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HOW FAR DOES THE APPLE FALL? INTERGENERATIONAL PROCESSES UNDERLYING THE ATTAINMENT OF DECENT WORK AND IMPLICATIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Industrial-Organizational Psychology

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by
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August 2024

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ABSTRACT

Despite decades of progress spurred by the Decent Work Agenda (International Labor Organization, 1999), efforts to improve working conditions, ensure fair wages, and establish health and well-being as fundamental standards in employment practices continue to be sorely needed. The burden of inadequate decent work has demonstrated profound effects on individual health and well-being. However, the effects of inadequate decent work are rarely investigated over long periods of time and are entirely unexplored in relation to effects on children as they age and enter the workforce themselves. Accordingly, this dissertation investigated the intergenerational effects of decent work, extending beyond the immediate occupational health and well-being of the worker to the trajectory of their children's lives well into the future. Most notably, using serial mediation, I found support for the indirect relationship between parents' experiences of decent work and children's experience of decent work through both educational and economic circumstances. Furthermore, I found that this relationship ultimately influences psychological well-being. This dissertation contributes to a growing body of scholarship that serves to bridge the gap between IO psychology and other disciplines (e.g., sociology, social psychology, developmental psychology) which focus more heavily on intergenerational relationships but much less so on work.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Experience shows that economic growth, on its own, is not sufficient. We must do more to empower individuals through decent work, support people through social protection, and ensure the voices of the poor and marginalized are heard." - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (United Nations, 2014)

Decent work – defined as work that pays a fair wage, is safe, secure, and protected – must no longer be seen as a privilege but a human right. Addressing persistent issues in the current workforce, such as inequality, precarity, working poverty, marginalization, and worker exploitation, necessitates an interdisciplinary lens emphasizing social justice and worker health and well-being (e.g., Allan et al. 2021; Blustein 2006, 2019, et al., 2023; Christie et al., 2021; Cortina & Areguin, 2021; McWhirter & McWha-Hermann 2021). To date, much of the policies, research, and advocacy focused on increasing decent work has arisen from scholarship in economics, public policy, and sociology (e.g., Autor & Dorn, 2013; Blustein et al., 2016; Brill, 2021; Standing, 2008). However, psychologists – whose guiding principles call for them to "respect and protect civil and human rights" (American Psychological Association, 2017) – are uniquely positioned to address these challenges and have an ethical and social responsibility to do so. Further, as organizations have an important role in creating and maintaining societal workplace disparities (Bapuji et al., 2020; Bidwell et al., 2013; Leana & Meuris, 2015), both practitioners and academics in Industrial and Organizational (IO) Psychology are in a unique position to utilize their expertise to enact and advocate for positive social change.

The population of workers who lack access to decent work is growing as economic inequality and precarious employment become increasingly common (Bapuji et al., 2020; Gutowski et al., 2021; LaBriola & Schneider, 2020). In the United States, full-time and full-year employment necessary to meet basic needs in modern society is often unavailable for low-wage workers, with 22.3% of part-time workers being involuntary part-time (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey, 2023) and with nearly a third of these workers being trapped in poverty (Finnigan & Searl, 2023). Even for those employed full-time and for the entire year, at the current federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour, one worker would be unable to attain the median poverty line for any household with more than one individual (Finnigan & Searl, 2023). As such, single parents earning minimum wage – even with only one dependent – working full-time for the entire year are unable to adequately support their family.

It comes as no surprise then that children are the poorest group in the United States, with 12.4% of children being in poverty in 2022 (more than doubling from 2021 at 5.2%; Census Bureau, 2023). Poverty is incredibly detrimental to children and is related to several adverse outcomes, such as delayed and impaired child development, chronic illness, stress, conduct problems, and nutritional deficiencies and food insecurity (Eamon, 2001; Evans, 2004; Evans & Kim, 2013; Justice et al., 2019; Shaw & Shelleby, 2014). Many of the consequences of childhood poverty persist into adulthood as well having significant implications for education, earnings, health, well-being, and work (Evans & Cassells, 2014; Graham & Sinclair, 2024). Because of this, it is essential to bring attention to the intergenerational implications of inadequate decent work – particularly concerning its socioeconomic effects on children and potential downstream consequences on health and work. In doing so, this line of research bridges the gap between IO psychologists who study work-related outcomes but pay little attention to worker's family

histories and researchers in other academic disciplines (e.g., sociologists or developmental psychologists) who study the impacts of family lives on children and adults but who pay comparatively less attention to workplace outcomes.

Accordingly, the purpose of this dissertation was to uncover the far-reaching implications of decent (or not so decent) work – with consequences extending not only into the occupational health and well-being of the worker themselves but also into the lives that their children lead many years down the road. Building upon life course (Elder et al., 2003) and cumulative disadvantage theories (Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010) as well as the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT; Duffy et al., 2016), I investigated the relationship between parents' experiences of decent work, children's educational attainment and economic situation, and ultimately their own attainment of decent work. Further, I investigated the relation between decent work (both parents' and children's) and several theorized outcomes of decent work including meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being. In doing so, this dissertation made several important contributions.

To begin, although both theoretical and empirical research related to the psychology of decent work has grown in recent years (e.g., Blustein et al., 2016; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016; Di Fabio & Maree, 2016; Duffy et al., 2016, 2017; Işık et al., 2018; Pouyaud, 2016), and IO psychologists have contributed a substantial amount of scholarship to related constructs (e.g., quality of work life; Hammer & Zimmerman, 2011), there is still insufficient attention given to decent work in IO psychology and related disciplines (Blustein et al., 2016). In addition, to my knowledge, no studies have examined the intergenerational effects of decent work. This is surprising given that aspects of parents' decent work (e.g., job security) are known to shape

children's work values (e.g., Johnson & Mortimer, 2015), which ultimately shape career choices (e.g., Choi, 2017).

In addition, in vocational psychology and sociology scholarship, the phenomenon of occupational inheritance (wherein individuals select occupations similar to those of their parents) is well documented. However, very little research examines occupational inheritance beyond initial career choice very early in adulthood (Gubler et al., 2017). Thus, the long-term effects of parents' occupations – and especially the quality of those occupations on the vocational experiences of their children – remains unknown. Nevertheless, this research is essential to capture the breadth of the effects of decent work on individuals' lives.

Further, although aspects of PWT have been supported empirically, this research is still emerging (Blustein et al., 2023; Duffy et al., 2016). This dissertation tested the theorized relationship between socioeconomic factors (i.e., education and economic stressors) and decent work, as well as the relationship between decent work and meaningful work and well-being. Although well-grounded theoretically, these relationships have received insufficient empirical attention in psychological scholarship – particularly as it relates to the manner in which these relationships unfold over time (Allan et al., 2021; Blustein et al., 2023). As the current study examined these relationships over the course of several years, it represents a sorely needed methodological contribution as well.

Finally, by framing decent work as essential not only for workers themselves but for their families and for the health of the population, this dissertation expanded current knowledge of the scope of the problem and paved the way for policy intervention. Without action, waning access to decent work jeopardizes public health (American Public Health Association, 2022) and has the potential to negatively impact the workforce in the future. It is my hope that in developing this

body of scholarship further, my dissertation will build on current evidence supporting the need for policies that protect and promote decent work for all.

Decent Work

The concept of decent work originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with movements focused on reducing exploitative labor practices and advocating for enhanced workers' rights. This push towards improving working conditions, ensuring fair wages and dignified treatment for workers was spurred by the acknowledgment of the prevalence of worker exploitation during the Industrial Revolution (International Labor Organization, 2016). During this time, workers often had minimal social protections and were subjected to unreasonable hours, meager wages, and unsafe working conditions. At the forefront of the international effort to address these issues was the establishment of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1919 and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which expressed the need for work as an essential aspect of human rights. In 1948, the United Nations declared the following:

> "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests." (United Nations, 2024)

Throughout the rest of the 20th century, the ILO continued to advocate for decent work, fighting for the fair treatment and well-being of workers through a series of conventions and

recommendations. These efforts culminated in the adoption of the Decent Work Agenda in 1999 – marking a significant milestone in workers' rights advocacy. This agenda is comprised of four "pillars" framing decent work: (1) employment creation, (2) social protection, (3) rights at work, and (4) social dialogue. The Decent Work Agenda advocates for productive employment opportunities that provide fair wages, workplace security, social welfare support, improved avenues for personal growth and integration into society, freedom for individuals to voice their concerns, organize, and participate in decisions affecting their lives, and the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment for both women and men (ILO, 2024). Adopting the Decent Work Agenda propelled the concept of decent work forward in research, policy, and the public eye – highlighting the importance of achieving social justice in the workplace.

As this research began to further emerge, the broad goals of the Decent Work Agenda were adopted and extended in a more individualized definition by Duffy and colleagues (2016), encompassing (a) access to decent and productive work that ensures fairness, stability, and respect; (b) workplace rights protected by law and upheld through mutually agreed upon standards; (c) social dialogue involving employees, employers, unions, and government; and (d) social protections encompassing safe work environments, sufficient rest time, and additional assistance for workers and their families. This new definition spurred a productive body of individual-focused research to complement the work being done at the macro level. This dissertation's conceptualization of decent work aligns with this individual-focused definition.

Much of the current decent work scholarship at the macro level focuses on informal employment – characterized by its lack of regulation, often precarious nature, and minimal social and legal protections (Blustein et al., 2024; ILO, 2021). The effects of inadequate decent work arrangements have consistently been found to be detrimental, affecting psychological and

physical health, the ability to meet basic needs, and societal cohesion (e.g., Christie et al., 2021). The Human Development Index – an index of human development support – has also been empirically related to aspects of decent work, such as desired and obtained work values (Baranik et al., 2022). These findings emphasize the substantial implications of country-level factors and socioeconomic constraints on attaining decent work.

At the individual level, prior scholarship has examined both antecedents and outcomes of decent work. Notably, research highlights that social class, work volition, and workplace climate positively relate to decent work, while experiences of marginalization negatively relate (Blustein et al., 2024). In terms of outcomes, decent work is positively related to intrinsic motivation, retention, job satisfaction, engagement, organizational climate, perceived voice, life satisfaction, and mental and physical health (Autin et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2017, 2018; England et al., 2020; Ferraro et al., 2018; Işık et al., 2018; Sheng & Zhou, 2021). Recognizing the significance of these relationships, both at the individual and macro levels is essential for advocacy efforts aimed at improving working conditions, ensuring fair wages, and establishing health and well-being as fundamental standards in employment practices.

The Psychology of Working Theory

The goal of the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT; Duffy et al., 2016) is to provide a framework in which fundamental employment experiences of all individuals can be conceptualized. PWT was born out of the decent work movement and emphasizes contextual factors, including economic constraints and experiences of marginalization that shape individuals' capacity to attain decent work and how the quality of employment, in turn, impacts both their work- and nonwork-related health and well-being (for the PWT full theoretical model see Duffy et al., 2016). As it relates to the current study, PWT can be divided into two main

components: the first framing economic constraints and marginalization as predictors of decent work, and the second proposing outcomes associated with attaining decent work (all centered around needs fulfillment, work fulfillment and health and well-being).

Central to PWT lies the concept of decent work, previously defined at the individual level in the previous section. According to PWT, securing decent work serves as a means to fulfill fundamental human needs (sense of security, financial needs, etc.), paving the way for fulfilling higher-order needs, such as finding meaning in one's work. However, PWT also acknowledges the presence of barriers hindering individuals from attaining decent work and fulfilling these essential needs. PWT emphasizes socio-economic contexts and systemic barriers in the pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling work experiences. Individuals from systemically disadvantaged, marginalized, and underrepresented groups often have limited access to decent and meaningful work opportunities, facing discrimination or oppression in the workplace (Seng et al., 2012). As such, PWT highlights the need for a more inclusive approach to career development that acknowledges the unique needs and challenges of diverse and oppressed populations.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF DECENT WORK

In the present study, I theorized that the intergenerational transmission of decent work occurs within families and is mediated by social and economic factors. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's understanding of work through modeling of work-related behaviors and what they prioritize and value in their own employment experiences (Johnson & Mortimer, 2015). However, beyond value transmission and parental modeling, one's childhood years are a critical time for the reproduction of socioeconomic inequality. For instance, prior work has found that, among other things, maternal employment characteristics have direct effects on children's verbal intelligence (Parcel & Menaghan, 1990). Parcel and Menaghan (1990) suggest that the social structures that often confine women to lower-paying jobs have lasting implications for child outcomes. Such job segregation may serve as a mechanism for perpetuating inequality across generations, with discernible effects as children mature. Despite these findings, however, research investigating intergenerational (dis)advantage stemming from parental work arrangements is scant, yet essential for illuminating processes of structural disadvantage. In the following subsections, I discuss the life course perspective and Cumulative Disadvantage Theory to provide a theoretical foundation for this work and position it among other research emphasizing intergenerational (dis)advantage processes.

