee's satisfaction (Gini, 2000:12) and so they are less likely to find meaning and pride in their work. The respondent goes on to say just that.

If I could put more of myself into my job (in terms of being tidy and organizing) then I would feel more prideful. The culture of retail/customer service doesn't allow for this attention to detail, so it honestly leads to you eventually not giving a shit about doing things correctly because you'll be scolded either way. It lends to creating an apathetic workforce.

For this employee, apathy is a direct result of management's actions and decisions on how the worker should conduct themselves while at work. They are actively prevented from being able to find pride in their work by the constraints put on them by the company policies. This is the second example of a respondent not really caring about the work they put in. As in the example from the IT worker, this employee has such a low expectancy of being able to make any impactful change at work (powerlessness) that they have responded

by knowingly and willingly retracting any sort of connection between their work and themselves. Alienation from the process at work has reached such an extent that they seek refuge in self-estrangement. The factors that affect her work have deprived her of opportunities to not only make work meaningful, but they are actively making the job impossible to succeed at, and they accept this as normal. This same person identifies another extrinsic factor is incentivizing self-estrangement: customer experiences. Some customers do not treat employees like people worthy of respect, they treat them as workers whose sole purpose is to serve as part of the company machine. They are alienated from others as a function of their work.

Retail in general is a bit soul sucking because of the frequent degradation from customers and from the unrealistic goals shouted at you to complete from managers who don't know or don't care what it's like to actually do your job.

Examining the mosaic of extrinsic factors influencing this employee's performance and satisfaction we can also see how not only disconnected they are from the work they perform but from the ability to change how this system works against them. If there are multiple managers who have direct authority over this employee, then changing this system of decision making would similarly have to come for and from both supervisors. From reading other respondents' comments, we can see that this experience is not just common it is the norm.

I don't think a lot of companies really value input from their employees. They make a lot of changes that make our jobs harder (Female, 30, retail)

Management keeps adding more and more responsibilities while giving minimal cost of living raises. They are downsizing and forcing the labor of the laid off employees on the remaining employees... I've felt the value of my labor decrease almost yearly with the addition of new tasks and an increase in actual production. During the pandemic, I've watched my duties grow even more due to downsizing of the company. (Male, 39, customer service)

The hard performers don't actually go up in the company and the awful workers get better positions compared to the rest of us associates due to their connections and favoritism. (Male, 20, Amazon fulfillment employee)

Target treats their employees like dirt. Work conditions get worse and worse for us every month. They're always trying to fix things that aren't broken and making changes that make our jobs more difficult... There is always too much work to do and not enough payroll hours to do it, so the quality of our work is compromised in an effort to get as much done as possible, but then we get chewed out for our work being less than perfect. It's a no-win situation (Female, 31, retail)

It doesn't matter if I ...show up every day for all of Black Friday week and the following Cyber Monday week, stay late and teach new trainees while also doing my job, not take any of my paid breaks for an entire year, work through my lunch while I'm off the clock, not call out once for an entire year, and come in to pick up extra shifts over 90% of the time I'm asked to do so - no effort is enough to stop my boss from trying to make me feel like I'm not doing enough. That isn't just my dozen or so bosses I've had either, this anecdote seems to be the norm. (Female, 28, retail)

These responses are not the result of a local concentration of mistreated employees, these responses came from across the country. These employees know when the work they perform is being hindered by their supervisors or policies. The reoccurring theme remains, employees know how to get the work done and what needs to happen in order for it to be accomplished, but there are extrinsic factors keeping them from doing so.

But there is another theme amongst these comments that ties them all together. Not only do these factors make their jobs more difficult, but they also stem from superiors who do not know how to do their employee's jobs. Because control of the work is not in the hands of the employees who do the work, the decisions made to improve work either fails to make improvements, or they do the opposite of what's intended. These workers are entirely alienated from the processes of their work and experience the powerlessness of not being able to make any changes to improve their work.

These extrinsic factors that affect performance also affect employee satisfaction and for many that resultant lack of satisfaction is enough to disconnect the employee from their desire to have their worth be tethered to their work. The last quote was taken from the same participant who spoke of "quiet dignity to it and a satisfaction to be had from a job well done". It is important to note that immediately following the comment about quiet dignity, they commented on the systemic ineffectiveness of corporate retailers and their employees.

It is almost impossible to experience those feelings [satisfaction] in the way most (if not all) corporate retailers function [sic]. We are systemically made to feel powerless to improve our situation. For every pleasant memory I have of helping a

customer and making their day I have a dozen memories of my boss deliberately trying to make me feel bad for not meeting a standard that we both know is impossible to meet but I'm forced to stand there and listen to them lecture me about not being able to meet an impossible standard.

This rejection of their work as being a part of them seems to be, at least for some, a sort of defense mechanism used to shelter themselves from the self-estranged nature of their work. By not trying their worth to the quality of product they produce, they are able to rationalize their alienation. They have a low expectation of control over their work compared to others that do not do their work, and so they exhibit Seemans's powerlessness. They have a low expectation of being able to use their skills at work to better themselves and others through valued work, so they exhibit Seeman's isolation. Together with their awareness of lack of power to use what they know and the alienation from the means to obtain this power they exhibit Seeman's self-estrangement, only seeing work as a source of income to sustain their lives. Not only do we see their alienation from the process of their labor, but we once again see an example of being alienated from others. Her entire relationship with her supervisors hinges on them setting impossible goals for her, and berating her for not completing those goals. She is alienated from the process of setting her own path to succeeding while also being alienated from working with her superiors to enrich everyone's jobs.

