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Testing the Psychology of Working Theory Among Economically Marginalized Workers

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TESTING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WORKING THEORY AMONG ECONOMICALLY
MARGINALIZED WORKERS

by

Willy Anthony Diaz Tapia

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

TESTING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WORKING THEORY AMONG ECONOMICALLY MARGINALIZED WORKERS

by

Willy Anthony Diaz Tapia

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2022
Under the Supervision of Professor Kelsey Autin

In 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that approximately 39.7 million U.S. Americans lived in poverty of which 6.9 million were considered the working poor. People from economically marginalized communities experience significant challenges in many areas of life and work is no exception; yet their work lives continue to be underrepresented in vocational literature. The Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) is one of the first vocational theories developed explicitly to better understand and support communities that experience marginalization and economic constraints, but it has yet to be tested among economically marginalized communities. This study is the first known examination to test PWT propositions among a sample representative of economically marginalized workers. Through conducting this study, I sought to answer two questions by testing 14 PWT propositions (see Figure 2 for hypothesized paths): (1) do contextual factors (i.e., economic constraints and marginalization) impact a person's ability to secure decent work; and (2) does career adaptability and work volition mediate the relation from contextual barriers to attainment of decent work? I used structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the 14 PWT propositions. Results generally supported PWT propositions and suggest that it is applicable and culturally attuned to the experiences of economically marginalized workers. Practical implications were discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In 2018, more Americans were living in poverty than people living in New York and Illinois combined; and that is without accounting for the economic impact of COVID-19. In 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that approximately 39.7 million Americans lived in poverty (Census Bureau, 2018). Of those 6.9 million were considered the working poor; and yet there are few existing vocational theories that appropriately conceptualize and predict work outcomes for impoverished Americans (Blustein, 2017).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) determined that there were three primary labor market issues that prevented workers from escaping poverty: low wages, involuntary part-time work, and lapses in employment. Although prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the national unemployment rate was at a record low (approximately 4%), many of the growing occupational opportunities were in the sectors in which the BLS identified as vulnerable to the primary labor market issues that keep people in poverty: these include under-employment and unstable short-term job contracts, jobs with little to no benefits, and jobs with weak or no union support (Kalleberg, 2009). Researchers (Blustein, Connors-Kellgren, Olle, & Diamonti, 2017; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017) have documented that the employment protections provided by labor unions are gradually declining or vanishing for people living in poverty in the working class. They claim that the decline in union power is significantly restructuring work and progressively leading to more unstable employment.

Poverty rates have seen little change since 2017: The poverty rate for those between the ages of 18 – 64 dropped by less than half a percentage point (11.1 to 10.7 percent) between 2017

and 2018, while the rate for individuals 65 and older remained stagnant at 9.7 percent (Semega, Kollar, Creamer, & Mohanty, 2019). Between those same years, Americans age 25 and older without a high school diploma faced a 1.4 percent increase in poverty rates (Semega et al., 2019). The unremarkable changes in poverty rates are no surprise when considering Stiglitz's (2015) claim that wages have stayed stagnant for almost an entire decade despite significant increases in the cost of living. Similarly, the most recent report published on the BLS website stated the median U.S. household income was not statistically different between 2017 and 2018 (Semega et al., 2019). Given that poverty rates and wages have seen marginal improvements, it is critical that vocational psychologists develop theories and interventions to serve economically marginalized workers who have been neglected in vocational research. This is especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic given that millions of former workers are only avoiding poverty due to expanded unemployment insurance and scarce stimulus payments (Han, Meyer & Sullivan, 2021).

In this study, I sought to address the dearth of vocational literature examining the work experiences of low-income and economically marginalized workers. Specifically, I tested an emerging vocational theory—Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) that was specifically developed to better understand and support marginalized communities that experience economic constraints (Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016).