Life Course Perspective

Elder's Life Course Model (Elder et al., 2003) has been applied across various academic domains, including public health, developmental psychology, medicine, and sociology (Elder, 2003; Leong et al., 2014; Wethington, 2005) and offers more than just a theoretical lens; it

provides a comprehensive perspective that acknowledges life as an ongoing accumulation of experiences over time. As a perspective, the life course approach emphasizes the interplay of time, context, process, and meaning in shaping individuals' development and interactions (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Elder, 2003). Unlike approaches that focus solely on present circumstances, this model considers the enduring effects of past events on individuals' well-being. This perspective is relevant to the current study as I investigated not only intergenerational processes at play but also the effects of economic events on health, well-being, and work over the course of nearly ten years.

Cumulative Disadvantage and Occupational Inheritance

Looking at decent work through a life course lens opens the door to questions concerning processes that unfold over long periods of time, ultimately resulting in intergenerational advantages or disadvantages. The Cumulative Advantage or Disadvantage Theory is rooted in a concept known as the "Matthew Effect." The Matthew Effect originated from the observations of sociologist Robert Merton (1968), where he found a recurring pattern in the scientific community – eminent scientists tended to receive more recognition and opportunities compared to their less distinguished counterparts, regardless of their actual contributions to the field. These effects tended to persist regardless of individual merit and reminded Merton of the passage from Matthew 25:29, which points to this effect and inspired the name "Matthew Effect": "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29, NKJV). This phenomenon generalizes to other settings and contexts as well, such as intergenerational processes associated with social class (e.g., the saying "the rich get richer; the poor get poorer"; Gariepy et al., 2017).

Beyond its early origins, the "Matthew Effect" found applications in diverse areas, ranging from discussions on gender equity to assessments of Nobel laureates (Cole, 1979; Zuckerman, 1977). Notably, Dannefer (1987) broadened its applicability to the domains of aging and career trajectories, suggesting its potential presence in processes such as the rapid advancement of certain employees moving from one organization to another. During this time, the concept of cumulative (dis)advantage – which delineates the compounding of (dis)advantages over time, thereby widening the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged – began to gain additional traction in several fields (Merton, 1988).

However, Dannefer (2003) noted that the definition of cumulative (dis)advantage lacked specificity, advocating for a more comprehensive understanding that encompassed both advantages and disadvantages within its framework. Dannefer (2003) provided a revised conceptualization of cumulative (dis)advantage, which sparked a surge of research interest, particularly in the realm of health outcomes. Subsequent scholarship (Walsemann et al., 2008) revealed that individuals with fewer educational advantages were more prone to experiencing health-related work limitations early in life, with these challenges exacerbating as they aged. Moreover, these adverse effects disproportionately impacted racial minorities, with Black individuals experiencing the most significant burden.

As scholars continued to refine the Cumulative Advantage or Disadvantage Theory, subsequent iterations incorporated a broader spectrum of factors, including individual and group-level resources and deficits (e.g., Thoits, 2010). These refinements highlighted how health, wealth, and overall well-being disparities accumulate over time, often resulting in a cascade effect wherein one form of disadvantage increases susceptibility to others (Kennedy et al., 2014). In the current study, I posited that the quality of parents' work also has downstream effects on

children as they age and engage in the workforce themselves. Parents with poor-quality jobs are often not able to afford their children the same opportunities in terms of economic and educational advantages as those with better quality jobs (Nicholson et al., 2012; Parcel & Menaghan, 1994; Rege et al., 2011; Strazdins et al., 2010), leading children to have less occupational opportunity.

In addition, there is also a general tendency for children to follow in their parents' occupational footsteps (Aldrich & Kim, 2015; Gubler et al., 2017). Vocational scholarship refers to this tendency as occupational inheritance. Occupational inheritance can be defined as a phenomenon in which individuals select occupations similar to their parents' occupations (characterized by a set of jobs sharing high similarity in tasks and duties; ILO, 2004). To date, vocational research has established a consistent positive relationship between parents'—especially fathers'—occupations and their children's occupational choices (e.g., Jodl et al., 2001; Werts, 1968). Although seldom framed in this way, occupational inheritance also implies that children tend to inherit the same quality of work as their parents. Because of this, this phenomenon also has the potential to be one explanatory factor related to limited intergenerational social class mobility.

However, despite the interdisciplinary exploration of factors influencing children's vocational interests and career decisions, a gap remains regarding the extent to which parents' professions and career trajectories influence their children's career paths beyond the initial choice (Gubler et al., 2017). Thus, while existing literature sheds some light on the significance of parental influence on early occupational outcomes, further investigation is warranted to uncover the enduring impact of parental occupational choice and occupational quality on children's career trajectories well into adulthood. Understanding this relationship is crucial for capturing the

intergenerational transmission of decent work over time, as well as the mechanisms through which inequality is perpetuated across generations. Accordingly, I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1: Parents' decent work will be positively related to their children's attainment of decent work in adulthood.

CHAPTER THREE

MEDIATING MECHANISMS

Social Class

Social class, like many other economic stress-related constructs (Sinclair et al., 2024), has both objective and subjective components. While subjective social class focuses on relative social standing, objective social class can be defined as a dimension of oneself that is rooted in both economic and educational objective resources (Adler et al., 2000; Côté, 2011; Loignon & Woehr, 2018). The present study focused on objective social class – as indicated by educational attainment and economic stressors – as a mediating mechanism linking parents' decent work to children's attainment of decent work as well as children's attainment of meaningful and satisfying work and health and well-being (see Figure 1). Cumulative Disadvantage Theory (Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010) posits that advantages and disadvantages can accumulate over the life course or across generations. In this section, I focus on the accumulation of advantages or disadvantages that are transferred from one generation to another in the form of educational and economic resources or constraints.

Educational Attainment

In addition to proposing that parents' decent work will be positively related to children's attainment of decent work, I also posited that parents' decent work will be positively related to their children's educational attainment. When parents have stable, better-quality jobs, they are more likely to have the resources (e.g., social capital) to be able to provide their children with opportunities that facilitate greater educational attainment (e.g., Barling et al., 1999; Kalil & Wightman, 2011; Walsemann et al., 2008). Indeed, a large body of scholarship demonstrates that

aspects of decent work are related to children's educational attainment. For instance, financial stress (both objective and subjective) which is associated with low-wage work is consistently related to decreased educational attainment in children (e.g., Lawson & Farah, 2017). In addition, other research has found that job stability and security are related to educational attainment (e.g., Barling et al., 1999; Kalil & Wightman, 2011). Even geographic factors largely determined by income, such as school zoning, position lower-income families in areas where they are less likely to have well-funded and well-resourced school zones (Darling-Hammond, 2010). These students are less likely to have resources to aid them in college readiness, which, in turn, can minimize their opportunity to pursue higher education (Conley, 2012). Because of this, I proposed the following:

Hypothesis 2: Parents' decent work will be positively related to their children's educational attainment.

For children, educational attainment may also play a pivotal role in securing decent work themselves by equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to succeed. Whether this occurs through formal education pathways such as technical schools and universities or through vocational training and certifications, increasing one's education allows for the acquisition of competencies that are often important for obtaining employment, maintaining employment, and advancement (Conley, 2010; Conley, 2012). Indeed, educational attainment is often linked to aspects of decent work, such as higher levels of job stability and security (Elman & Angela, 2002). Additionally, individuals with higher levels of education experience lower rates of unemployment and are better equipped for reemployment (Mincer, 1991).

Positioned within the PWT framework, education serves as a mediating factor that connects structural factors to access to decent work over the life course (Duffy et al., 2022). Although not yet tested empirically, it has been theorized that students who receive a higher and better-quality education are better equipped to navigate workplace challenges post-graduation and exhibit greater work volition (Duffy et al., 2022). In the present study, I empirically examined the relationship between education and decent work, thereby contributing to the empirical underpinning of the PWT and underscoring the significance of education as a catalyst for decent work. As such, I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 3: Educational attainment will be positively related to decent work.

Economic Stressors

When parents secure decent work, not only may they be better equipped to provide their children with educational opportunities, but they also may be less economically constrained (e.g., as the result of higher wages associated with decent work). According to extant research (e.g., Duncan et al., 1998, 2010; Huston & Bentley, 2010; Hotchkiss & Borrow, 1996), engaging in decent work enables workers to increase their economic resources. Indeed, decent work, from an intervention standpoint, may serve as a means to lift individuals out of poverty (Hughes & Haworth, 2011; Huston & Bentley, 2010). Prior work (e.g., Raj Adhikari, et al., 2011; Thore & Tarverdyan, 2009) has found support for this notion and echoes the ILO's advocacy for decent work as a fundamental strategy for poverty and inequality reduction (ILO, 1999, 2001a, 2008b). Thus, from its conceptualization, a primary goal of decent work is for individuals to have the opportunity to build economic resources for themselves and their families.

Moreover, since economic advantages and disadvantages tend to persist across generations – particularly intergenerational economic disadvantages (e.g., Duncan et al., 1998), parents' decent work should lead to fewer economic stressors in their children. Indeed, according to Cumulative (Dis)advantage Theory (Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010) both advantages and disadvantages tend to accumulate over time. Thus, as parents' decent work is an advantage, this facilitates additional advantages (economic, social, educational, etc.) for not only parents but their children as well. Prior research also supports this idea suggesting that children from higher socioeconomic status families (in terms of higher educated, higher income, and more occupationally prestigious) have better life chances and are better off financially as adults (Côté, 2024; Evans, 2004). Accordingly, I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 4: Parents' decent work will be negatively related to their children's economic stressors in adulthood.

Although decent work may be an antecedent to fewer economic stressors, it is also the case that economic stressors may make it more difficult to attain decent work. This relationship is theorized by the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016) and has since been tested empirically (Blustein & Duffy, 2020). According to PWT, the effects of economic constraints on decent work are a function of a diminished sense of volition in an individual's career decision-making as well as a function of limited opportunity. However, the extent to which these effects persist over time is still largely unknown (Blustein et al., 2023; Duffy et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, a substantial body of literature highlights the stark reality faced by many impoverished and economically constrained individuals: the conditions and opportunities necessary for attaining decent work are often lacking in their lives (Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Rasheed Ali, 2009). Moreover, the widening disparities between the haves and the have-nots

(Bapuji et al., 2020; Bazzoli et al., 2022; Jiang & Probst, 2017) have only made economic mobility less attainable over time (Piketty, 2014; Stiglitz, 2012). It is crucial to acknowledge these contextual constraints, not to diminish the importance of decent work, but rather to highlight the systemic challenges that hinder many individuals from achieving upward mobility. By recognizing these barriers and their long-lasting implications, researchers can better understand the complexities of socioeconomic inequality and work towards creating more equitable pathways to economic prosperity for all. As such, I also sought to examine the relationship between economic stressors and the attainment of decent work. I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 5: Economic stressors will be negatively related to decent work.

The Relationship Between Education and Economic Stressors

Although social class dimensions do not perfectly correlate and are distinct constructs (Côté, 2024), education and economic resources are consistently positively related, with meta-analytic estimates demonstrating a moderate relationship of .29 (Loignon & Woehr, 2018). This relationship comes as no surprise as educational performance and attainment often lead to higher earning potential over the course of an individual's career (e.g., French et al., 2015). With education often leading to higher-paying jobs and opportunities for career advancement, more educated individuals have greater financial stability, job security, and reemployment rates (Elman & Angela, 2002; Mincer, 1991). Furthermore, educational attainment can facilitate social mobility, allowing individuals to push past socioeconomic barriers and access opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach (Jacobson & Mokher, 2009). Thus, for some, obtaining higher levels of education may be a pathway to reducing economic stressors later in life. In line with this, I hypothesized:

Hypothesis 6: Educational attainment will be negatively related to economic stressors.

Building on my previous hypothesis, I also investigated the indirect relationship between parents' decent work and economic stressors through children's educational attainment. Due to the educational opportunities that parents' decent work may afford children and the well-documented relationship between education and economic resources (Loignon & Woehr, 2018), it is likely that an indirect relationship is present: parents' decent work will be related to children's economic stressors through this educational opportunity. I hypothesized:

Hypothesis 7: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's economic stressors through their children's educational attainment.

Indirect Effects on Children's Attainment of Decent Work

Within the framework of the Cumulative Disadvantage Theory (Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010), the intergenerational transmission of decent work occurs via the accumulation of resources of deficits across generations and across the life course. Individuals with social class advantages, such as high educational attainment and low economic stressors, may be more likely to secure decent employment opportunities due to the proliferation of resources that enable them to attain additional resources. In psychological research, this phenomenon is often framed within the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989). One proposition of this theory is that individuals can build a collection or caravan of resources that enables them to acquire additional resources and protect against resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989; 2011). Thus, the initial familial advantage of having parents who have secured decent work may set children on a trajectory of accumulating further educational and economic resources, thereby perpetuating their advantage across generations and providing them a better opportunity to obtain decent work themselves.