What I mostly want from a job is to just go there, do what I know I need to do, and then come home to actually do what I want to do. I'd prefer not to have to put the essence of my actual being into the job (Male, 26, retail)

Perhaps unknowingly, this respondent describes Seeman's self-estrangement in a very concise manner and links that feeling to a lack of desire to attach his being to his work. Almost directly from his manuscripts, this is a direct reference to Marx's alienation from species being. What has happened, in the process of removing control and decision-making power from the hands of these workers, is that the operational procedures of the job have been routinized so that nearly any person employed can be put in the position and perform the needed tasks. In creating the cookie-cutter position, the employer has removed the need for individuals to bring any particular skills or develop any new skills other than the soft skills surrounding the technicalities of that job. By removing the need for skills and the development of skills, employers have removed one of the easiest ways for an employee to find fulfillment and find a sense of pride in work. While some do so, the likelihood of doing so is greatly diminished and as a result the employer is left with employees that care little for their work.

But what can be done about this? Looking at the comments made by respondents it is clear that some of them do not dislike their job because of their job, but because of factors that get in the way of the job. Marx would argue this is the necessary structure of the wage labor system. People value labor, but they recoil from wage labor because of the necessary way in which it is structured. One way to understand this is to look at a hypothetical job situation. Think back to the example of the mechanic who enjoys working on engines but must regularly perform jobs not related to being a mechanic like paperwork or waste disposal. Even in a job that may be highly satisfying, the dissatisfying factors would still reduce overall satisfaction. As some cited, they are working more hours, or they are

expected to get more work done in the same hours. Others mention that while workload may stay the same, they are not being paid effectively. Pay is noted to be not a source of satisfaction but a factor that can be used to reduce dissatisfaction. In instances where workload is increased but pay is not, the actual pay for work done goes down, in a sense many of them are getting a pay cut. By increasing an employee's required workload without increasing pay to account for the extra work, a worker's labor has been cheapened, the worker does not benefit from the extra work as the surplus labor only benefits the employer. Without allowing for more time or more efficient completion of previous work the added work only serves to lower the quality of the duties perform for the addition of more work. This double increase in dissatisfying factors could help explain the overall feelings of satisfaction by employees.

Disposable Labor

By making employee positions easily filled by any graduate of the public education system, employees have created a business system that requires their stores to act as machines that generate as much value from their employees as possible.. The parts of those machines are the employees and by making job positions easily fillable they have also made employees highly replaceable. If an employee starts performing poorly enough that retraining them would take more effort than simply hiring a new person, then they can do so at little or no cost. In fact, if there are enough people desperate for work, they may even be able to hire the new worker at a lower wage than the one they let go. By constructing the business as a machine with replaceable parts, it comes as no surprise that workers may begin to feel like nothing more than a tool to be used when needed.

Retail has been getting worse over the past 3 years. “Pay” has increased but hours are cut and benefits have been stripped. We are now required to do 3 times the work with less hours and deal with the increased mistreatment from customers and higher ups. We were once regarded as “essential heroes” but we are treated like dirt that is always replaceable at the drop of a hat. (Male, 24, retail)

This retail worker brings up a few points discussed in previous paragraphs and has no delusions about their position always being open to termination. He mentions the concept of an essential hero. For those who are not currently living in a global pandemic, there was a push early on when some businesses were being shut down to slow the spread of the virus to call people who had to keep working “essential heroes.” These positions were usually grocery store employees, retail workers, cleaning staff, or other positions that helped our society maintain the supply lines of (occasionally) essential goods and services. Other names included frontline workers. Some businesses offered an extra dollar an hour or percentage of wages earned during the first month of lockdown to incentivize workers to risk the lives of themselves and their family to come in to work and maintain the business. This continued access to workers during the pandemic allowed many businesses to remain open and for some corporations, report record sales (Finch, 2020). Most businesses stopped this practice after the publicity moved on to something else and worker’s wages went back to normal.

This feigning of concern for workers during the global health crisis became a means of advertising and later a marketing ploy to get customers back in stores while still requiring employees provide their own viral protection. Another participant expressed their

concerns of the disposability of employees during health hazards in the way they were treated as people by others at work.

Retail is just a job. I don't see it as a career. Retail workers are treated very poorly with customers. We are often the people that get yelled at, screamed at, harassed[,] and even hurt/killed for trying to enforce covid [sic] restrictions and wearing a mask in public. (Male, 30, retail)

While it might be crass to say that employers view their employees as replaceable, the question can certainly be raised at the impressions they make when they are willing to risk the lives of their workers in exchange for a better quarterly return. Why allow customers to yell at employees if the employee is important to the business? Why allow the public unrestricted access to risk the lives of workers if those employees' lives are important to the business? Another participant might say that it is because the very lives of employees are disposable.

This corporation is terrible and cares nothing for its workers consistently. Though it does increase pay, it also cuts staff and hours. I have had a coworker get hit by a car on the job, and they made him finish his shift. Another got injured and they sent her to a quack doctor. I have had my manager ask HR lead about a promotion for me and she laughed at him dismissively. This company sees employees as cogs. (Female, 25, retail)

Another participant offered insight as to why that may be. In systemic efforts to make more positions efficient and productive, many businesses are making efforts to prepare for automation. Because that process has a very high buy-in cost for stores, the

steps to prepare for this eventuality have brought many employers to the position that they have some very productive machines being used by unskilled labor to make up for the difference.

Most of the jobs I have worked were woefully behind their ability to automate the jobs I was doing. I was essentially the robotic automaton they would use. Between not having the tools necessary to work efficiently, because that would cost them money, and desire to race to the bottom for costs, you would be using the equivalent of a spoon to dig ditches. I was nothing more than a robot that was dismissed and replaced without hesitation. (Male, 36, manufacturing)

Regardless of whether companies see the function of some employees as replaceable cogs, the impression that employees take from management's actions and policies is that they are little more than interchangeable parts. Sentiments such as these, highlights how alienation from the process of the work through a lack of stake in the process, alienation from the product as they are voicing concerns about a lack of fair compensation and alienation from their species-being as a person with skills and talents unable to use them at their job leads to a dehumanized sensation. They are objectively alienated and that has an effect on their subjective perceptions of alienation.