BACKGROUND

Working is a complex process that has many facets, meanings, and manifestations. According to Blustein (2019), the meaning of work depends on factors like culture, socioeconomic privilege, and individual differences in perceptions about work. For the privileged (e.g., cisgender, White, male, middle class and above), work may be an opportunity to

engage in endeavors one finds intellectually stimulating, motivating, and meaningful (Blustein, 2019). Others may define work as an opportunity to produce and provide a contribution to our society and economy (Blustein, 2019). Work may also be defined as the amount of energy and time a person spends on an activity that provides economic returns required for human existence (Blustein, 2019). Caregiving and other household tasks are also part of the working experience that play a critical role in the larger society (Budd, 2011). Blustein (2006) argued that work can also be viewed as a means to gain sociocultural power and self-determination. According to the BLS American Time Use Survey (2018), employed Americans spend about one-third of their lives engaging in paid work and work-related activity (excluding household work). It is no surprise why vocational psychologists consider work a central human experience that is fundamental to our existence.

Vocational psychologists have investigated work-related topics for decades. After engaging in fieldwork and providing vocational support to economically disadvantaged youth, Frank Parsons (1909) wrote one of the first publications on vocational psychology. Parsons (1909) is known for pioneering a strategy to help individuals select a vocation based on individual interest, knowledge of work tasks, and logical reasoning. The central idea was that individuals can match their personalities, values, and interest with specific career opportunities. Since Parsons's (1909) work, vocational psychology has integrated occupation-personality fit theories, developmental perspectives, constructivist perspectives, and social-cognitive models. According to Pope's (2000) thorough review of vocational publications, Parson's (1909) intervention was commonly integrated into most career counseling theories. One of those theories was Holland's (1997) theory of career personality types, in which client personalities are assessed and matched with corresponding career types. Recently, Holland's (1997) person-

environment fit theory along with developmental, constructivist, and social cognitive models have been criticized because they primarily focus on analyzing how people select satisfying careers without accounting for contextual barriers that can inhibit career selection (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016).

In addition to the work on career selection, investigators have researched topics about employment and its association with well-being. In a meta-analysis, Parker, Baltes, Young, Huff, Altmann, LaCost, and Roberts (2003) echoed the results in Murphy and Athanasou (1999) when they claimed that positive work experiences are positively associated with indicators of well-being. McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, and Kinicki, (2005) conducted an analysis of the physical and psychological impact of unemployment. They stated unemployment is correlated with poor mental health outcomes (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Although there have been great strides in career theory, vocational research has historically been limited in scope and reach (Blustein, 2017). Since the founding of career counseling, it has been criticized by academics and advocates of social inclusion (Blustein, 2017).

According to Blustein (2017), since the time of Parsons, investigators have criticized vocational theory for its hyper-focus on serving middle-class and wealthy workers. Vocational theorists to date have had a primary emphasis on supporting those with the privilege to afford higher education (Blustein, 2017). Other similar critiques took place when vocational psychologists began recognizing the downward spiral of the “American dream” during periods of economic recession (Warnath, 1975). About a decade later, Betz and Fitzgerald, (1987) criticized the primary vocational theories for having a biased focus towards serving male clients and excluding women. During the same time, sociologist Hochschild (1989) highlighted the fact that women don’t only work in paid jobs but are required to adopt a “second shift”– spending time

and energy completing household tasks. In 1993, Richardson presented a compelling social justice-based argument where she called for the inclusion of unpaid work (e.g. caregiving) in vocational investigations. Smith (1983) advocated for increased investigations about the effects that discrimination and repression can have on therapeutic settings and in academia. Sadly, after those calls for inclusive perspectives, the working poor continued to be ignored by the majority of vocational investigations (Blustein, 2017).

In 2007, Fouad provided an outline of the “assumptions” that have historically served as the basis for developing career theory. She explained that career theories have been developed based on 5 assumptions (Fouad, 2007, p. 555): (1) everyone can make work-related choices; (2) work is an isolated part of people’s lived experiences; (3) the world of work is predictable; (4) people will only make one career choice; and (5) vocational counseling is composed of short-term interventions. The five assumptions that have driven career theory are becoming less applicable in the 21st century (Fouad, 2007). Fouad (2007) explained external forces like the transforming global economy, a person’s ability status, and economic standing conflict with some of the 5 basic assumptions that have driven career theory for decades. Fouad (2007) concluded the article by calling for researchers to expand their research focus beyond the 5 basic assumptions and also pointed out that there is a lack of vocational research involving social class status.