On the other hand, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds where their parents lacked access to decent work may have limited opportunities to attain social class advantage (in terms of educational and economic advantages) and, ultimately, decent work themselves. Thus, the inability to attain decent work may limit upward economic mobility across generations. Without intervention, these individuals will likely pass on their experiences of disadvantage to the next generation, perpetuating a cycle of limited access to decent work and economic mobility. As such, I hypothesized that educational attainment, economic stressors, and educational attainment in conjunction with economic stressors (i.e., serial mediation) will serve as mediators between parents' decent work and children's attainment of decent work.

Hypothesis 8: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's attainment of decent work through children's educational attainment.

Hypothesis 9: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's attainment of decent work through children's economic stressors.

Hypothesis 10: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's attainment of decent work through both educational attainment and economic stressors.

CHAPTER FOUR

OUTCOMES

According to PWT (Duffy et al., 2016), for those fortunate enough to secure decent work, it is theorized that such work can contribute to both fulfilling work and overall health and well-being by satisfying three key categories of needs: survival, social connection, and self-determination (Blustein et al., 2008). Through the lens of PWT, work fulfillment can be characterized as encompassing work that is satisfying and meaningful (Duffy et al., 2016), while well-being aligns with an individual's cognitive and affective assessment of their life (e.g., Diener et al., 2002) and physical health respectively (Duffy et al., 2021). Thus, in the current study, I focused on four outcomes of decent work: (1) meaningful work, (2) satisfying work, (3) general self-rated health, and (4) psychological well-being. As I examined the effects of decent work on outcomes several years later, this work represents an important contribution to a literature that has largely studied these phenomena cross-sectionally or over short time periods (e.g., Duffy et al., 2021 with temporal separation of one month). However, it is important to note that given the limitations of my data, like prior work, the present study still cannot draw strong causal inferences given that I did not analyze repeated measures of the same variables over time (Hamaker et al., 2015).

Meaningful Work

At its core, meaningful work involves a subjective experience of purpose and fulfillment derived from one's work activities. It is characterized by a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as a feeling of contributing to something greater than oneself (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Meaningful work has attracted substantial scholarly attention in recent years (e.g.,

Bailey et al. 2017, 2019; Laaser & Bolton, 2021; Lepisto & Pratt 2017; Lysova et al. 2019; Michaelson et al. 2014; Rosso et al. 2010). Although defined in several ways (Martela & Pessi, 2018), meaningful work is most often conceptualized and measured as a unidimensional construct (May et al. 2004). However, its dimensionality, including personal significance, social impact, and alignment with one's values and beliefs, has also received some albeit less attention (Rosso et al., 2010). In general, though, meaningful work goes beyond traditional measures of job satisfaction and focuses on the deeper psychological and existential significance of work in people's lives.

Meaningful work has been linked to various positive outcomes for individuals, including higher job satisfaction, greater engagement, and enhanced well-being (Steger et al., 2012). Research has shown that employees who perceive their work as meaningful are more committed to their organizations, more resilient in the face of challenges, and more likely to experience a sense of fulfillment in their lives (Rosso et al., 2010). Furthermore, meaningful work is associated with improved organizational outcomes, such as higher levels of employee motivation, productivity, and retention (Grant, 2008). Meaningful work is also not limited to specific occupations or industries but can be found across various job roles and sectors and can encompass both positive and negative emotions (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017).

Although some (often wealthier) individuals have regarded meaningfulness as an essential aspect for work to qualify as decent (as opposed to viewing it as an outcome of decent work; Di Fabio & Kenny, 2019; Masdonati et al., 2019; Vignoli et al., 2020), within the PWT framework, meaningful work is conceptualized as an outcome of decent work. Decent work is viewed as essential for meeting basic human needs, while meaningful work is a higher-order need related to life fulfillment (Rosso et al., 2010). However, jobs can certainly be designed in

ways that make work more meaningful leading to higher job satisfaction, motivation, and performance, and lower absenteeism and turnover rates (Garg & Rastogi, 2006; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007).

Other research has emphasized meaningfulness as a core element of workplace spirituality, emphasizing the recognition of the inner self and soul within professional contexts (e.g., Dix et al., 2013; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Within this paradigm, employers are encouraged to facilitate a work environment that fosters purpose, community, and a sense of belonging (Adawiyah & Pramuka, 2017). However, without decent work as a foundation, many of these efforts may be unfruitful if workers' basic work-related needs go unsatisfied. Thus, decent work is theorized to precede meaningful work. Specific hypotheses related to meaningful work are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Satisfying Work

While meaningful work focuses on the deeper existential and psychological aspects of work experience, satisfying work pertains more to the immediate relationship between workers' perceptions of the quality of their work relative to their expectations of work (Burchell et al., 2014). Indeed, from its inception, a fundamental tenet of job satisfaction has been the positive appraisal and subsequent emotional state resulting from one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). According to PWT, job satisfaction is an indicator of work fulfillment, and thus, through the lens of PWT, satisfying work refers to the positive subjective experience of contentment, enjoyment, and fulfillment derived from one's job role and work activities (Duffy et al., 2016). As workers have their fundamental needs met through decent work, they are theorized to then experience greater satisfaction and well-being (Duffy et al., 2016). The way job satisfaction is framed in PWT resembles that of the job characteristics model (JCM), in which the basic

characteristics of a job determine the extent to which it is likely to be motivating and satisfying (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Job satisfaction is a well-established predictor of numerous positive workplace outcomes such as retention (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Hom et al., 1979), prosocial behavior (Bateman & Organ, 1983), and job performance (Judge et al., 2001). Workers who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to be committed to their organizations, perform at a higher level, and be engaged at work (Spector, 1997). Research explicitly related to decent work has found that aspects of decent work (safe working environment, income, free time, and values; Duffy et al., 2017) as well as decent work overall positively predict job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2020; McIlveen et al., 2021; Wan & Duffy, 2022). Thus, the current study added to this prior work by examining the relationship between decent work and job satisfaction, as well as extended this body of scholarship by examining intergenerational implications. Specific hypotheses related to each of these relationships and satisfying work will be presented at the end of this chapter.

General Self-Rated Health

One of the core motivations for studying and advocating for decent work revolves around the goal of promoting individual occupational health and health equity overall (Bluestein et al., 2016). Two of the key distinctions between work that is decent and work that is not are the adequacy of compensation and the opportunity to engage in non-work activities (e.g., low work-life conflict; Duffy et al., 2016), both of which play a crucial role in determining an individual's living conditions and their ability to allocate time and effort to health-promoting behaviors. In turn, these conditions and behaviors directly impact individual health and health inequity (e.g., as social determinants of health; Schulz et al., 2002).

Indeed, several studies have documented relationships between health and aspects of decent work, such as low pay and unsafe working conditions (Dich et al., 2019; Magee et al., 2012; Pohling et al., 2016) and it is indisputable that work and health are interrelated (Näswall et al., 2014). Individuals who are cognitively depleted from engaging in low-paying poor-quality work may also be less likely to engage in healthy behaviors such as physical activity or healthy eating (Mazzola et al., 2017; Wardle et al., 2000). However, even in jobs that pay well but are otherwise poor quality (e.g., in terms of psychological resources; Grzywacz & Dooley, 2003), workers can experience poorer health, highlighting the importance of considering multiple factors that constitute decent work.

Although much less research has examined the relation between decent work as a whole and health, the work that does has found support for this relationship (Autin et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2019; 2021). This work has examined health both as a latent variable (e.g., Duffy et al., 2019) and as encompassing several distinct factors (healthy behaviors, symptoms, etc.; Duffy et al., 2021). Adhering to the PWT framework, this research has examined the link between decent work and health through the relationship of need fulfillment and workplace fatigue, finding support for these theorized relationships. However, as briefly mentioned, this work does not examine any long-term health effects limiting the current breadth of understanding in this area. Furthermore, intergenerational effects have been neglected entirely. Despite this, however, parents' decent work may have substantial implications on children's health later in life (Duncan et al., 2018; Evans & Cassells, 2014). Specific hypotheses will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Psychological Well-being

According to recent survey data, ninety percent of Americans feel that mental health in the United States is in crisis (American Psychological Association, 2024). With one out of three individuals struggling with mental health issues and access to resources being more limited than ever, this issue necessitates urgent attention (APA, 2024). As the workplace can serve as a source of stress or well-being (Griffin & Clarke, 2011; Spector, 1997), consideration of the role of job quality in mental health is certainly warranted. Indeed, psychological distress, anxiety, and depression have all demonstrated strong relationships with work-related factors such as job stress (e.g., Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Kahn & Byosiere, 1992). In fact, prior work (Viswesvaran et al., 1999) has estimated a correlation of .43 between work stress and psychological strain.

As it relates to decent work specifically, a strong body of scholarship (e.g., Wilson, 1996; Blustein, 2008; Paul & Moser, 2009; Swanson, 2012; Wanberg, 2012) has highlighted the robust, positive relationship between decent work in general or aspects of decent work and workers' psychological well-being. From its inception, the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016) has theorized well-being as a key outcome of decent work, and subsequent research (e.g., Duffy et al., 2019; 2021) has supported this relation. Current scholarship now views access to decent work as a prerequisite for psychological well-being, noting that without decent work, survival, self-determination, and social contribution need satisfaction are unlikely to be met (Blustein, 2008; Duffy et al. 2019, 2021; Paul & Moser, 2009). However, although there is now strong evidence to support the relationship between decent work and psychological well-being, intergenerational implications of decent work have not been examined. This is the case despite the connection between parents' work and children's mental health (Dockery & Kendall, 2009) and the robust body of scholarship on the long-term effects of childhood distress (Evans & Cassells, 2014). Accordingly, this dissertation represents an addition to past scholarship connecting decent work

to psychological well-being and an intergenerational extension of this work. The specific hypotheses and additional rationale will be discussed in the following section.

Outcomes of Decent Work

Childhood is a critical period of physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The plasticity during this developmental period leads individuals to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of stressors – with some scholars referring to it as the sensitive period (Kamis, 2021; McFarland, 2017; Miller et al., 2011). Parental hardship, be it financial hardship (Evans, 2004), hardship related to work (Barling et al., 1999), or mental ill health (Kamis, 2021), may function as a stressor for children during this sensitive period given that parents are central to the lives of their children, providing an essential source of self-esteem, direction, social control, and nurturing (Metzler et al., 2017; Schepman et al., 2011; Umberson et al., 2010; Wilkinson & Andersson, 2019). Parents struggling with to cope with the lack of decent work experiences may struggle to parent well and disengage from their children's needs, having substantial implications for their children's development and eventual life trajectories (Crouter & Bumpus, 2001; Elgar et al., 2007; Goodman et al., 2011; Lim & Loo, 2003; Mauno et al., 2017).

Beyond this, given the relationship between decent work and mental health and well-being (Blustein, 2008; Paul & Moser, 2009), the absence of decent work can negatively impact parents' mental health and contribute to family dysfunction, such as increased marital conflict, substance abuse, or divorce. These issues can, in turn, lead to adverse childhood experiences. However, research explicitly related to decent work is entirely unexplored. Nevertheless, stress process and life course models consistently emphasize that childhood stress can lead to negative outcomes throughout an individual's life and into adulthood (Kuh et al., 2003; Pearlin, 2010). As such, with this dissertation, I examined the relationship between parents' decent work and four

outcomes that are central to the PWT: meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being. In doing so, the current study will be the first of this kind to examine the intergenerational implications of decent work. Accordingly, I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 11: Parents' decent work will be positively related to meaningful work (H11a), satisfying work (H11b), self-rated health (H11c), and psychological well-being (H11d).

Beyond the relationship between parents' decent work and these four outcomes. I also examined the relationship between children's decent work in adulthood and meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being. Although these connections are not novel and have been proposed theoretically by the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016) and tested empirically across several studies (e.g., Autin et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2019; 2021; Wan & Duffy, 2022), much of this research is cross-sectional or examines these relationships over a short period of time (e.g., a few weeks). However, research that examines these phenomena over a longer period of time is useful as it provides valuable information about the persistence of the effects of work that is decent As such, the present study functions as a longer-term examination of these relationships and contributes to the literature in that way. I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 12: Decent work will be positively related to meaningful work (H12a), satisfying work (H12b), self-rated health (H12c), and psychological well-being (H12d).