Findings and Follow up Studies

If considering a follow up study, there are a few recommendations I would give, as well as some possible focus areas that could be investigated further. Most of the participants are from internet forums, there was a fair number of respondents who may be opposed to the idea of wage labor entirely, either a result of ethical and moral backgrounds,

or as a result of experiences working in a menial position. This sample was able to draw from dozens of major cities across the United States but given the disparity of internet access in some communities, there are some who simply could not be reached. Similarly, follow up research with more resources may be able to access participants in menial labor who would report a higher level of satisfaction.

Alternatively, researchers who may wish to focus on one or more aspects identified here could focus on expanding on a few particular variables. This study used a very general question when asking about opportunities to find fulfillment or pride. A study looking into the construction of fulfillment and pride in menial labor may want to separate the two concepts or qualitatively examine how individuals construct or perceive pride or fulfillment in alienated labor. In the same vein, researchers could explore the industry's routes of advancement and how limited they are. A fair number of respondent's stated that there is very little in the way of advancement other than being a supervisor for menial positions, even then the work is regularly the same just with more leadership responsibilities.

A final route researchers could take would be to look into the difference variables used here. I wanted to examine how the disparities between what a worker wanted their job to be like verses what it actually was like and despite my lengthy efforts, I found very little in the literature of similar uses of similar variables. Although I tried to refine the format of asking the questions and the questions themselves, it still seems a bit crude compared to what it could be. I will inevitably make further refinements to this kind of variable in the future, but I gladly welcome others to work on making the measurement of difference more empirical.

I bring up considerations that should be made for follow up studies, but I would also advise against using Seeman's forms of alienation as the basis of examining labor. Despite its foundation in Marxism, it seems ill equipped to look solely at labor itself. Instead it may be more effective at examining the overall life conditions and sentiments of workers. Many workers have differing conceptions of work should be and how they should construct their lives around it, and those variances make looking at labor particularly difficult with Seeman's forms of alienation without making changes from the focus on subjective expectations to some other concept. In contrast, Marx's concepts are very well suited to examining both the objective alienation of workers and building the basis for studying the subjective interpretation of that alienation. Seeman's forms of alienation would better serve in the qualitative analysis portion of research and should also include related literature from Pearlin (1962), Dean (1961), or Neal and Rettig (1967).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study sought to better understand worker satisfaction in menial labor positions through the perspective of Marx's form of alienation. Through the process of examining general satisfaction as a measurement of what an employee's standards were at work and how well those needs were met, we were able to measure how this estrangement contributed to their satisfaction at work. By looking at the menial industry, known for a lack of mental stimulation, predatory employment practices, and low upward mobility, we were able to study these factors with a population who should have a fairly stable baseline of satisfaction from position responsibilities. Therefore, variances in overall individual satisfaction would have to come from the particulars of each person's experiences at work, be it in finding more, or less, intrinsically satisfying factors at work or by creating or eliminating extrinsic factors that impede or overshadow the positive of the job.

These variances were measured by asking survey participants to rate the importance of various conditions they may experience at work and then asking them to rate how often they actually experienced the conditions. By measuring the difference between what they valued as important and what they experienced, we can gauge how well needs are met and what trends tend to follow that same pattern.

Some statements were based on the theorizations of Marx's forms of alienation, others from Seeman's forms of alienation, and others from economists and psychologists. As one would expect, some conditions proved to be more important in predicting satisfaction. Opportunities to find pride or fulfillment in their work and opportunities to advance in the company were consistently shown to be reliable predictors of satisfaction.

Other variables like receiving clear, measurable, and obtainable goals and a company's values matching that of the employees were only significant when measured against the participant's ideals.

Quantitative findings showed that even in highly alienated labor, pride in one's work is not only important for the quality of work, but for the development of the worker as a member of the organization. Workers that felt they had more frequent opportunities to find pride in their work or advance upwards were also more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction. From a researcher's perspective it would stand to reason that the more satisfied a worker is, the better their perceptions of their life are. After all we are what we do with our time. An unhappy worker is an unhappy person for the majority of their life. From an employer's perspective, employees who are more satisfied, are more likely to put quality efforts into their work and more reliably come to work and are more likely to give others a more positive experience.

Part of the experience of work comes from the work itself and part of it comes from the environment and conditions that make up the context the job exists in. Even a CNC operator working in position where they control none of the means of production or product after it is made may enjoy their job making products, but extrinsic factors may increase feelings of dissatisfaction. Similarly, a green collar worker that enjoys making people's lives more sustainable can be dissatisfied when the jobs they do eventually deviate from the description of their job.

Quantitative analysis also showed us that while it may be theoretically straightforward to show what makes a job more likely to be satisfying, it is not quite so

simple to do the same for what makes people more likely to stay at their job. What makes us satisfied with our jobs is not always the same as what keeps us from going somewhere else to work. Pride in the work put in helps, as does the prospects of eventually advancing in the position, but the question of what makes people want to stay at their job remains more complex than a simple satisfaction survey can measure.

Even if someone finds a better job or one that they might find more satisfying, the process of changing jobs can be very difficult. The work it takes to change jobs is more immense for some. Even for those who are able to change jobs because they can afford to go without income for a few weeks, they still have to be trained at that job, learn to do it well, get to know their coworkers, learn the intricacies of new workplace politics to show that you are achieving the goals set by management and then do so. Even outside the job a person who has recently changed jobs has to deal with the possibility of a different family schedule, they may have to change their commute, or they may even have to move. All this for the terrifying possibility that the new job pays better and is more intrinsically satisfying but that is not the job that was advertised. Take for example the case of a retail manager who transferred to a new position in the company to spearhead a new tech department at grocery chains. After weeks of working with programmers to make a digital product that meets the specified needs, they are then redelegated back to their old position they got out of but only for slightly more pay. This fear of the unknown makes many choose “[the devil you know](#)” (Male, 27, retail). Instead of being able to venture out to find better jobs as some people may suggest when workers say they are unhappy, they are either too

financially precarious to take any possible risks, or are too afraid of worse conditions at a new place that they will settle with where they are.