By the mid-2000s, activists and scholars began to develop more inclusive frameworks (Blustein, 2006). During the same time that Fouad (2007) reviewed the 5 basic assumptions of career theory, Blustein (2006) acknowledged shortcomings in the traditional assumptions that have influenced most vocational theories and developed more inclusive assumptions. Those assumptions include the following: (1) work is a critical component of human life and it is

connected to mental health; (2) all epistemology about working should be considered without privileging one epistemology over others; (3) vocational psychologists should be inclusive when studying work-related topics; (4) job-related activity may be interconnected to non-work activity, (5) work should include paid employment and non-paid employment (e.g. caregiving); (6) work can help meet several human needs including the need for power, survival, social connection, and self-determination; and (7) to understand the psychological aspects of work one should consider the ecological systems that influence work (e.g. history, politics, economics, and other social forces).

In his book, Blustein (2006) also delineated one of the first vocational frameworks intended to support marginalized workers, the Psychology of Working Framework (PWF). PWF integrates a range of pertinent social science research on the study of work; Blustein (2006) drew from psychology, sociology, economics, and other relevant areas of study to develop a holistic framework to support disadvantaged communities. Blustein (2006) highlighted the distinction between hierarchical careers and work and advocated for research that also incorporates working-class employment. He explained that work can fulfill several social and individual functions including the need for power, interpersonal connection, self-determination, and the need for survival. Blustein (2006) shed light on forces that can affect work including marginalization due to race, ethnicity, social class, poverty, ability status, and other identities. He spoke about an integrative therapeutic approach to vocational counseling that would help support those who do not have the luxury of “choice” when making work-related decisions (e.g. undocumented migrants and people living “paycheck to paycheck”).

In an effort to create a framework for more defined empirical work based on Blustein’s PWF, Duffy, Blustein and colleagues (2016) developed Psychology of Working Theory (PWT).

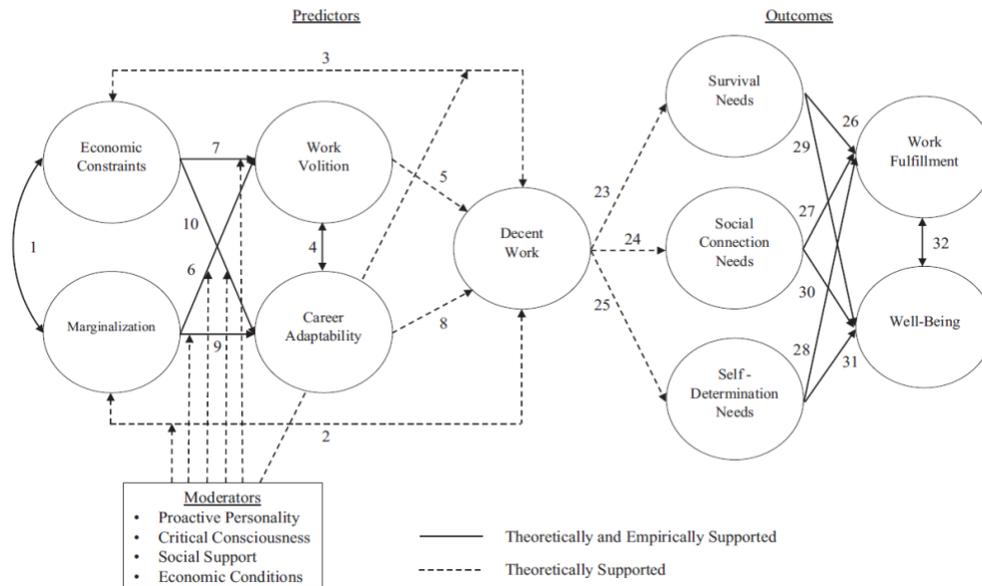
The PWT was built on the foundational tenets of PWF and generated a set of directional paths within a testable model that can support therapeutic intervention.