Scholarship also documents the intergenerational continuity of aspects of decent work such as adult earnings and job quality suggesting that, in many ways, occupations and the decency of work is inherited from parents (Evans, 2004; Gubler et al., 2017). Thus, building on prior hypotheses and drawing from the occupational inheritance literature, I posited that parents' decent work will be indirectly related to children's meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and

psychological well-being through children's attainment of decent work. I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 13: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H13a), satisfying work (H13b), self-rated health (H13c), and psychological well-being (H13d) through children's decent work.

Outcomes of Social Class

As discussed in Chapter Three, the present study focused on objective social class – as indicated by educational attainment and economic stressors. Beginning with education, I posited that higher educational attainment will facilitate more meaningful and satisfying work as well as greater health and well-being. Prior theorizing building on PWT (Duffy et al., 2022) suggests that education enhances access to decent work and, subsequently, meaningful work and health and well-being by fostering both a sense of empowerment and adaptability to changes in the job market. These psychological attributes have been consistently associated with positive outcomes, such as optimistic expectations in college students (Blustein & Duffy, 2020). Since education offers access to valuable information and often facilitates employment opportunity, individuals who attain a higher education are theorized to feel more empowered and equipped to navigate the challenges of the workforce after graduation (Duffy et al., 2022). Consequently, this increased sense of agency and adaptability is likely to contribute to the attainment of decent work opportunities over time and, subsequently, meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being. I hypothesized:

Hypothesis 14: Educational attainment will be positively related to meaningful work (H14a), satisfying work (H14b), self-rated health (H14c), and psychological well-being (H14d).

In addition to education, one's economic situation may also have substantial implications for the attainment of meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being. Indeed, a robust body of scholarship has demonstrated the substantial effects of income and financial stress on health and well-being (e.g., Deaton, 2008; Friedline et al., 2021; Thomson et al., 2022). However, comparatively less research has focused on work-related outcomes (Sinclair et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the current work that does consider job fulfilment work has found that those who experience financial stress are less likely to consider their work meaningful and satisfying. (Munyon et al., 2020).

Other related constructs, such as pay satisfaction, have also been related to job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2010), suggesting a compelling link between one's financial situation and meaningful and satisfying work. Economically constrained individuals may also feel feelings of financial scarcity or dependency (Meuris & Leana, 2015), detracting from the otherwise potentially fulfilling nature of their work. In line with Cumulative Disadvantage Theory (Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010), financial scarcity has been related to poor financial decision-making further compounding the financial stress that one experiences and making it increasingly difficult to escape this vicious cycle (Cook & Sadeghein, 2018; De Bruijn & Antonides, 2022). Indeed, financial scarcity leads individuals to hyperfocus or tunnel on their financial situation – often limiting the resources that can be dedicated to other areas of their life and increasing cumulative disadvantage overall (De Bruijn & Antonides, 2022). Accordingly, I hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 15: Economic stressors will be negatively related to meaningful work (H15a), satisfying work (H15b), self-rated health (H15c), and psychological well-being (H15d).

Indirect Effects on Meaningful and Satisfying Work and Health and Well-being

Lastly, building on previous hypotheses, I hypothesized a series of indirect effects based on the Psychology of Working Theory theoretical model and demonstrated in my conceptual model in Figure 1. First, I hypothesized that social class (encompassing both educational and economic resources) will mediate the relationship of parents' decent work with their children's meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being (Hypotheses 16 and 17). Second, I hypothesized that children's decent work will mediate the relationship of social class (again, encompassing both educational and economic resources) with meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being (Hypotheses 18 and 19). Finally, I hypothesized that both social class and decent work mediate (i.e., serial mediation wherein social class leads to decent work) the relationship of parents' decent work with their children's meaningful work, satisfying work, health, and psychological well-being (Hypotheses 20, 21, and 22). Specific hypotheses are presented below:

Hypothesis 16: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H16a), satisfying work (H16b), self-rated health (H16c), and psychological well-being (H16d) through children's educational attainment.

Hypothesis 17: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H17a), satisfying work (H17b), self-rated health (H17c), and psychological well-being (H17d) through children's economic stressors.

Hypothesis 18: Educational attainment will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H18a), satisfying work (H18b), self-rated health (H18c), and psychological well-being (H18d) through decent work.

Hypothesis 19: Economic stressors will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H19a), satisfying work (H19b), self-rated health (H19c), and psychological well-being (H19d) through decent work.

Hypothesis 20: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H20a), satisfying work (H20b), self-rated health (H20c), and psychological well-being (H20d) through educational attainment and decent work.

Hypothesis 21: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H21a), satisfying work (H21b), self-rated health (H21c), and psychological well-being (H21d) through economic stressors and decent work.

Hypothesis 22: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H22a), satisfying work (H22b), self-rated health (H22c), and psychological well-being (H22d) through educational attainment, economic stressors, and decent work.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES

In the current chapter, I provide a summary of my hypotheses. For a visual overview of my full conceptual model, see Figure 1 in Appendix A.

Hypothesis 1: Parents' decent work will be positively related to their children's attainment of decent work in adulthood.

Hypothesis 2: Parents' decent work will be positively related to their children's educational attainment.

Hypothesis 3: Educational attainment will be positively related to decent work.

Hypothesis 4: Parents' decent work will be negatively related to their children's economic stressors in adulthood.

Hypothesis 5: Economic stressors will be negatively related to decent work.

Hypothesis 6: Educational attainment will be negatively related to economic stressors.

Hypothesis 7: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's economic stressors through their children's educational attainment.

Hypothesis 8: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's attainment of decent work through children's educational attainment.

Hypothesis 9: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's attainment of decent work through children's economic stressors.

Hypothesis 10: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to their children's attainment of decent work through both educational attainment and economic stressors.

Hypothesis 11: Parents decent work will be positively related to meaningful work (H11a), satisfying work (H11b), self-rated health (H11c), and psychological well-being (H11d).

Hypothesis 12: Decent work will be positively related to meaningful work (H12a), satisfying work (H12b), self-rated health (H12c), and psychological well-being (H12d).

Hypothesis 13: Parents decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H13a), satisfying work (H13b), self-rated health (H13c), and psychological well-being (H13d) through children's decent work.

Hypothesis 14: Educational attainment will be positively related to meaningful work (H14a), satisfying work (H14b), self-rated health (H14c), and psychological well-being (H14d).

Hypothesis 15: Economic stressors will be negatively related to meaningful work (H15a), satisfying work (H15b), self-rated health (H15c), and psychological well-being (H15d).

Hypothesis 16: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H16a), satisfying work (H16b), self-rated health (H16c), and psychological well-being (H16d) through children's educational attainment.

Hypothesis 17: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H17a), satisfying work (H17b), self-rated health (H17c), and psychological well-being (H17d) through children's economic stressors.

Hypothesis 18: Educational attainment will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H18a), satisfying work (H18b), self-rated health (H18c), and psychological well-being (H18d) through decent work.

Hypothesis 19: Economic stressors will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H19a), satisfying work (H19b), self-rated health (H19c), and psychological well-being (H19d) through decent work.

Hypothesis 20: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H20a), satisfying work (H20b), self-rated health (H20c), and psychological well-being (H20d) through educational attainment and decent work.

Hypothesis 21: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H21a), satisfying work (H21b), self-rated health (H21c), and psychological well-being (H21d) through economic stressors and decent work.

Hypothesis 22: Parents' decent work will be indirectly related to meaningful work (H22a), satisfying work (H22b), self-rated health (H22c), and psychological well-being (H22d) through educational attainment, economic stressors, and decent work.

CHAPTER SIX

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

For my dissertation, I utilized data from the Youth Development Study (YDS), an ongoing longitudinal study of respondents from ages 14 to 15, from 1988 until the most recent data collection in 2019 at midlife (Mortimer, 2003). The YDS is a public use data set, available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan: https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/ICPSR/studies/24881. The original purpose of the Youth Development Study was to examine the effects of formative experiences in adolescence and early adulthood on health and well-being, formation of values, socioeconomic attainment, and various other aspects of behavioral adjustment. This study now has data spanning across 31 years. It encompasses three generations: the child generation whose data collection began in the ninth grade (Generation Two), their parents (Generation One), and their children (Generation Three) – many of whom have now reached adulthood themselves. These unique data enabled me to evaluate the intergenerational transmission of decent work and investigate some of the mechanisms through which this process occurs.

Initially, the YDS was initiated as a school-based study and in-school administration of paper surveys was supplemented by mailed surveys during the first four years of the study. Afterwards, data collection occurred solely via mail and a total of 19 surveys were conducted between 1988 and 2011. In 2019, the most recent survey was conducted online. To date, there have been 233 data-related publications using YDS data (including theses, dissertations, and peer-reviewed articles). However, none of these publications have focused on decent work, and

most work-related studies have focused on work values (e.g., Johnson et al., 2012; Johnson & Mortimer, 2015; Porfeli & Mortimer, 2010). As such, this dissertation is a unique contribution to the current body of scholarship utilizing these data.

Data Cleaning

The YDS contains 1,139 participants who were repeatedly measured across 20 waves of data collection. For Wave 19, 696 participants responded to the survey. I created a subset of these data that contained all relevant variables measured in Wave 19. These variables included all decent work items, educational attainment, and economic constraint items. Because the economic constraint items are objective experiences (e.g., having your home foreclosed), I used listwise deletion to omit participants who had missing data on this variable (i.e., did not indicate whether they experienced the event or not). This reduced the sample size to 681 participants. For Wave 20, 612 participants responded to the survey, 536 of whom also responded to Wave 19. Next, I created a subset of the YDS Wave 20 data that contained all relevant outcomes (i.e., health, psychological well-being, meaningful work, and satisfying work). Then, because health, meaningful work, and satisfying work are all single-item measures, I used listwise deletion in this wave to remove participants who did not answer these items, further reducing the sample size to 456 participants.

Then, participants were matched to their parents' data in the generation one Wave One of the YDS, resulting in a sample size of 395 matched participants. In these matched data, parents who did not report any period of unemployment and who indicated that they were employed were assumed to be employed for the full year. In addition, because household income was asked from both parents, if one parent did not respond, their response was assumed to be consistent with the parent who did respond to the item, and if neither parent responded (as was the case for

4 participants), the participant was omitted via listwise deletion. Finally, if none of the items related to job strain were answered (as was the case for 37 participants), the participant was omitted via listwise deletion. All participants who responded to job strain questions were checked to ensure that they were employed. This left a final sample size of 345 participants. The remaining missing data on job strain and decent work items were examined for patterns of missingness and proportion of missingness. There was very little (i.e., less than 1% of observations had missing data) missingness on the decent work items. However, the parent job strain items had substantially more missing data (ranging from 15% to 20% depending on the item), and fathers were more likely to have missing data than mothers. This remaining missing data was addressed via multiple imputation by chained equations using the MICE package in R (Van Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011).

Sample Composition

In the final sample of 345 participants, 59.6% identified as women, 89.7% identified as White, 5% as Black, 2.1% as Hispanic, 1.5% as Asian, 0.6% as Native American, and 1.2% as mixed race or other. The average age in the sample was 46.4 (SD = 0.79) years old; participants had an average household income of $89,343.06 (median = $80,000; SD = $54,369.26) and worked for an average of 39.6 (SD = 9.41) hours per week. In general, these individuals were also well-educated with 2% having attained less than high school, 9% high school, 11% technical or vocational school, 32% some college or an associate degree, 28% a bachelor's degree, 13% a master's degree, and 3% a Ph.D. or professional degree. In terms of O*NET occupational classification, the largest group of participants were employed in management occupations (22.2%), followed by office and administrative support (10.8%), business and financial operations (10.8%), educational instruction and library (7.3%), and healthcare practitioners and

technical occupations (5.8%). All other occupational groups employed less than 5% of the sample.

Measures

All parent measures were collected in Wave 1 of the Generation One data collection of the YDS. This survey was given to both parents of the child participating in the data collection in 1988. Economic stressors – which were retrospective in nature (i.e., asking about the past two years) – were measured in Wave 19 of the Generation Two data collection (i.e., original cohort) and only measured at this single time point. Educational attainment was also taken from Wave 19, along with all decent work items. All outcome variables were measured in Wave 20 of the Generation Two data collection. The full measures are presented in Appendix C-K.

Decent Work

To measure decent work, items were chosen from the available pool of work-related items in Wave 19 of the YDS. Each of these items reflects aspects of decent work outlined by the psychology of working framework (PWF; Blustein, 2006) and/or the ILO definition of decent work. I used these measures as indicators of an overall latent decent work variable ($\alpha = .64$). Specifically, I used two items that reflect the extent to which the working conditions are physically and psychologically safe ("How often are you exposed to excessive heat, cold, or noise at work?" and "How often are you held responsible for things that are really outside your control?"), two items that reflect a workload that allows for adequate rest ("I have too much work to do everything well" and "I feel drained of my energy when I get off work"), two items that reflect the extent to which work that aligns with family needs ("Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home" and "Job worries or problems distract you

when you are at home"), a single item that reflects whether the compensation from work is adequate ("Would you consider your pay "good pay" for the work you do?"), a single item that assesses job security ("How secure is your primary job?"), and a single item that reflects the opportunity for advancement ("There is little opportunity for advancement on my job").