Because of the difficulty of conceptualizing what drives some to change jobs and others to stay, it was fortunate that the survey had such success in receiving so many qualitative responses. From these we identified three main themes. Many, devoid of opportunities to find satisfaction in work or placed under such conditions that repeatable success is an impossibility, become apathetic to the whole idea of work. They care only for their job so far as it brings them a paycheck and the chance to find a life outside work. In practices of trying to make job positions as easy to fill as possible, employers have made the average worker easily replaceable and disposable as a human. This disposability is not unnoticed by workers and as some noted, feel like extensions of the machines they use but because they cost no money to replace, are treated worse than objects. They are cursed at by customers, their lives are threatened on a daily basis, and they know that if they speak up, they can simply be fired and replaced by any person off the street.

Even through disposability, humiliation, and death threats, there are those that still find enjoyment out of a job well done. Some have refused to be apathetic about their job, they like the simplicity of some jobs or the ability to excel in a position that some do not find desirable. Despite that, they want to come to work and help customers, stock shelves, make machine parts, and then get up and do it again the next day. The difficulty for them comes from times when the job becomes less about doing the job and more about appeasing others. Many cited incompetent management, abusive customers, and an overwhelming workload that would be impossible for a team to succeed, let alone one energetic employee.

What we also find is that there is far more to work satisfaction than whether the job pays well. While it may help that a job pays enough for someone to have food and shelter, if that job gives them no fulfillment or opportunities to point and say “I did that” with pride, then the work they do not only does not satisfy them, but it does little to help them grow as a person. Instead of looking forward to their work, or at least not dreading it, some are left spending their time off work trying to get away from what it is that they do, their work is at odds with who they are as people.

While some questions will always remain, there are some important takeaways from this study. Understanding satisfaction as an alienation from what makes a job desirable, fulfilling, and meaningful is an effective means of looking at the experiences of workers and their perceptions of those experiences. We also see that for many menial workers, the conditions they spend their lives working in are not only difficult but sometimes dangerous and even when they enjoy what they do, they may be prevented from actually doing their job. Many want to do more but through the conditions they work are held back from making their jobs better or more enjoyable. We know many parts of what makes work meaningful and what can make it satisfying but alienated from that experience and the expectations they have, they are rarely satisfied. In the words of the timeless national treasure Dolly Parton:

9 to 5, what a way to make a living

Barely getting by, it's all taking and no giving

They just use your mind and they never give you credit

It's enough to drive you crazy if you let it

9 to 5, yeah they got you where they want you

There's a better life, and you dream about it, don't you?

It's a rich man's game no matter what they call it

And you spend your life putting money in his wallet

APPENDICES

A1. Survey

Q37 Minnesota State University, Mankato IRBNET ID: 1725536

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Satisfaction in Menial Labor Positions

Researchers:

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You are invited to participate in a research study conducted at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of workers in menial or unskilled labor positions. You are asked to take part in this study because you identified yourself as a worker in a menial or unskilled job position.

This study involves open-ended, and close-ended questions about your experiences and expectations at work as well as your satisfaction with work. The surveys will then be analyzed to see if there are any trends in yours' and other's responses. The surveys are expected to take between **5 and 15 minutes** depending on how long respondent wish to spend on open ended questions.

This research is **voluntary**. If at any point you wish to conclude the survey, withdraw your consent for participation or take a break to gather your thoughts you are welcome to do so, simply close out of the survey. To do so, click the "X" at the top corner of your screen. If the survey is closed out of before submitting, your data will be deleted and not considered a part of the study. This survey will not be timed, you can take as much or as little time as you need. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

There is minimal risk associated with participating in this research. Even so, as a participant, you may experience various adverse emotions such as discomfort or stress. Additionally, the survey questions might touch on sensitive subjects. The process of taking the survey will be, at a minimum, intruding on your personal life. If any of those risks become an issue during the course

of the survey, feel free to decline to answer or withdraw your consent for participation at any time. You may do this by closing out of the survey before submitting your answers. You will not face any penalty or loss of benefits should you choose to stop taking the survey. There may be benefits associated with participating in this study. As a participant you might feel a sense of pride for being part of a research study. You may also enjoy the chance to reflect on parts of your life.

In order to protect your privacy and confidentiality certain precautionary measures will be put into place. Your name or will not be collected. Access to data will be restricted to the primary and student researchers. Please be sure to complete the survey in a private location with a secure internet connection. Although you will not be asked to provide your name, your IP address will be logged to protect the study from being flooded with automated responses. To protect your information, this logged IP address will only be visible to researchers and will be purged when the study is completed. Furthermore, to ensure protection researchers will ensure that any data that could be used to identify any participant will be similarly be kept private and inaccessible to any individuals or organization outside the research team.

In any publications or professional presentations using the information I obtain from this study, I will never reference any identifiable information– again, you will not provide your name – if and when I reference any of your specific survey responses. If you reference your company by name I will use a pseudonym in their stead. However, I still cannot guarantee total privacy. As with all forms of electronic communication, it is possible that your privacy may be compromised. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager

Because you have been selected to participate in this study you have a right to a copy of this informed consent form. If you would like a copy, you may download the file titled. [Informed Consent Form](#).

If you have any questions about this research study, contact Paul Prew by phone at (507).389.5674 or by email at: paul.prew@mnsu.edu. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242. If you click “**I agree**” below, it means that you are at least 18 years of age and have read (or have had read to you) the information given in this consent form, and **you consent** to be in this study.

- I agree (1)
- I do not agree (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Minnesota State University, Mankato IRBNET ID: 1725536 Consent to Participate in a Research Stu... = I do not agree

Q2 How old are you?

Age in years (1) _____

Q3 What race or ethnicity best describes you? Check all that apply.

White (1)

Black or African-American (2)

Asian or Asian Indian (3)

American Indian, Alaskan Native, First Nation, or other indigenous North American (4)

Hispanic or Latinx (5)

Middle Eastern or North African (9)

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (10)

Other (6)

Q4 Highest level of education completed.