The PWT model is composed of 14 variables (see Figure 1 below) and divided into 3 categories: (1) predictors of decent work (economic constraints, marginalization, work volition, career adaptability); (2) moderators that impact the route to decent work (proactive personality, critical consciousness, social support, and economic conditions); and (3) outcomes of decent work (survival needs, social connection needs, self-determination needs, work fulfillment, and well-being). The model posits that economic constraints (e.g. lack of access to social resources), marginalization (e.g. racism and sexism), work volition (e.g. perception of choice in career selection), and career adaptability (e.g. ability to cope with a changing work environment) can affect a person's ability to access decent work. The model suggests that proactive personality, critical consciousness, social support, and economic conditions are likely to moderate the relationships between marginalization and economic constraints to career adaptability, work volition and ultimately access to decent work. Duffy, Blustein, and colleagues (2016) state that decent work predicts three basic human needs (need for survival, social connection, and self-determination) which mediate relations to work fulfillment and well-being.

The development of the PWT contributed to vocational psychologists' aims to meet multicultural standards of inclusivity and social justice. It provides a model that can facilitate investigations intended to support disenfranchised groups (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016). It counters the notion that research designed to support White middle-class students applies to economically marginalized communities.

Figure 1

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WORKING THEORY



The PWT not only aims to comprehend and to support marginalized communities by getting an understanding of surface level concerns; the PWT aligns with American Psychological Association’s (APA; 2017) multicultural standards by aspiring a historical understanding of peoples’ experiences with oppression.

Although the development of PWT is a movement in the correct direction for vocational psychology, there is one critical limitation: it has not been tested among a sample of working Americans who experience economic marginalization. This dissertation seeks to test the PWT model on said population. By examining PWT on economically marginalized communities, vocational counselors may get a better understanding of individual and systemic variables that must be addressed to adequately support the 39.7 million Americans living in poverty whom have largely been dismissed in vocational theory (Blustein, 2017).

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Career adaptability: an individual's capacity to adjust to changing work environments and values (Savickas, 2002)

Decent work: employment that meets minimum standards for the essentials of life (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016; ILO, 1999; ILO, 2013). Duffy, Blustein, and colleagues (2016) define 5 factors that comprise decent work: adequate healthcare, physical and psychological safety, adequate compensation, adequate rest and leisure time, as well as organizational values that complement family and social values (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016; ILO, 1999; ILO, 2013)

Economic constraints: limited economic resources (e.g., household income, family wealth) which represent a critical barrier to securing decent work (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016, p.133)

Intersectionality: a paradigm that addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect with one another and relate to inequality, such as racism, genderism, heterosexism, ageism, and classism, among other variables (APA, 2017, p. 166)

Marginalization: is the relegation of people to a less significant or excluded position in a society characterized by a lack of privilege and power (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016). People who are marginalized lack protection and integration into the mainstream social, political, and/or economic system which can lead to diminished opportunities and unequal access to means for survival (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016).

Multicultural: the coexistence of diverse cultures that reflect varying reference group identities (APA, 2017). Multicultural can embody the coexistence of cultures within an individual, family, group, or organization (APA, 2017, p.167)

The Psychology of Working Framework (PWF): In 2006, Blustein introduced PWF which is one of the first theoretical frameworks in vocational scholarship specifically designed to better understand and support marginalized workers. PWF supplements previous vocational theory by emphasizing that privilege, social class status, and lack of choice play a principal part in job selection and fulfillment at work (Blustein, 2006).

Psychology of Working Theory (PWT): the theoretical framework that was developed as an extension of PWF. The development of the PWT introduced a set of testable hypotheses based on PWF (Duffy, Blustein et al. (2016).

Work volition: is defined as a person's perception of choice in vocational decision-making despite constraints (Duffy, Diemer, Perry, Laurenzi, & Torrey, 2012).

Social class: a higher-order construct representing an individual or group's relative position in an economic-social-cultural hierarchy (Diemer, Mistry Wadsworth, Lopez, and Reimerz's, 2013)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an umbrella term for a broad span of multivariate analysis aimed at examining structural relations between observed and latent variables. It is used to evaluate confirmatory hypotheses such as the adequacy of a theoretical model in fitting a sample population (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Central to PWT is the multidimensional concept of decent work. All additional PWT variables are either predictors of decent work, outcomes of decent work, or moderators that impact paths to the attainment of decent work. The literature review will begin with a review of decent work followed by an analysis of the predictors, moderators, and outcomes of decent work.