To investigate the nature of these items further, a factor analysis was performed. The number of factors was determined using the "nfactors" function in the psych package (Revelle, 2024) and three factors was determined to be the optimal number using the sample size adjusted Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). Then, using the "fa" function in the psych package (Revelle, 2024) and setting the number of factors to 3, I performed a latent variable exploratory factor analysis (EFA), using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) to find the minimum residual solution and with a varimax rotation (Table 1). I found that factor one contained job security, compensation, and opportunity for advancement (loadings ranging from .45 to .57), factor two contained items relating to psychological safety, overload, depletion, work-life conflict (loadings ranging from .36 to .79), and factor three contained the physical working conditions item (the only item that represented physical work stressors with a loading = .27). These factor analytic results align with core aspects central to the definition of decent work – economic stressors, psychological stressors, and physical stressors. A summary of these items and factor loadings can be seen in Table 1.

Parents' Decent Work

Parents' decent work was measured using relevant items from the parent Wave 1 survey, which was collected in 1988. At this time, the concept of decent work was only beginning to gain traction, and thus, the measures were not quite as robust as they were in later years. As such, the items selected to measure parents' decent work most closely align with the Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) framework of job quality and encompass three dimensions: (1) earnings, (2) job stability, and (3) quality of the working environment – often operationalized as job strain (OECD, 2016). Household income was used to measure household earnings, and job stability was measured as parents' cumulative unemployment experience – a count of the number of years each parent reported being unemployed for any part of the year (i.e., not employed and looking for work) from the year the respondent was born until they were 18 years of age. Finally, the quality of the working environment was measured using four items that assess psychosocial job stressors (Karasek et al., 1979). These items (father's α = .61; mother's α = .58) include one item measuring skill discretion (i.e., "do things new ways"), one item measuring decision authority (i.e., "free to make decisions"), one item measuring job control (i.e., "control over work time"), and one item measuring job demands (i.e., ("work time pressure").

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment was measured in Wave 19 of the YDS using a single item that asked respondents, "What is the highest level of education you have completed?" The response options ranged from 1-9, beginning with elementary or junior high school and ending with Ph.D. or professional degree. Higher values indicate greater educational attainment.

Economic Stressors

Economic stressors were measured in Wave 19 of the YDS by asking participants the following: "During the past two years, have you made any of the following adjustments because of financial need?" Participants were provided with 19 events that would constitute an economic stressor, such as "received government assistance" or "had your home foreclosed." Because these

stressors ranged in severity and topic (e.g., housing, spending, assistance), a factor analysis was performed as an empirical strategy to identify item parcels that reflect an overall economic stressors latent variable (see Rocha & Chelladurai, 2012 for a comparison of parceling strategies in which the exploratory factor analysis emerges as the best option). The number of factors was determined using the "nfactors" function in the psych package (Revelle, 2024) and four factors was determined to be the optimal number using sample size adjusted BIC. Then, using the "fa" function in the psych package (Revelle, 2024) and setting the number of factors to 4, I performed a latent variable exploratory factor analysis (EFA), using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) to find the minimum residual solution and with a varimax rotation (Table 2).

Factor one was comprised of work-related economic stressors (taking a second job, working longer hours, starting a home business) with loadings ranging from .49 to .69. Factor two was comprised of home-related economic stressors (charged residence to save money, gotten behind on mortgage payments, and foreclosure) with loadings that ranged from .56 to 1.03. Factor three was comprised of items that reflected participants attempting to obtain more resources (selling things, bartering, and receiving government assistance) and had loadings ranging from .44 to .78. Factor four was comprised of the remaining economic stressors which were primarily related to postponing and cutting back on resource use (e.g., postponing healthcare, cutting back on utility use) and had loadings that ranged from .42 to .78. The items within each factor were then summed to create four parcels which I used to reflect the economic stressors latent variable ($\alpha = .82$).

Outcomes

All outcomes were measured in Wave 20 of the YDS. Meaningful work was measured using a single item that asked participants, "At your primary job, how often do you feel that your

work is meaningful and important?" Response options ranged from 1-5, with 5 indicating always and 1 indicating almost never. Satisfying work was also measured using a single item. Participants were asked, "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job as a whole?" Response options ranged from 1-6 with 1 indicating extremely dissatisfied and 5 indicating extremely satisfied. Health was measured using a single general self-rated health (GSRH) item (DeSalvo et al., 2006). The item asks, "In general, would you say your health is. . .?" and response options ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor. In large data collections such as the YDS, these single-item measures are very common as they save participants time and energy. Additionally, single-item measures of job satisfaction, meaningful work, and health have all been found to be valid and reliable assessments of these constructs (DeSalvo et al., 2006; Fisher et al., 2016; Idler & Benyamini, 1997; Matthews et al., 2022; Wanous & Hudy, 2001; Wanous et al., 1997). Finally, psychological well-being was measured using 9 items ($\alpha = .91$; Veit & Ware, 1983) that asked about participants' well-being overall. A sample item is, "Have you been in low or very low spirits?" and response options range from 1-5, with 1 indicating "none of the time" and 5 indicating "all of the time."

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESULTS

Using R version 4.4.0 (R Core Team, 2024), I began by calculating bivariate correlations between all study variables. Then, I tested my hypotheses using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012). The results of these analyses are discussed in the following text and presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Correlations

As seen in Table 3, bivariate correlations were conducted between all study variables. Parents' decent work was not significantly related to child decent work ($p > .05$, CI [-.14, .07]) but was significantly related to child educational attainment ($r = .21$, $p < .01$, CI [.10, .31]) and economic stress ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$, CI [-.21, -.01]). As such, I found initial support for Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4 but not Hypothesis 1. Parents' decent work was not related to the child's meaningful work ($p > .05$, CI [-.03, .18]), satisfying work ($p > .05$, CI [-.04, .17]), general self-rated health ($p > .05$, CI [-.02, .19]), or psychological well-being ($p > .05$, CI [-.08, .13]). Hypotheses 14a-d were not supported.

Child's decent work was not significantly related to child educational attainment ($p > .05$, CI [-.11, .10]) but was significantly and negatively related to economic stress ($r = -.40$, $p < .01$, CI [-.48, -.31]) providing initial support for Hypothesis 5 but not Hypothesis 3. In addition, decent work was not significantly related to meaningful work ($p > .05$, CI [-.07, .14]) but was significantly and positively related to satisfying work ($r = .12$, $p < .05$, CI [.01, .22]), general self-rated health ($r = .18$, $p < .01$, CI [.08, .28]), and psychological well-being ($r = .41$, $p < .01$, CI [.32, .49]). Thus, initial support was found for Hypotheses 12b-c but not Hypothesis 12a.

Educational attainment was positively and significantly related to general self-rated health ($r = .14$, $p < .05$, CI [.03, .24]) but not to meaningful work ($p > .05$, CI [-.02, .19]), satisfying work ($p > .05$, CI [-.02, .19]), or psychological well-being ($p > .05$, CI [-.10, .11]) providing initial support for Hypothesis 14c but not Hypotheses 14a, 14b, or 14d. Economic stress was not related to meaningful work ($p > .05$, CI [-.15, .06]) or satisfying work ($p > .05$, CI [-.18, .03]) but was significantly and negatively related to general self-rated health ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$, CI [-.45, -.27]) and psychological well-being ($r = -.43$, $p < .01$, CI [-.51, -.34]) providing support for Hypotheses 15c and 15d but not 15a or 15b.

Test of Hypothesized Model

I tested my hypothesized model using the lavaan package in R version 4.4.0 (R Core Team, 2024; Rosseel, 2012). I began by creating a measurement model for all latent variables including parents' decent work, child's decent work, economic stress, and psychological well-being. All single item measures (i.e., education, meaningful work, satisfying work, general self-rated health) were modeled as observed. For parents' decent work, my latent variable was reflective of six indicators: mother's earnings, father's earnings, mother's employment stability, father's employment stability, mother's psychosocial job stressors, and father's psychosocial job stressors. For the child's decent work, my latent variable was reflective of each of the decent work items.[1] For the economic stress latent variable, each of the four factors identified in my factor analysis were used as indicators. Lastly, all the psychological well-being items were used as indicators of the psychological well-being latent variable. Using maximum likelihood estimation, I found that my measurement model demonstrated a somewhat acceptable fit, Yuan

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[1] I also tested models with decent work divided into the three factors that I identified with my factor analysis. However, aside from the economic stress decent work factor being significantly related to satisfying work ($\beta = .31$; $p = .002$), which is in line with prior work (e.g., Munyon et al., 2020), none of the findings added anything beyond the composite approach. Thus, for the sake of simplicity, I discuss only decent work as reflective of all items.

Bentler χ^2 (344) = 894.09, $p < .001$, with some fit indices indicating an acceptable fit (RMSEA = .06, 90% CI (.06, .07), SRMR = .07), and the CFI indicating a less than acceptable fit (CFI = .83). The conclusion of CFI disagreeing with other indices is not a rare occurrence and may be partially due to a smaller sample size and rather complex model (Lai & Green, 2016). Further, this is not particularly surprising given the measurement constraints often associated with the use of public longitudinal large-scale datasets (Diemer, 2008) – but an important limitation to note.

Next, to test my hypotheses, I specified the path model including all 22 hypothesized relationships. Using maximum likelihood estimation, I found that the model demonstrated a similar fit to my measurement model, Yuan Bentler χ^2 (440) = 1097.93, $p < .001$, with some fit indices indicating an acceptable fit (RMSEA = .06, 90% CI (.06, .07), SRMR = .07), and the CFI again indicating an inferior fit (CFI = .81). Parents' decent work was not directly related to children's decent work (β = -.05, p = .465) or economic stress (β = -.05, p = .468) but was significantly related to education (β = .21, $p < .001$) supporting Hypothesis 2 and failing to support Hypothesis 1 and 4. Further, education was not significantly related to decent work (β = -.11, p = .084) but economic stress was related to decent work (β = -.35, $p < .001$) failing to support Hypothesis 3 but supporting Hypothesis 5. Education was significantly negatively related to economic stress (β = -.22, p = .002) supporting Hypothesis 6.

For the indirect effects corresponding to Hypotheses 7, 8, 9, and 10, I found a significant indirect effect wherein parents' decent work is related to children's economic stress through educational attainment (β = -.05, p = .015) supporting Hypothesis 7. Hypotheses 8 (β = -.02, p = .116) and 9 (β = .02, p = .473) where education and economic stress separately mediate the relationship between parents' decent work and children's decent work was not supported. However, Hypothesis 10 in which education in conjunction with economic stress sequentially

mediate the relationship between parents' decent work and children's decent work was supported ($\beta = .02$, $p = .030$).

Next, regarding the direct effects proposed in Hypotheses 11 and 12 between parents' decent work (H11) and children's decent work (H12) and my outcomes, I found little support with only the direct relationship between the child's decent work and psychological well-being being positive and significant ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$) supporting Hypothesis 12d. For the nonsignificant direct effect estimates related to Hypotheses 11 and 12 see Table 4 which includes all standardized and unstandardized direct effects. I also found little support for Hypotheses 14 and 15 which posited a direct relationship of education (H14) and economic stress (H15) with all of my outcomes. There was only a significant direct relationship between economic stress and health ($\beta = .26$, $p = .001$) and economic stress and psychological well-being ($\beta = -.29$, $p < .001$) supporting Hypotheses 15c and 15d.

Table 5 displays all standardized and unstandardized indirect effects. I found no support for Hypothesis 13 that posited an indirect relationship between parents' decent work and my outcomes through the child's decent work. Hypotheses 16, 17, and 18 were also unsupported with estimates shown in Table 5. Hypothesis 19 which posited an indirect relationship between economic stress and my outcomes through decent work was only partially supported with a significant indirect relationship to psychological well-being ($\beta = -.10$, $p = .002$) supporting Hypothesis 19d. Hypotheses 20 and 21 were unsupported with estimates shown in Table 5. Finally, Hypothesis 22 which posited an indirect relationship between parents' decent work and my outcomes (i.e., meaningful work, satisfying work, health, psychological well-being) through education, economic stress, and decent work was partially supported with a significant positive

relationship to psychological well-being (β = .04, p = .047). Thus, Hypothesis 22d was supported while Hypotheses 22a-c were not.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

This dissertation sought to examine the intergenerational implications of decent work. While recent advancements in psychological research, particularly the advent of the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016), and subsequent empirical studies (e.g., Autin et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2017, 2018; Sheng & Zhou, 2021), have contributed to the understanding of decent work, much of this progress has been confined to the vocational sciences. This isolation has resulted in significant knowledge disparities between vocational research and ongoing sociological and lifespan research, which explore aspects of decent work (e.g., earnings; Evans, 2004) as a mechanism through which intergenerational transmission of (dis)advantage occurs. Therefore, this dissertation acts as an initial bridge between these two domains – emphasizing parental decent work as a catalyst for children's educational attainment, economic situation in adulthood, their own attainment of decent work, and ultimately, their psychological well-being.