Some High school (1)

High School or GED (2)

College (2 year degree) (4)

College (4 year degree) (5)

Masters degree (6)

Doctorate (7)

Q1 What is your gender?

- Woman or female (2)
 - Man or male (1)
 - Non-binary (5)
 - Prefer to self describe (7)
-

Display This Question:

If What is your gender? = Prefer to self describe

Q34 How do you self describe?

Display This Question:

If What is your gender? = Woman or female

Or What is your gender? = Man or male



Q36 Do you identify as transgender?

- Yes (1)
- No (4)

Q7 General type of industry you work in. (eg: shipping, retail, manufacturing, customer service, food industry)

Q8 Time spent with employer (in years)

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

Overall time spent with Employer ()	
Time in current position ()	

Q9 Title of current position within company

Q10 Does this title accurately describe or represent your responsibilities?

- Yes (1)
- No (will ask optional short response) (2)

Display This Question:

If Does this title accurately describe or represent your responsibilities? = No (will ask optional short response)

Q11 (optional) Could you explain why or what would describe your responsibilities more effectively?

Q12 Official Status of current position.

- Seasonal Employment (1)
- Part-Time (2)
- Full-time (3)
- Independent Contractor (gig work) (4)
- Independent Contractor (non-gig work) (5)

Q13 Average hours per week at this position?

0 20 40 60 80 100

Hours per week ()	
-------------------	--

Q14 About what percentage of the total household income would you say comes from this job?
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

% of Total Household Income ()	
--------------------------------	--

Q15 Is this your only source of income from employment? Other forms could include: side jobs, gig jobs, etc.

- Yes (1)
- No, I have 1 other job (2)
- No, I have 2 other jobs (3)
- No, I have 3 other jobs (4)
- No, I have more than 3 other jobs (5)

Q16 This set of questions is a set of compensation (pay) related questions. We ask that you focus your responses on your primary or most recent source of income that you discussed in the previous section unless otherwise asked.

Q17 (Optional) What is your expected yearly income OR hourly wage
Hourly wage can be converted into yearly income with: (Hourly wage)x(average hours worked/week)x52

- Yearly Income (1) _____
- Hourly Wage (2) _____
-

Q22 Do you know what other companies in your local area pay for similar positions? Will ask related secondary question.

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Do you know what other companies in your local area pay for similar positions? Will ask related s... = No

Q37 How competitive do you think your pay is with similar positions in your area?

	Significantly Lower (1)	Somewhat Lower (2)	About the Same (3)	Slightly Higher (4)	Significantly Higher (5)
Competitive Pay (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If Do you know what other companies in your local area pay for similar positions? Will ask related s... = Yes

	Significantly Lower (1)	Somewhat lower (2)	About the Same (3)	Slightly Higher (4)	Significantly Higher (5)
Competitive Pay (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21 How competitive is your pay with similar positions in your area?

Q18 What secondary benefits are you provided by your employer?

- Health Insurance (Non-HSA) (1)
- Health Insurance (HSA) (2)
- Dental (3)
- Vision (4)
- Injury (5)
- Life Insurance (6)
- Company Discount (8)
- Other (opens additional response) (11)
- None (12)

Display This Question:

If What secondary benefits are you provided by your employer? = Other (opens additional response)

Q19 What other form of benefit(s) are you provided that is unlisted in the previous question?

Q23 How often do you worry about being able to pay bills?

- Always (8)
 - Often (9)
 - Sometimes (10)
 - Rarely (11)
 - Never (12)
-

Q24 How would you describe your financial situation?

- Diminishing Quickly (1)
 - Diminishing Slowly (2)
 - Static/ stable (3)
 - Growing Slowly (4)
 - Growing Quickly (5)
-

Q25 Do you know your area's estimation of a livable wage?

- Yes (will ask optional second question) (1)
 - No (2)
-

Display This Question:

If Do you know your area's estimation of a livable wage? = Yes (will ask optional second question)

Q26 What is your area's estimation of a livable wage?

Hourly wage in dollars (1) _____

Q29 Would you stay at this job if you did not need the pay? (Will ask optional short response)

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display This Question:

If Would you stay at this job if you did not need the pay? (Will ask optional short response) = Yes

Q30 Would you stay at this job if you did not need the pay? (Yes)

Please explain your answer to the previous question. Why would you stay at your current job if you could?

Display This Question:

If Would you stay at this job if you did not need the pay? (Will ask optional short response) = No

Q35 Would you stay at this job if you did not need the pay? (No)

Please explain your answer to the previous question. Why would you leave your current job if you did not need it?

Q34 How long do you hope to remain at this position?

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50



Q31 How satisfied are you with your financial situation?

- Very Satisfied (1)
- Moderately Satisfied (2)
- Somewhat Satisfied (3)
- Indifferent (4)
- Somewhat Dissatisfied (5)
- Moderately Dissatisfied (6)
- Very Dissatisfied (7)

Q32 How satisfied are you with your job?

- Very Satisfied (1)
- Moderately Satisfied (2)
- Somewhat Satisfied (3)
- Indifferent (4)
- Somewhat Dissatisfied (5)
- Moderately Dissatisfied (6)
- Very Dissatisfied (7)

Q38 This set of questions focus on your workplace and what kind of experiences you have of different expectations.

The questions on the left are asking how important something is to you.

The questions on the right are asking you to answer how frequently these opportunities or expectations occur for you at work.

How IMPORTANT is it to you
that you...