Decent Work

The construct of *decent work*, as defined in the PWT, gained the attention of researchers after the International Labor Organization (ILO, 1999) identified it as a standard human right that should be accessible to all workers. Since 1999, the ILO has built a social justice initiative to help workers attain decent and productive work. They argued that decent work would facilitate economic fairness for men and women in a free, safe, and dignified economy and that setting international work benchmarks of decent employment would help promote a global economy that benefits all workers (ILO, 1999).

Core to the ILO's (1999) decent work initiative are four interconnected pillars: (1) developing a structurally and economically sustainable environment that generates necessary employment; (2) generating and improving sustainable measures of social protection (e.g. opportunities to engage in collective negotiations); (3) fostering an environment where states, labor unions, and employers can have productive dialog; (4) making certain that all people, regardless of their identities (e.g. gender), are provided with an occupational environment that permits reasonable work hours, embraces social/ family values, provides adequate payment for the work conducted, proper benefits in the event of a job loss, and access to suitable medical care.

Since ILO put forth its standard of promoting decent and productive work, researchers have sought out to conceptualize and operationalize decent work. In an ILO manuscript, Anker, Chernyshev, Egger, Mehran, and Ritter (2003) helped clarify the meaning of decent work and develop indicators that can be analyzed and compared in future studies. In their analysis, they identified six overarching facets of decent work: (1) the capability to find employment; (2) opportunity to become employed in an area of choice; (3) jobs that produce satisfactory livelihoods for employees as well as sustainable progress for states; (4) reasonable and equal treatment for all people; (5) protected livelihood and wellbeing including in the event of unwarranted circumstances (e.g. illness that impairs ability to work); and, (6) a respectful work environment for all employees and opportunities for employees to engage in their companies decision-making process. The ILO also developed thirty statistical indicators to measure the six overarching principles. The statistical indicators covered eleven categories including: workplace communication and relations (e.g. union membership opportunities); ample work opportunities, unjust working practices (e.g. child labor); work-life balance; social protections; proper working conditions; decent work time; societal influences; stable employment; fair wages; and fair treatment.

Although the ILO engaged in efforts to operationalize the meaning of decent work, investigators criticized the decent work agenda for being too abstract. Standing (2008) reported that the intangible nature of decent work made it confusing and ineffective as a tool to criticize economic policies and labor practices. Standing (2008) went further and stated that as it stood, the decent work agenda was ill-equipped to produce justice-oriented outcomes.

After acknowledging the limitations to the decent work agenda, the continuation of workers' rights abuses, and the challenges associated with an increasingly globalized economy,

the ILO responded by making the decent work agenda more practical, measurable, and outcome-based. In 2013, ILO published a 257-page manuscript dedicated to the operationalization of the decent work agenda. It was devoted to decreasing ambiguity and providing the tools needed to develop a thorough analysis of the various facets of decent work. It had a central focus on accelerating the research needed to develop a sustainable and just global economy (ILO, 2013). In their report, the ILO (2013) committed a chapter to each of their newly refined 10 dimensions (employment opportunities; adequate earnings and productive work; decent working time; combining work, family and personal life; work that should be abolished; stability and security of work; equal opportunity and treatment in employment; safe work environment; social security; and social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation) of decency in the work environment. In addition to defining each of the dimensions, they provided a theoretical rationale for each variable, suggested methods for measurement, and explained how results should be interpreted.