Summary of Findings

The results of this study supported many of the theorized relationships between parents' decent work and several aspects of children's economic and work lives. Although support for Hypothesis 1, which posited a direct relationship between parents' decent work and children's decent work, was not found, an indirect relationship was identified between parents' decent work and children's decent work sequentially through educational attainment and economic stress (Hypothesis 10). This finding aligned with intergenerational (dis)advantage theories (e.g., Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010), which describe advantage or disadvantage as a proliferation process wherein opportunities or deficits in one generation lead to similar opportunities or deficits in subsequent generations and compound over the life course. In this study, I found that it is not

merely that parental decent work influences children's attainment of decent work. Rather, parental decent work facilitates greater educational attainment for children (Hypothesis 2), which in turn affects their economic situation (Hypothesis 6), leading to their attainment of decent work (Hypothesis 5).

Thus, these social class mechanisms are not only an essential theoretical consideration but also a vital point for intervention. Though considerably less than other fields (Côté, 2011), the managerial sciences have begun to theoretically and empirically position social class and social class dimensions (e.g., economic stress; Sinclair et al., 2024) as predictors of organizational attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Dittmann et al., 2020; Fang & Saks, 2021; Martin & Harrison, 2022; Stephens et al., 2014). However, almost no research has been dedicated to understanding the effects of social class "origins" (Côté, 2024) such as parental occupational prestige on vocational outcomes – although, as the current study suggests, perhaps there should be.

Through education and economic stress, decent work may be inherited from one generation to the next. This study contributed to current scholarship on social class reproduction by presenting evidence of job quality reproduction, distinct from the predominant focus on income attainment in economic and sociological literature. Furthermore, by highlighting education's role in this process, I aligned with other scholars (e.g., Lampard, 2007) who have begun to stress the relevance of education more heavily in class reproduction processes. Education significantly contributes to the intergenerational transfer of advantage, and as I found, mediated the relationship between parental job quality and children's economic stress, thereby influencing the decency of work children eventually secured. However, I did not find that education directly affects decent work (Hypothesis 3) or directly or indirectly (through just

decent work) affects meaningful work (Hypothesis 14a; 18a), satisfying work (Hypothesis 14b; 18b), health (Hypothesis 14c; 18c), or well-being (Hypothesis 14d; 18d). These findings illustrated that economic stress must be considered along with education.

Recognizing economic stress as a mediator in the relationship between educational attainment and children's decent work, the findings in my dissertation also contributed to the scholarship on economic stress. In many instances (e.g., in relation to discretionary behavior; Piff et al., 2010), it may be useful to consider economic stress as a component of one's social class along with education (Côté, 2024). Recent meta-analytic research has found that education may be one of the drivers of the relationship between economic stress (specifically financial scarcity) and cognition (De Almeida et al., 2024). This suggests that, even if education is not a core variable of interest as in the current study, it may at least be useful to control for in economic stress research.

There is also a pressing need for research that examines economic stress over longer periods time (Sinclair et al., 2024). Prolonged or recurrent exposure to economic stressors may have meaningfully different effects compared to short-term stressors such as sudden financial shocks (e.g., sudden medical debt, large home repair expenses). In the current study, I found that economic stressors over the past two years were negatively related to decent work (Hypothesis 5). Consistent with the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016), these stressors act as constraints that make achieving decent work more challenging. However, economic stressors are also known to limit one's bandwidth making it more difficult to effectively perform (De Almeida et al., 2024; De Bruijn & Antonides, 2022, Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013, Mani et al., 2013). Therefore, theoretically, economic stress not only impedes the initial *attainment* of decent work

but may also undermine *retention* of decent work – an area, to the best of my knowledge, yet to be explored.

Regarding parent's decent work, I found that parental decent work, through educational attainment, shaped the financial situations of children even into adulthood (Hypothesis 7). Thus, in line with current economic stress theory (e.g., Côté, 2024; Sinclair et al., 2024), one's past is an important consideration along with one's present economic situation. Parental decent work was also directly negatively related to economic stress (Hypothesis 4) suggesting that a lack of decent work may be one of the precipitating factors perpetuating cycles of poor financial health across generations (Barrett et al., 2016). Thus, from an intervention standpoint, access to decent work emerges as critical not only for lifting individuals out of poverty (Hughes & Haworth, 2011; Huston & Bentley, 2010) but also for providing their children with improved economic prospects in adulthood.

Beyond this, I also found that economic stress was negatively related to health (Hypothesis 15c) and psychological well-being (both directly as in Hypothesis 15d and indirectly through decent work as in Hypothesis 19d). These findings contribute to the body of research highlighting the detrimental effects of economic stress (e.g., Deaton, 2008; Friedline et al., 2021; Thomson et al., 2022) and emphasizing the importance of considering individuals' economic circumstances in initiatives aimed at promoting occupational health and well-being. However, economic stress was not directly related to meaningful work (Hypothesis 15a) or satisfying work (Hypothesis 15b) or indirectly related through decent work to meaningful work (Hypothesis 19a), satisfying work (Hypothesis 19b), or health (Hypothesis 19c). Furthermore, although both educational attainment and economic stress sequentially served as significant mediators of the relationship between parental decent work and children's decent work (Hypothesis 10),

individually, neither education nor economic stress significantly mediated the relationship between parental decent work and children's decent work (Hypotheses 8 and 9). Thus, both mediators are necessary to adequately capture this process.

Parental decent work also did not directly affect or indirectly affect through children's decent work meaningful work (Hypothesis 11a and 13a), satisfying work (Hypothesis 11b and 13b), health (Hypothesis 11c and 13c), or well-being (Hypothesis 11d and 13d). Further, when considering education and economic stress individually as mediators or when considering them individually along with decent work, there were no significant relationships (Hypotheses 16, 17, 20, and 21). However, when education and economic stress were tested in conjunction along with decent work, there was a significant relationship between parental decent work and psychological well-being (Hypothesis 22d). This finding suggests that parental decent work can have an indirect effect on children's well-being much beyond childhood – all the way into midlife. This finding falls in line with other research (e.g., Frank et al., 2023) that argues that work is a critical social determinant of health and well-being, and further suggests that it might also shape well-being in subsequent generations.

This finding extends the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016) by incorporating an intergenerational component and provides empirical support for the Cumulative Advantage or Disadvantage Theory (Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010) in the context of work-related intergenerational (dis)advantages and their effects on psychological well-being. However, beyond this finding, I did not find support for the hypothesized relationships with meaningful work (Hypothesis 22a), satisfying work (Hypothesis 22b), or health (Hypothesis 22c). It's possible that, as more subjective constructs, perceptions of meaningful and satisfying work vary significantly among individuals – with some finding fulfillment in jobs that are less decent. For

example, for certain individuals, factors such as high pay or opportunities for advancement may be less crucial, and the job can still be meaningful and satisfying. Thus, it will be important for future research to continue to investigate these outcomes along with potential moderators of these relationships.

Limitations

In addition to the contributions of this dissertation, there are limitations worth noting. First, my sample was quite WEIRD – consisting of individuals from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies (Henrich et al., 2010) and POSH biased toward Professionals, Official work in the formal economy, groups that are relatively Safe from discrimination, and citizens of High-income countries (Gloss et al., 2017). These individuals were primarily well-paid (with an average income of $89,343.06 and some reaching the top 2% of US earners at over $400,000), highly educated (with over half of my sample having attained a college degree at 56%), predominantly white (90%), and in highly skilled, managerial, professional, and executive occupations at a disproportionally high rate compared to the general US population.

Largely focusing on workers from relatively privileged backgrounds can lead to a biased understanding of the experiences one is attempting to study (Bergman & Jean, 2016). In the context of this study, most of the decent work items were negatively skewed, suggesting that most individuals in my sample did have decent work. Thus, I was likely not able to amply assess the experiences of individuals in low-to-middle quality jobs. This is unfortunate given that the aim of this dissertation was to capture both intergenerational advantage and disadvantage – but likely captured more of the former. Perhaps if the sample was more balanced with greater representation of low-wage, temporary, or low- and medium-skill workers my findings could

have been different – or even stronger as negative situations tend to exert stronger effects (Baumeister et al., 2001). It would also have been advantageous to be able to capture individual's experiences from outside of the US (e.g., Choi et al., 2022) as well – facilitating a more global perspective on decent work.

Moreover, the YDS measures are limited in important ways that may have affected my findings. Given that the YDS spans several topic areas, it is important to not overburden participants with lengthy and detailed measures. Consequently, I had to construct measures for parental and child decent work based on their respective definitions. Additionally, while the child decent work measure used in this study closely adhered to the PWT definition of decent work, the parental decent work measure aligned more closely with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) framework on job quality. Ideally, both measures would have been parallel in defining decent work. However, the parental decent work measures were collected in 1988, predating the research that informed current definitions of decent work.

These measurement limitations likely contributed to my models' low CFI values and could have weakened my results. Where at all possible, future research should use validated measures of decent work such as the Decent Work Scale (Duffy et al., 2017) and should encompass all aspects of decent work. For instance, because this sample was from the Unted States where access to health insurance coverage is often limited (Hoffman & Paradise, 2008), financial literacy is rather low (Mitchell & Lusardi, 2011), and family leave (particularly paid family leave) is often nonexistent (Irish et al., 2021), a consideration of the benefits provided by the job (related to health, family, finances, etc.) would also be useful.

The measure for economic stress was also somewhat limited as the questions were retrospective asking about the past two years and measured in the same wave as decent work.

Additionally, the economic stress measure focused on objective events and neglected to account for the subjective perceptions of stress. Ideally both objective and subjective stressors would be considered to capture economic stress more adequately (Sinclair et al., 2024). This is because individuals who experienced the same stressor can have different appraisals of that stressor. For instance, one individual may feel that purchasing "used goods rather than new" due to financial need is resourceful and only mildly stressful whereas another individual may feel stigmatized and inadequate and experience higher stress. These economic stressors also differed in the extent to which they may be harmful over the long term. For instance, while neglecting health and dental care may save money now, over time, this could lead to much larger and more costly health concerns. Future research could investigate the extent to which these attempts to cope with insufficient financial resources are adaptive or maladaptive for individual physical, mental, and financial health and well-being.

Lastly, while longitudinal research on decent work is essential, the significant temporal gap of approximately eight years between decent work and my study's outcomes may have been too extensive. This likely contributed to the predominantly nonsignificant findings regarding meaningful and satisfying work, as these aspects of work are often more immediate responses to work. Moreover, from the time parental decent work was assessed when their children were in 9th grade (around 1988) to when these children reported on their own decent work as adults (around 2011), various intervening factors could have influenced their ability to attain decent work. For instance, they may have built social capital or experienced upward work mobility as they remained in their careers. Therefore, parental decent work might have a stronger impact on children's initial attainment of decent work rather than on the decency of work that they hold years later. If this was the case, it would imply that my findings would be even stronger if decent

work was measured earlier in the life course. My findings however, support proliferation theories such as the Cumulative Advantage or Disadvantage Theory and speak to the enduring nature of these effects – despite the potential of attenuation over time.

Implications and Future Directions

To my knowledge, this dissertation is the first of its kind to explore intergenerational implications of decent work. Because of this, there are several theoretical and practical implications of this work as well as a wealth of unexplored research questions that are essential for the advancement of knowledge in this domain. From a theoretical perspective, this dissertation represents an important extension of the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016) as it broadens its focus to consider the wider societal and familial context that individuals find themselves in when attempting to attain and retain decent work. This integration merges the PWT with other theoretical frameworks such as the Life Course Perspective (Elder, 1998) and the Cumulative Advantage or Disadvantage Theory (Merton, 1988; Thoits, 2010), which recognize the significance of resource accumulation or depletion across both individual lifetimes and generations. By acknowledging generational and structural factors beyond experiences of marginalization and economic constraint, the PWT can expand its utility and position itself among interdisciplinary efforts aimed at uncovering the underlying causes of barriers to decent work.