How OFTEN is it that you think
you...

have opportunities to advance upwards? (1)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
receive a regular raise? (2)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
have a feeling of friendship/ community with others in your organization? (3)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
are able to make use of your individual skills or talents to complete your work (4)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
are given the opportunity to improve the skills you have and develop new ones (5)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
find fulfillment or have pride in the work you perform? (6)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
decide how your workload gets accomplished (7)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
receive pay relative to the quality of work you perform (8)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
receive pay relative to the profit you generated for the company (9)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
are able to speak freely with coworkers about issues and problems relating to work responsibilities (10)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
receive clear, measurable, and obtainable goals (11)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
that your supervisors know, talk about, and listen to your input. (12)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
that your supervisors know how much your efforts have contributed to the company (13)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
that your supervisors acknowledge your contributions (14)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
for your values to match those of the company's (15)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)
for the company's values to match your own (16)	▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5)	▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)

that you be included in news of upcoming changes or developments to the company even if they don't effect you (17)

▼ Extremely Important (1 ... Not at All Important (5) ▼ Very Frequently (1 ... Never (5)

Q38 (optional) If you would like to comment about your thoughts regarding how you responded, about your overall satisfaction at work, or about why you are in this job position rather than another this open response is available to you. You may also use this space to say whatever it is you want about how your experiences in your position.

A2

Groupings	Important/ Often Statement
Marx / Process	have opportunities to advance upwards?
Misc / Product	receive a regular raise?
Marx / Others	have a feeling of friendship/ community with others in your organization?
Process	are able to make use of your individual skills or talents to complete your work?
Process	are given the opportunity to improve the skills you have and develop new ones?
Marx / Species Being	find fulfillment or have pride in the work you perform?
Process	decide how your workload gets accomplished?
Misc / Product	receive pay relative to the quality of work you perform?
Misc / Product	receive pay relative to the profit you generated for the company?
Others	are able to speak freely with coworkers about issues and problems relating to work responsibilities?
Process	receive clear, measurable, and obtainable goals?
Supervisors / Process	that your supervisors know, talk about, and listen to your input?
Marx / Supervisors / Process	that your supervisors know how much your efforts have contributed to the company?
Supervisors / Process	that your supervisors acknowledge your contributions?
Misc / Values	for your values to match those of the company's?
Misc / Values	for the company's values to match your own?
Misc / Process	that you be included in news of upcoming changes or developments to the company even if they don't effect you?

APPENDIX B

B1

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Man or male	98	45.2	55.4	55.4
	Woman or female	52	24.0	29.4	84.7
	Non-binary	25	11.5	14.1	98.9
	Prefer to self describe	2	.9	1.1	100.0
	Total	177	81.6	100.0	
Missing	System	40	18.4		
Total		217	100.0		

B2

Race/ Ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	135	62.2	76.7	76.7
	Black or Hispanic	20	9.2	11.4	88.1
	Asian, Native, MENA, Hawaiian, Other	21	9.7	11.9	100.0
	Total	176	81.1	100.0	
Missing	System	41	18.9		
Total		217	100.0		

B3

How satisfied are you with your financial situation?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Satisfied	5	2.3	2.9	2.9
	Moderately Satisfied	14	6.5	8.1	11.0
	Somewhat Satisfied	28	12.9	16.2	27.2
	Indifferent	18	8.3	10.4	37.6
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	44	20.3	25.4	63.0
	Moderately Dissatisfied	28	12.9	16.2	79.2
	Very Dissatisfied	36	16.6	20.8	100.0
	Total	173	79.7	100.0	
Missing	System	44	20.3		
Total		217	100.0		

B4

How would you describe your financial situation?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Growing Quickly	3	1.4	1.7	1.7
	Growing Slowly	35	16.1	20.1	21.8
	Static/ stable	76	35.0	43.7	65.5
	Diminishing Slowly	52	24.0	29.9	95.4
	Diminishing Quickly	8	3.7	4.6	100.0
	Total	174	80.2	100.0	
Missing	System	43	19.8		
Total		217	100.0		

B5

How satisfied are you with your job?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Satisfied	4	1.8	2.3	2.3
	Moderately Satisfied	19	8.8	11.0	13.3
	Somewhat Satisfied	21	9.7	12.1	25.4
	Indifferent	27	12.4	15.6	41.0
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	31	14.3	17.9	59.0
	Moderately Dissatisfied	33	15.2	19.1	78.0
	Very Dissatisfied	38	17.5	22.0	100.0
	Total	173	79.7	100.0	
Missing	System	44	20.3		
Total		217	100.0		

B6

How often do you worry about being able to pay bills?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	17	7.8	9.8	9.8
	Rarely	33	15.2	19.0	28.7
	Sometimes	51	23.5	29.3	58.0
	Often	47	21.7	27.0	85.1
	Always	26	12.0	14.9	100.0
	Total	174	80.2	100.0	
Missing	System	43	19.8		
Total		217	100.0		

B7

Highest level of education completed

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Some High school	9	4.1	5.1	5.1
	High School or GED	86	39.6	48.6	53.7
	College (2 year degree)	39	18.0	22.0	75.7
	College (4 year degree)	38	17.5	21.5	97.2
	Masters degree	4	1.8	2.3	99.4
	Doctorate	1	.5	.6	100.0
	Total	177	81.6	100.0	
Missing	System	40	18.4		
Total		217	100.0		

B8

Race And Gender Correlations

		Race	Gender
Hourly Wage	Pearson Correlation	-.010	-.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.903	.134
	N	161	162
Hours per week	Pearson Correlation	-.057	.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.452	.838
	N	174	175
Annual Wage	Pearson Correlation	-.006	-.075
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.934	.327
	N	170	171
Would you stay at this job if you didn't need the pay?	Pearson Correlation	.106	.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.166	.230
	N	173	174
How satisfied are you with your job?	Pearson Correlation	.055	.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.475	.262
	N	172	173
How satisfied are you with your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	-.066	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.388	.256
	N	172	173
How often do you worry about being able to pay bills	Pearson Correlation	.026	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.739	.122
	N	173	174
How would you describe your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	-.047	.123
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.537	.106
	N	173	174