Although such publication seems to be an appropriate response to some of the criticism highlighted by Standing (2008), the operationalization and refinement of decent work concepts do not resolve all of its shortcomings. Vocational psychologists may argue that the decent work agenda fails to account for vocational elements that are inseparable from the employment experience including work/life fulfillment, sense of purpose, and meaning. Moreover, Pouyaud (2016) argued the decent work agenda generally fails to account for individual work experiences given its focus on macro-level influencers. The author also claimed that ILO's definition of decent work may not parallel the definition of decent work prescribed by each individual worker. Blustein, Olle, Connors-Kellgren, and Diamonti (2016) agreed, noting that the decent work agenda lacked the individual-level experience. Blustein and colleagues (2016) claimed that

excluding the individual experience would result in an agenda that views workers as expendable commodities. However, Blustein (2019), reminded investigators that ILO's work is primarily dedicated to putting forth a foundational structure for the development of a fair and sensible labor system; by understanding the ILO's purpose and history, investigators can recognize that the decent work agenda is only the initiation phase in creating dignified work. Like Pouyaud (2016), Blustein and colleagues (2016) called for psychologists to help investigate the link between the ILO's macro-level agenda of decent work and workers' individual experience in the workplace.

For decades, psychologists have understood that work has an impact on peoples' lives, and recently, psychologists have begun to study psychological factors related to decent work. Duffy, Blustein, and colleagues (2016) analyzed the four primary pillars of the decent work agenda and concluded that the first three (i.e. (1) developing a structurally and economically sustainable environment that generates necessary employment; (2) generating and improving sustainable measures of social protection; (3) fostering an environment where states, labor unions, and employers can have productive dialog;) designations apply to workers at a macro-level and may adequately target the concern in today's globalized economy. They assert the fourth pillar (i.e. (4) making certain that all people, regardless of their identities, are provided with an occupational environment that permits reasonable work hours, embraces social/ family values, adequate payment for the work conducted, proper benefits in the event of a job loss, and access to suitable medical care) is more focused on individual workforce experiences; thus, they grounded the PWT definition of decent work on this fourth pillar of the ILO's decent work agenda. From a PWT perspective, decent work is defined as (a) Physical and interpersonally safe working conditions (e.g. no physical maltreatment) (b) hours that allow for free time and

adequate rest (c) organizational values that complement family and social values (d) adequate compensation and (e) access to adequate healthcare (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016. p130).

As stated by ILO and Blustein (2019), decent work is still a developing concept; research on the topic remains limited and a direction towards safe, stable, and dignified employment requires continued investigation especially among marginalized groups that experience undignified work.

Marginalization

Marginalization is characterized by the relegation of individuals to a less significant or excluded status in society characterized by a lack of privilege and power (Duffy Blustein, et al., 2016). People who experience marginalization in society lack protection and integration into the mainstream social system which can lead to decreased opportunities and uneven distribution of resources for survival (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016). Although experiences of marginalization have a significant impact on individuals and communities, there continues to be minimal research studies about marginalization within psychological publications. To illustrate, community psychologist Kagan and Burton (2010) conducted a search in PsycINFO utilizing the term ‘marginalization’ and found that, between 1876 and 2010, only 52 publications contained the term in their title. Out of the 52 publications, only 17 applied to people from oppressed communities. Furthermore, there are no specified research-based guidelines to help individuals understand the multifaceted characteristics of marginalization (Kagan & Burton, 2010). Kagan and Burton (2010) report that marginalization cannot be arranged into any conclusive types; marginalization has several dimensions, is caused by various forces, and requires a historical perspective to be understood. Intersectionality perspectives also highlight that multiple dimensions of identity and societal structures can intersect and result in marginalization

(American Psychological Association, 2020). Although forms of marginalization do not always fit into an exclusive typology, there are a few general forms of marginalization including social, political, and economic exclusion. Provided that economic constraints will be reviewed in detail in a later section, the focal points here will be social and political exclusion as well as a review of current vocational literature describing how marginalization affects minoritized groups.

Social marginalization develops in numerous ways. In many cases, social exclusion can be ascribed at birth based on gender, skin color, congenital abnormality, and so on. In other cases, marginalization is assigned and can change based on social standing (Kagan & Burton, 2010). For instance, a person who is ostracized for having acquired a physical disability may be treated more fairly after recovering from that injury. On the other hand, a privileged middle-aged man who has not experienced marginalization may eventually encounter marginalization due to old age. Marginalization can also differ based on social context. For example, some societies may discriminate against elderly populations while others have great respect for their elders.