As the current study demonstrated, it is also important to consider the role of education not only in theoretical frameworks but also as a critical point of intervention. Individuals from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds often face limited access to educational resources prior to entering the workforce (Loignon & Woehr, 2018). However, existing policies have fallen short in addressing this issue, allowing the problem to exacerbate. Prior research finds that

children from affluent families are more likely to attain better quality jobs with higher earnings due to greater educational opportunities and college attendance (Goldin & Katz, 2000). In contrast, less than a third of impoverished Americans can afford college, leading to a significant decline in their chances of surpassing their parents' income levels over time. Compared to other nations with lower economic disparities, American children are disproportionately caught in cycles of poverty with much of this being due to flaws in the educational system and in ability to attain quality work (Chetty et al., 2017).

This educational gap between the privileged and disadvantaged is problematic not only for the attainment of decent work but also societally as the labor market increasingly favors highly skilled and educated workers. Even with college enrollment rates remaining historically high the public remains skeptical that today's colleges are preparing people for the workforce – especially as many graduates fail to secure decent work without graduate degrees (Pew Research Center, 2019). Indeed, in recent years as globalization and technology advances, low- and high-skilled employment opportunities have become more abundant and middle-skilled labor has steeply declined creating a U-shaped distribution (Alabdulkareem et al., 2018; Autor & Dorn, 2013; Tüzemen & Willis, 2013). Thus, only the most educated and skilled are securing the best employment opportunities and the middle-skilled workers are increasingly downwardly mobile. As such, policies aimed at investing in public goods like education (e.g., Federal Pell Grant Program), technology (e.g., Tech Hubs Program), and infrastructure (e.g., Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) play a pivotal role in training workers and creating job opportunities, particularly for those at the lower and middle echelons (Stiglitz, 2012). Such policies, coupled with equitable pay, can help to foster decent work opportunities for more individuals, decreasing

current inequity, and facilitating long-term prosperity (Bapuji et al., 2020; Doyle & Stiglitz, 2014).

Additionally, it could also be useful to examine the intergenerational transmission of decent (or lack thereof) work through a mental health lens. Indeed, there is quite a strong body of scholarship that documents the relation to mental health and well-being (e.g., Blustein, 2008; Paul & Moser, 2009) but has yet to examine subsequent effects of mental ill health on children. Perhaps, parents' mental health may serve as a mediator between parents' decent work and children's attainment of decent work down the road. Further, when parents lack decent work and subsequently struggle with maintaining mental health, various types of family dysfunction may emerge, such as increased marital conflict, parental abuse of drugs/alcohol, or parental divorce. Thus, lacking decent work could potentially lead to adverse childhood experiences and have substantial implications for children's life chances (e.g., relational, educational, social, and employment opportunity) and health and well-being (Metzler et al., 2017). Work is an integral aspect of societal functioning and without decent work, other aspects of life are sure to suffer as well.

In addition to an investigation of explanatory mechanisms between generations, there is also a need for increased research on when, how, and for whom advantages or disadvantages proliferate. For instance, how are some capable of elevating themselves beyond poverty and adversity and into more decent work and a better life? What is the role of human agency? For instance, perhaps some individuals may be able to build social capital which aids in increasing their likelihood of attaining more decent work. Individuals may also be able to move up in their organizations to more decent work as their tenure and skills increase. Accordingly, organizational or even occupational tenure or skill level could serve as moderators of the relationship between

one's initial endowment of resources and their attainment of decent work. Prior research has also found that proactive personality traits represent an aspect of human capital that can assist individuals with fewer resources (educational, economic, etc.) in overcoming barriers to upward mobility (Ayoub et al., 2018). Thus, perhaps these individuals may be more resilient to cycles of disadvantage and overcome many of the hindrances that limit their access to decent work. With that said though, childhood experiences may also limit one's development of proactive personality traits and lead to other more harmful traits (Grusnick et al., 2020) – particularly if these childhood experiences are especially stressful (e.g., poverty due to parental lack of decent work).

It is essential then, to also go beyond individual attributions and acknowledge the role of societal structures and public policy. What resources can be provided to offer individuals better employment opportunities and lift them out of poverty? What societal constraints hinder upward mobility in America? The topic of social class constraints has been hotly debated with some arguing that the presence of the working poor is essential for American consumerism – with poverty wages and limited access to decent work facilitating fast service, low prices, and American luxury. That is, a substantial portion of the workforce is intentionally subjected to oppressive conditions that prioritize convenience and profit over human dignity. For instance, according to Desmond (2023), "the working class and working poor – and now, even the working homeless – bear the costs of our appetites and amusements" (p. 104). The problem then, goes much beyond limited access to decent work to a broader systemic issue wherein the American worker becomes trapped in a cycle of exploitive work often lacking the social power to escape while others are allowed to benefit from their efforts.

This issue cannot be overlooked. There's a pressing need for increased research not only on the scope of the problem and the extensiveness of its effects – but on why it is allowed to continue in the first place. The United States has increasingly embraced class extremities, having substantial implications for the workforce (Bapuji et al., 2020; Doyle & Stiglitz, 2014). Economic inequality has surged over the years (about a 20% increase from 1980 to 2016; Pew Research Center, 2020), thereby widening disparities and eroding the middle class. As corporate monopolies emerge, workers lose bargaining power and excessive rent-seeking behavior proliferates (Doyle & Stiglitz, 2014; Stiglitz, 2012). Monopolistic corporations (e.g., Walmart) are known to actively undermine union efforts advocating for workers (e.g., Murmello, 2013), necessitating stronger regulations from policymakers and active pushback from consumers.

Moreover, as the US becomes increasingly less progressive in tax policy, harmful wage practices are exacerbated, burdening low- and middle-income earners (Saez, & Zucman, 2020; Stiglitz, 2012). As the current study demonstrated, lack of decent work is harmful to worker health and well-being – even intergenerationally. IO Psychologists must not turn a blind eye. Organizations have the ability to influence policy. Thus, they can—and should—exert this influence to enact positive change for society and the workforce. By building on their efforts to enhance wages internally, corporate leaders can champion initiatives for increased worker protections, fair wages, and decent working conditions. From leaders, policymakers, practitioners, and academics there must be a collective and active refusal to accept a reality wherein entire generations of workers become entrapped in work that is far from decent, safe, healthy, or equitable.

Conclusion

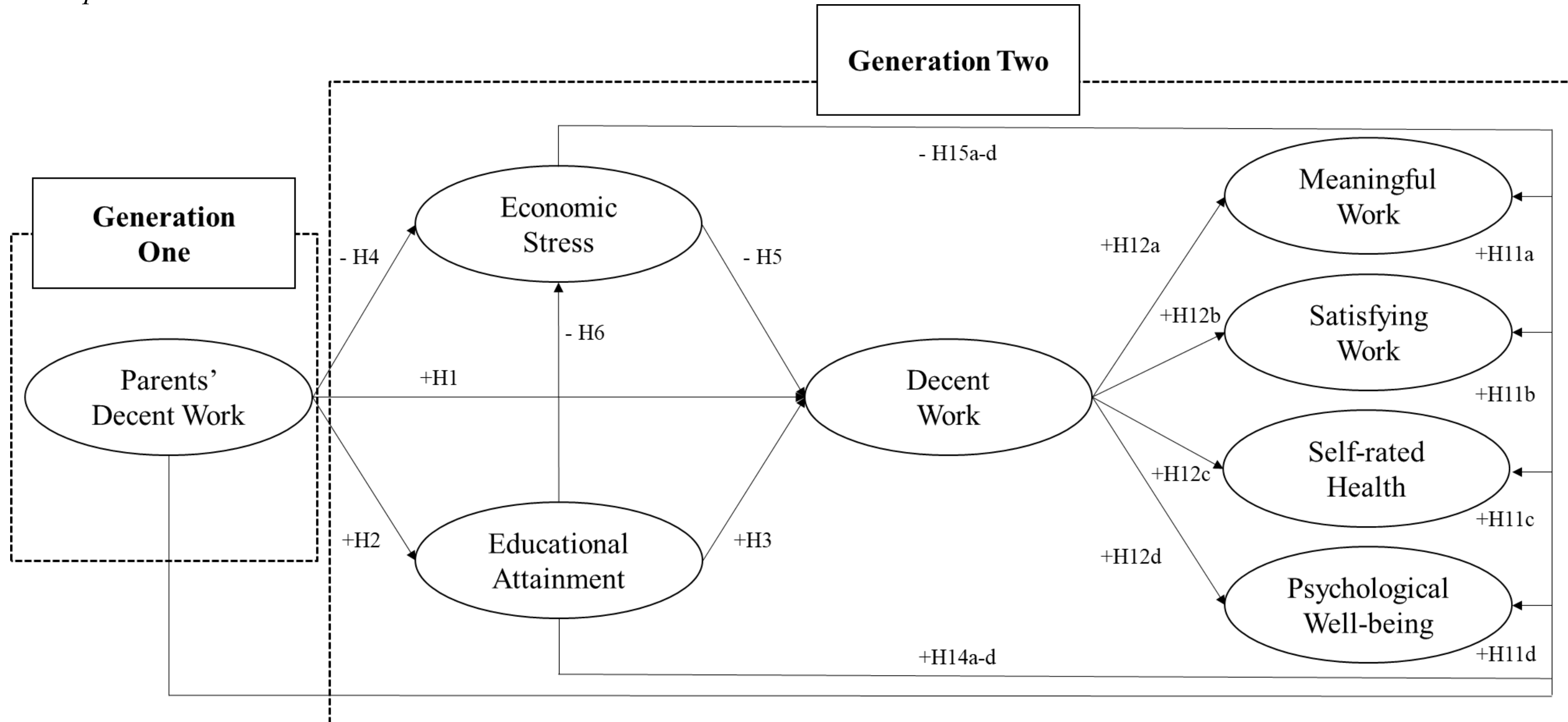
In conclusion, this dissertation found that the decency of parents' work has important implications for the lives of children even decades down the road with decent work relating to higher educational attainment, less economic stress, a greater likelihood attaining decent work, and ultimately, enhanced psychological well-being. Thus, not only are advocacy efforts important for improving the occupational health and well-being of workers themselves, but also essential for families and subsequent generations. With this dissertation, I hope to encourage future interdisciplinary research to continue to investigate the implications of decent work which, as the results demonstrate, extend much further than previously thought.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Conceptual Model

Figure 1.
Conceptual Model.



Note. Indirect Effects: H7 = (H2 × H6); H8 = (H2 × H3); H9 = (H4 × H5); H10 = (H2 × H6 × H5); H13 = (H1 × H12); H16 = (H2 × H14); H17 = (H4 × H15); H18 = (H3 × H12); H19 = (H5 × H12); H20 = (H2 × H3 × H12); H21 = (H4 × H5 × H12); H22 = (H2 × H6 × H5 × H12).

Appendix B

Tables

Table 1.
Factor loadings for Decent Work.

Economic Stressors	Factor 1
How secure is your primary job?	0.54
Would you consider your pay "good pay" for the work you do?	0.57
There is little opportunity for advancement on my job.	0.45
Physical Stressors	Factor 2
How often are you exposed to excessive heat, cold, or noise at work?	0.27
Psychological Stressors	Factor 3
Job worries or problems distract you when you are at home.	0.68
Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home.	0.67
How often are you held responsible for things that are really outside your control?	0.36
I have too much work to do everything well.	0.56
I feel drained of my energy when I get off work	0.79

Note. All decent work items were coded such that higher values indicated higher decent work.

Table 2.
Factor loadings for Economic Stressors.

	Factor 1
Charged residence to save money.	0.56
Gotten behind on mortgage payments.	0.60
Had your home foreclosed.	1.03
	Factor 2
Taken on a second (part-time) job to help meet living expenses.	0.65
Started a home-based business.	0.49
Worked longer hours.	0.69
	Factor 3
Sold possessions or property.	0.44
Received government assistance.	0.78
Bartered with others for goods or services.	0.54
	Factor 4
Taken more responsibility at home so that your spouse or partner could work more hours or work outside the home.	0.42
Used savings to meet daily living expenses.	0.61
Purchased more items on credit than you used to.	0.59
Postponed major household purchases.	0.74
Purchased used goods rather than new.	0.61
Reduced charitable contributions.	0.68
Changed food shopping or eating habits to save money.	0.78
Reduced household utility use to save money.	0.63
Cut back on social and entertainment expenses.	0.71
Postponed medical or dental care.	0.44

Table 3.
Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals.