B9

Education Correlations		Highest level of education completed.
Hourly wage	Pearson Correlation	.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.618
	N	162
Average hours per week	Pearson Correlation	.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.632
	N	175
Annual Income	Pearson Correlation	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.273
	N	171
How satisfied are you with your job?	Pearson Correlation	.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.605
	N	173
How satisfied are you with your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.936
	N	173
How often do you worry about being able to pay bills	Pearson Correlation	.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.621
	N	174
How would you describe your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.500
	N	174
Would you stay at this job if you didn't need the pay?	Pearson Correlation	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.706
	N	174

B10

Age Correlations		Age in years
Annual Wage	Pearson Correlation	.389
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	170
Hourly Wage	Pearson Correlation	.393
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	161
Hours per week	Pearson Correlation	.279
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	174
Highest level of education completed.	Pearson Correlation	.260
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	176
Would you stay at this job if you didn't need the pay?	Pearson Correlation	.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.285
	N	173
How satisfied are you with your job?	Pearson Correlation	.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.891
	N	172
How satisfied are you with your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	.113
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.139
	N	172
How often do you worry about being able to pay bills	Pearson Correlation	.111
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.146
	N	173
How would you describe your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	-.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.822
	N	173

B11

Satisfaction Correlations

		How satisfied are you with your job?	How satisfied are you with your financial situation?
How satisfied are you with your job?	Pearson Correlation	1	.361
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	173	173
How satisfied are you with your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	.361	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	173	173
Would you stay at this job if you didn't need the pay?	Pearson Correlation	.555	.309
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	173	173
What is your gender?	Pearson Correlation	.086	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.262	.256
	N	173	173
How often do you worry about being able to pay bills	Pearson Correlation	.293	.586
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	173	173
How would you describe your financial situation?	Pearson Correlation	.280	.570
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	173	173
Race	Pearson Correlation	.055	-.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.475	.388
	N	172	172
Highest level of education completed.	Pearson Correlation	.040	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.605	.936
	N	173	173
Age in years	Pearson Correlation	.010	.113
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.891	.139
	N	172	172
Hours per week	Pearson Correlation	.064	-.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.403	.381
	N	173	173
Hourly Wage	Pearson Correlation	-.094	-.155
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.236	.051
	N	160	160

B12

How important/ often do you have opportunities to advance upwards?		
f	Importance / Often	f
38	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	8
24	Very Important 2 Frequently	5
44	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	32
25	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	55
26	Not at All Important 5 Never	44
157	Total	144
2.85	Mean	3.5

B13

How important/ often do you receive a regular raise		
f	Importance / Often	f
70	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	4
43	Very Important 2 Frequently	17
31	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	38
11	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	50
2	Not at All Important 5 Never	35
157	Total	144
1.93	Mean	3.66

B14

How important/ often do you are able to make use of individual skills		
f	Importance / Often	f
44	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	16
46	Very Important 2 Frequently	23
45	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	38
15	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	42
7	Not at All Important 5 Never	24
157	Total	143
2.33	Mean	2.33

B15

How important/ often do you are able to improve preexisting skills		
f	Importance / Often	f
41	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	7
48	Very Important 2 Frequently	15
49	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	41
10	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	58
8	Not at All Important 5 Never	22
156	Total	143
2.33	Mean	3.51

B16

How important/ often do you find fulfillment or have pride in your work		
f	Importance / Often	f
62	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	13
53	Very Important 2 Frequently	20
22	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	41
14	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	30
5	Not at All Important 5 Never	37
156	Total	141
2.02	Mean	3.41

B17

How Important/ often do you have a feeling of community with others		
f	Importance / Often	f
48	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	24
29	Very Important 2 Frequently	45
50	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	41
23	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	25
7	Not at All Important 5 Never	9
157	Total	144
2.44	Mean	2.65

B18

How Important/ often do you decide how your workload gets accomplished		
f	Importance / Often	f
39	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	8
56	Very Important 2 Frequently	21
46	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	37
15	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	41
0	Not at All Important 5 Never	36
156	Total	143
2.24	Mean	3.53

B19

How Important/ often do you receive pay relative to quality of work		
f	Importance / Often	f
66	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	8
43	Very Important 2 Frequently	17
34	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	27
7	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	26
4	Not at All Important 5 Never	64
154	Total	142
1.96	Mean	3.85

B20

How Important/ often do you receive pay relative to profits generated		
f	Importance / Often	f
82	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	8
35	Very Important 2 Frequently	8
23	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	9
4	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	22
12	Not at All Important 5 Never	95
154	Total	142
1.9	Mean	4.32

B21

How important/ often do you able to speak freely with coworkers?		
f	Importance / Often	f
76	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	28
50	Very Important 2 Frequently	32
21	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	26
6	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	42
2	Not at All Important 5 Never	14
155	Total	142
1.76	Mean	2.7

B22

How important/ often you receive clear, measurable, and obtainable goal?		
f	Importance / Often	f
66	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	16
57	Very Important 2 Frequently	19
25	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	53
5	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	33
3	Not at All Important 5 Never	21
156	Total	142
1.86	Mean	3.17

B23

How important/ often is it that your supervisors listen to your input?		
f	Importance / Often	f
77	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	9
51	Very Important 2 Frequently	21
19	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	49
6	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	35
2	Not at All Important 5 Never	28
155	Total	142
1.74	Mean	3.37

B24

How important/ often that your supervisors know of your contributions?		
f	Importance / Often	f
68	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	8
38	Very Important 2 Frequently	23
32	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	34
11	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	44
6	Not at All Important 5 Never	32
155	Total	141
2.03	Mean	3.49

B25

How important/ often do your your superiors acknowledge your contributions?		
f	Importance / Often	f
58	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	6
44	Very Important 2 Frequently	21
28	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	42
16	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	46
8	Not at All Important 5 Never	25
154	Total	140
2.17	Mean	3.45

B26

How important/ often that your values match the company's?		
f	Importance / Often	f
29	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	6
30	Very Important 2 Frequently	23
35	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	44
28	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	41
32	Not at All Important 5 Never	27
154	Total	141
3.03	Mean	3.43

B27

How important/ often that the company's values match yours?		
f	Importance / Often	f
35	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	6
30	Very Important 2 Frequently	20
40	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	46
30	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	39
19	Not at All Important 5 Never	29
154	Total	140
2.79	Mean	3.46

B28

How important/ often that you are included in company news?		
f	Importance / Often	f
41	Extremely Important 1 Very Frequently	11
44	Very Important 2 Frequently	22
37	Moderatly Important 3 Occasionally	31
19	Slightly Important 4 Rarely	42
13	Not at All Important 5 Never	34
154	Total	140
2.47	Mean	3.47

B29

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.570 ^a	.325	.298	5.72349

a. Predictors: (Constant), How old are you? - Age in years, How satisfied are you with your job?, How satisfied are you with your financial situation?, Pay_Uniform, How OFTEN is it that you think you... - have opportunities to advance upwards?

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1998.627	5	399.725	12.202	.000 ^b
	Residual	4160.306	127	32.758		
	Total	6158.932	132			

a. Dependent Variable: How long do you hope to remain at this position? - Years

b. Predictors: (Constant), How old are you? - Age in years, How satisfied are you with your job?, How satisfied are you with your financial situation?, Pay_Uniform, How OFTEN is it that you think you... - have opportunities to advance upwards?

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.359	3.499		2.103	.037
	How satisfied are you with your financial situation?	-.531	.312	-.136	-1.703	.091
	How satisfied are you with your job?	-1.162	.337	-.299	-3.444	.001
	Pay_Uniform	.000	.000	.120	1.503	.135
	How OFTEN is it that you think you... - have opportunities to advance upwards?	-1.245	.531	-.199	-2.344	.021
	How old are you? - Age in years	.190	.083	.180	2.292	.024

a. Dependent Variable: How long do you hope to remain at this position? - Years

Table 1. Linear Regression Estimates for the Effects of the Predictors on Job Satisfaction Based on the Perceived Frequency of Work Conditions

Variables	Model 1- Process			Model 2- Marx's Concepts			Model 3- Other/ Seeman			Model 4- All Variables		
	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig
Supervisor Input	.281	.170	.122	.275			.138	.171	.090	.423		
Supervisors Know Contribution	-.144	.188	-.970	.443	.114	.040	-.189	.184	-.127	.307		
Supervisors Acknowledge	.221	.176	.136	.212			.204	.173	.125	.240		
Advance	.632	.143	.388	.000	.488	.132	.299	.467	.149	.288	.002	
Make Use of Skills	.140	.115	.099	.226			.012	.120	.008	.923		
Improve Skills	.193	.138	.117	.165			.038	.141	.022	.790		
Receive Clear Goals	.024	.134	.016	.860			-.067	.136	-.044	.626		
Fulfillment / Pride					.456	.144	.333	.441	.141	.323	.002	
Friendship with Others					.225	.109	.146	.171	.123	.113	.170	
Values match Company							.381	.225	.238	.093		
Company Values Match You							.088	.238	.055	.711		
Pay Relative to Quality							.202	.154	.147	.192		
Pay Relative to Profit							-.099	.160	-.066	.538		
Regular Pay Raise							.321	.151	.193	.035		
Cases											140	140
Adjusted R Square											.283	.150
											.391	.355

Table 3. Linear Regression Estimates for the Effects of the Predictors on Remain Time Based on the Perceived Frequency of Work Conditions

Variables	Model 1- Process			Model 2- Marx's Concepts			Model 3- Other/ Seeman			Model 4- All Variables		
	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig	b	SE	Sig
Supervisor Input	.417	.772	.590							.498	.837	.553
Supervisors Know Contribution	.518	.861	.549	-.098	.565	.863				.642	.912	.483
Supervisors Acknowledge	-1.348	.801	.095							-1.308	.846	.125
Advance	-2.454	.652	.000	-2.226	.648	.001				-2.471	.729	.001
Make Use of Skills	-.927	.524	.080							-1.006	.589	.090
Improve Skills	-.118	.623	.850							.082	.689	.905
Receive Clear Goals	.048	.608	.937							-.097	.670	.885
Fulfillment / Pride				-.663	.564	.242				-.167	.701	.812
Friendship with Others				.300	.530	.573				.583	.614	.344
Values match Company							-.788	.974	.420	-.157	1.043	.880
Company Values Match You							.698	1.027	.109	.385	1.111	.730
Pay Relative to Quality							-1.440	.666	.032	-1.346	.698	.056
Pay Relative to Profit							.831	.690	.231	1.078	.733	.144
Regular Pay Raise							-1.049	.663	.158	-.164	.694	.814
Cases			131			134			134			128
Adjusted R Square			.150			.142			.046			.134

APPENDIX C

All advertisement images are the product and creation of Stephanie Tran.

C1

DO YOU HAVE A MENIAL LABOR JOB?

CURRENTLY WORKING IN

THE RETAIL INDUSTRY?

CUSTOMER SERVICE?

A WAREHOUSE OR FACTORY?

SHIPPING AND RECEIVING?

If you're employed in a **non-managerial** position
with repetitive duties taught on the job
we want to hear from you.

Looking for voluntary participation in this anonymous United States based survey.

This takes about **5–15 minutes** to complete the questions.

Must be **18 years** or older to participate in the survey.

For any questions contact Colin Larter at colin.larter@mnsu.edu

Minnesota State University, Mankato
IRBNET ID# 1725536
https://mnsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2uy1f7RA8z8IPPw



SHARE

C2

DO YOU HAVE A MENIAL LABOR JOB?

ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING:

- IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY
- WITH CUSTOMER SERVICE
- AT A WAREHOUSE OR FACTORY
- WITHIN SHIPPING AND RECEIVING

If you're currently a worker in a **non-managerial** position with repetitive duties taught on the job we want to hear from you.

Looking for voluntary participation in this anonymous United States based survey.

This takes about 5–15 minutes to complete. Must be 18 years or older to participate.

For any questions contact Colin Larter at colin.larter@mnsu.edu

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