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Decent Work	-0.07	0.52							
2. Parents' Decent Work	-0.06	1.97	-.04 [-.14, .07]						
3. Educational Attainment	5.92	1.71	-.01 [-.11, .10]	.21** [.10, .31]					
4. Economic Stress	-0.15	0.29	-.40** [-.48, -.31]	-.11* [-.21, -.01]	-.02 [-.13, .08]				
5. Meaningful Work	3.86	0.83	.04 [-.07, .14]	.07 [-.03, .18]	.08 [-.02, .19]	-.05 [-.15, .06]			
6. Satisfying Work	4.29	1.19	.12* [.01, .22]	.07 [-.04, .17]	.08 [-.02, .19]	-.08 [-.18, .03]	.36** [.26, .45]		
7. Health	3.52	0.82	.18** [.08, .28]	.09 [-.02, .19]	.14* [.03, .24]	-.36** [-.45, -.27]	.10 [-.01, .20]	.12* [.01, .22]	
8. Psychological Well-Being	1.05	0.54	.41** [.32, .49]	.02 [-.08, .13]	.00 [-.10, .11]	-.43** [-.51, -.34]	.02 [-.08, .13]	.05 [-.06, .15]	.14* [.03, .24]

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. Decent Work, Parent's Decent Work, Economic Constraints, and Psychological Well-Being are all latent variables. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

Table 4.
Standardized and Unstandardized Direct Effects from Structural Equation Model.

	b	*β*	*z*	*p*
Hypothesis 1:				
Parent DW → Child DW	-0.013	-0.045	-0.730	.465
Hypothesis 2:				
Parent DW → Child Education	0.176*	0.205*	3.819	< .001
Hypothesis 3:				
Child Education → Child DW	-0.038	-0.110	-1.725	.084
Hypothesis 4:				
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress	-0.008	-0.049	-0.725	.468
Hypothesis 5:				
Child Economic Stress → Child DW	-0.603*	-0.349*	-4.005	<.001
Hypothesis 6:				
Child Education → Child Economic Stress	-0.044*	-0.221*	-3.153	.002
Hypothesis 11:				
Parent DW → Meaningful Work	0.023	0.056	0.999	.318
Parent DW → Satisfying Work	0.032	0.054	0.966	.334
Parent DW → Health	0.021	0.050	0.921	.357
Parent DW → Well-Being	0.001	0.004	0.070	.944
Hypothesis 12:				
Child DW → Meaningful Work	0.049	0.034	0.512	.609
Child DW → Satisfying Work	0.219	0.108	1.611	.107
Child DW → Health	0.119	0.085	1.303	.193
Child DW → Well-Being	0.257*	0.280*	3.982	<.001
Hypothesis 14:				
Child Education → Meaningful Work	0.035	0.072	1.255	.210
Child Education → Satisfying Work	0.051	0.074	1.289	.198
Child Education → Health	0.033	0.069	1.231	.218
Child Education → Well-Being	0.004	0.013	0.239	.811
Hypothesis 15:				
Child Economic Stress → Meaningful Work	-0.023	-0.009	-0.124	.901
Child Economic Stress → Satisfying Work	-0.026	-0.008	-0.102	.919

Child Economic Stress → Health	-0.625*	-0.258*	-3.313	.001
Child Economic Stress → Well-Being	- 0.466*	-0.294*	-3.578	<.001

Notes. *N* = 345. DW = Decent Work. * denotes significant effect at α = .05.

Table 5.
Standardized and Unstandardized Indirect Effects from Structural Equation Model.

	b	*β*	*z*	*p*
Hypothesis 7:				
Parent DW → Child Education → Economic Stress	-0.008*	-0.045*	-2.432	.015
Hypothesis 8:				
Parent DW → Child Education → DW	-0.007	-0.022	-1.573	.116
Hypothesis 9:				
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → DW	0.005	0.017	0.717	.473
Hypothesis 10:				
Parent DW → Child Education → Economic Stress → DW	0.005*	0.016*	2.176	.030
Hypothesis 13:				
Parent DW → Child DW → Meaningful Work	-0.001	-0.002	-0.419	.675
Parent DW → Child DW → Satisfying Work	-0.003	-0.005	-0.666	.506
Parent DW → Child DW → Health	-0.002	-0.004	-0.639	.523
Parent DW → Child DW → Well-Being	-0.003	-0.013	-0.720	.471
Hypothesis 16:				
Parent DW → Child Education → Meaningful Work	0.006	0.015	1.192	.233
Parent DW → Child Education → Satisfying Work	0.009	0.015	1.221	.222
Parent DW → Child Education → Health	0.006	0.014	1.172	.241
Parent DW → Child Education → Well-Being	0.001	0.003	0.239	.811
Hypothesis 17:				
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → Meaningful Work	0.000	0.000	0.122	.903
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → Satisfying Work	0.000	0.000	0.101	.920
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → Health	0.005	0.013	0.712	.477
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → Well-Being	0.004	0.014	0.714	.475
Hypothesis 18:				
Child Education → DW → Meaningful Work	-0.002	-0.004	-0.491	.623
Child Education → DW → Satisfying Work	-0.008	-0.012	-1.184	.237
Child Education → DW → Health	-0.005	-0.009	-1.061	.289
Child Education → DW → Well-Being	-0.010	-0.031	-1.617	.106
Hypothesis 19:				
Child Economic Stress → DW → Meaningful Work	-0.029	-0.012	-0.508	.611
Child Economic Stress → DW → Satisfying Work	-0.132	-0.038	-1.507	.132

Child Economic Stress → DW → Health	-0.072	-0.030	-1.285	.199
Child Economic Stress → DW → Well-Being	-0.155*	-0.098*	-3.079	.002
Hypothesis 20:				
Parent DW → Child Education → DW → Meaningful Work	-0.000	-0.001	-0.487	.626
Parent DW → Child Education → DW → Satisfying Work	-0.001	-0.002	-1.131	.258
Parent DW → Child Education → DW → Health	-0.001	-0.002	-1.022	.307
Parent DW → Child Education → DW → Well-Being	-0.002	-0.006	-1.489	.136
Hypothesis 21:				
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → DW → Meaningful Work	0.000	0.001	0.417	.677
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → DW → Satisfying Work	0.001	0.002	0.656	.512
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → DW → Health	0.001	0.001	0.634	.526
Parent DW → Child Economic Stress → DW → Well-Being	0.001	0.005	0.709	.478
Hypothesis 22:				
Parent DW → Child Education → Economic Stress → DW → Meaningful Work	0.001	0.001	0.499	.618
Parent DW → Child Education → Economic Stress → DW → Satisfying Work	0.001	0.002	1.303	.193
Parent DW → Child Education → Economic Stress → DW → Health	0.001	0.001	1.153	.249
Parent DW → Child Education → Economic Stress → DW → Well-Being	0.001*	0.004*	1.985	.047

Note. *N* = 345. DW = Decent Work. * denotes significant effect at α = .05.

Appendix C

Measure of Meaningful Work

"At your primary job, how often do you feel that your work is meaningful and important?"

1 = Almost Never

2 = Rarely

3 = Sometimes

4 = Often

5 = Always

Appendix D

Measure of Satisfying Work

"All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job as a whole?"

1 = Extremely dissatisfied

2 = Very dissatisfied

3 = Somewhat dissatisfied

4 = Somewhat satisfied

5 = Very satisfied

6 = Extremely satisfied

Appendix E

Measure of Health

Note: Health was coded such that higher values indicated better health.

"In general, would you say your health is?"

1 = Excellent

2 = Very good

3 = Good

4 = Fair

5 = Poor

Appendix F

Measure of Psychological Well-being

Note: Psychological well-being was coded such that higher values indicated better well-being.

1. “Have you been under any strain, stress, or pressure?”
2. “Have you been anxious or worried?”
3. “Have you felt tired, worn out, or exhausted?”
4. “Have you felt downhearted and blue?”
5. “Have you felt tense or "high strung"?”
6. “Have you been moody or brooded about things?”
7. “Have you felt depressed?”
8. “Have you been in low or very low spirits?”
9. “Have you felt lonely?”

Response Options:

1 = None of the time

2 = A little of the time

3 = Some of the time

4 = Most of the time

5 = All of the time

Appendix G

Measure of Educational Attainment

“What is the highest level of education you have completed?”

1 = Elementary or junior high school

2 = GED

3 = High school

4 = Technical or vocational school

5 = Associate degree

6 = Some college

7 = Bachelor's degree

8 = Master's degree

9 = Ph.D. or professional degree

Appendix H

Measure of Economic Stressors

"During the past two years, have you made any of the following adjustments because of financial need?"

0 = No

1 = Yes

Note: Higher scores indicate more economic stressors.

1. Taken on a second (part-time) job to help meet living expenses.
2. Started a home-based business.
3. Worked longer hours.
4. Taken more responsibility at home so that your spouse or partner could work more hours or work outside the home.
5. Used savings to meet daily living expenses.
6. Sold possessions or property.
7. Purchased more items on credit than you used to.
8. Postponed major household purchases.
9. Purchased used goods rather than new.
10. Charged residence to save money.
11. Reduced charitable contributions.
12. Changed food shopping or eating habits to save money.
13. Reduced household utility use to save money.
14. Cut back on social and entertainment expenses.
15. Postponed medical or dental care.
16. Gotten behind on mortgage payments.
17. Received government assistance.
18. Bartered with others for goods or services.
19. Had your home foreclosed.

Appendix I

Measure of Parent Job Strain

Note: Both parents were asked the following questions regarding their work. Items were coded such that higher values indicated less job strain and reflected more decent work.

"The following questions are about your experiences at work."

1. "How often do you have to work under time pressure?"

   1 = Almost always
   2 = Often
   3 = Sometimes
   4 = Rarely
   5 = Never

2. "How much control do you have over the way you spend your time at work - over when and how long you work on the various parts of your job?"

   1 = Complete control over the way I spend my time at work.
   2 = A great deal of control.
   3 = A fair amount of control.
   4 = Some, but not much control.
   5 = Almost no control at all.

3. "Overall, how much freedom do you have to make important decisions about what you do at work and how you do it?"

   1 = Complete freedom in deciding what I do and how I do it.
   2 = A great deal of freedom.
   3 = A fair amount of freedom.
   4 = Some, but not much freedom.
   5 = Almost none at all.

4. "Do you have to think of new ways of doing things or solving problems on your job?"

   1 = Almost always
   2 = Often
   3 = Sometimes
   4 = Rarely
   5 = Never

Appendix J

Measure of Parent Employment Stability

Note: Both parents were asked their employment situation from the birth of their child each year until they were 18 years old. My measure of unemployment is a count of years a parent experienced unemployment from the birth of the child until they were 18 years old (i.e., with a range of 0 – 18)

> "Think about the years since the ninth grader who is in our study was born. We want to know your employment situation for each year of your child's life. On the next page, circle all the numbers that apply for each year. For example, during the first year of your child's life, if you were not employed (out of the labor force) and then employed part time, you would circle numbers 2 and 4 on the first line."

(Birth-18) Unemployed

1 = Circled

0 = Not circled

Appendix K

Measure of Parent Household Income

Note: Both parents were asked the following question.

"What was your total household income in 1987 before taxes?"

1 = under $5,000

2 = $5,000 9,999

3 = $10,000 - 14,999

4 = $15,000 - 19,999

5 = $20,000 - 29,999

6 = $30,000 - 39,999

7 = $40,000 - 49,999

8 = $50,000 - 59,999

9 = $60,000 - 69,999

10 = $70,000 - 79,999

11 = $80,000 - 89,999

12 = $90,000 – 99,999

13 = $100,000 or more

Appendix L

Indicators of Decent Work Latent Variable

Note: All items were coded such that higher values indicated more decent work.

1. "How often are you exposed to excessive heat, cold, or noise at work?"

   - 1 Almost Never
   - 2 Rarely
   - 3 Sometimes
   - 4 Often
   - 5 Always

2. "How often are you held responsible for things that are really outside your control?"

   - 1 Almost Never
   - 2 Rarely
   - 3 Sometimes
   - 4 Often
   - 5 Always

3. "I have too much work to do everything well."

   - 1 Not at all true
   - 2 A little true
   - 3 Somewhat true
   - 4 Very true

4. "I feel drained of my energy when I get off work."

   - 1 Not at all true
   - 2 A little true
   - 3 Somewhat true
   - 4 Very true

5. "Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home."

   - 1 Never
   - 2 Rarely
   - 3 Sometimes
   - 4 Most of the time
   - 5 All of the time

6. "Job worries or problems distract you when you are at home."

- 1 Never
- 2 Rarely
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Most of the time
- 5 All of the time

7. “Would you consider your pay "good pay" for the work you do?”

   - 1 Yes, definitely
   - 2 Yes, it is pretty good
   - 3 I am not sure
   - 4 No, the pay is not good

8. “How secure is your primary job?”

   - 1 Not at all secure
   - 2 Somewhat secure
   - 3 Secure
   - 4 Very secure

9. “There is little opportunity for advancement on my job.”

   - 1 Not at all true
   - 2 A little true
   - 3 Somewhat true
   - 4 Very true

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