Communities that experience social marginalization suffer from a shortage of social resources that are rendered important for one's livelihood (Kagan & Burton, 2010). Socially excluded populations are often marked with stigma and are viewed in a negative light by the oppressing group. They are often deprived of social capital and excluded from opportunities to positively contribute to their society (Kagan & Burton, 2010; Duffy et al., 2016). Social policies may exclude such groups from receiving an equal opportunity to attain a higher education when compared to the dominant group. Socially relegated groups may not receive other social benefits such as affordable housing, energy assistance, and government-sponsored vocational assistance (Kagan & Burton, 2010). One such example is undocumented populations in the U.S. who are

often ostracized by individuals and institutions; and as a result, lack resources necessary to become fully integrated into society.

Political marginalization involves suppressing a person's ability to engage in the democratic decision-making process and/or to benefit from political policy (Janusz & Lajevardi, 2016). Such marginalization may also make it difficult for the marginalized group to escape their marginalized status (Janusz & Lajevardi, 2016; Kagan & Burton, 2010). Moreover, as stated previously, political marginalization is often interconnected with other forms of marginalization because inadequate political support may lead to economic or social marginalization (Janusz & Lajevardi, 2016; Kagan & Burton, 2010).

Political exclusion impacts many minoritized groups. Although democratically nominated policymakers are presumed to advocate on behalf of their constituents, investigators have found that policymakers often fail to fairly represent the interests of Blacks and undocumented Latinx/a/o constituents (Mansbridge, 2003; Griffin & Newman, 2008; Hajnal, 2009; Janusz & Lajevardi, 2016). Another example of political exclusion may be the under-representation of women in positions of political power when compared to men. According to the Center for American Women in Politics (2018), only 20% of those appointed to congress in 2018 were female and only about 25.4% of the people in state legislature identified as women compared to approximately 80% and 75% male. Nevertheless, people in political positions often control the implementation of policies that will impact women such as reproductive health policies among others. Furthermore, based on the descriptions of political marginalization, people who are incarcerated and deprived of their right to vote would also be considered marginalized.

Marginalization may impact women, racial & ethnic minorities, undocumented migrants, refugees, sexual minorities, those with alternate abilities, as well as the elderly, religious minorities, and other disadvantaged communities (Sahoo, 2017). The following will review recent research pertaining to marginalization in a vocational context.

Benner and Wang (2015) analyzed the role that social exclusion has on racial and ethnic minorities. The authors examined data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, a survey administered to a nationally representative sample of middle and high school students. Out of the 7,731 participants, 8 percent were Asian American, 16 percent Latino/a, 21 percent African American, and 55 percent Caucasian. The sample was recruited from a combination of private and public middle schools and high schools. To measure marginalization, the surveyees were asked to identify their race and ethnic identity; the researchers categorized students into marginalized and non-marginalized categories based on whether or not the students were a numerical minority (< 15% of the student body) in their academic institution. Benner and Wang (2015) concluded there was moderate-strong evidence suggesting race-based marginalization predicts a lack of academic connection and ultimately depression symptoms and substance (marijuana and/or alcohol) use.

A critical limitation to Benner and Wang's (2015) article was their measure (or lack thereof) for marginalization. It is questionable whether or not their findings would stand if the study was replicated with a measure examining participant's perceived experiences of marginalization. Future studies should also consider the impact that historical marginalization has on the individual. Nevertheless, the findings in Benner and Wang's (2015) study provide initial verification that experiences of racial exclusion can potentially impact academics,

substance use, and mental health. Moreover, Benner and Wang's (2015) findings are similar to the conclusions made by Diemer and Blustein (2007).

Diemer and Blustein (2007) surveyed approximately two hundred students to investigate their career-related barriers and areas of resilience. The students were recruited from urban high schools within the U.S. and were asked to complete three vocational measurement tools. The authors argued that urban youth experienced a loss of connection to their work after encountering discrimination based on race. Diemer and Blustein's (2007) analysis found that a 4-factor (sense of connection to employment, identifying with the selected vocation, dedication to their selected vocation, and, salience of selected career) explanation best fit their model. Their 4-factor solution suggests having a sense of connection to a chosen career when confronted with marginalization (i.e. vocational hope) helps urban youth persevere. Diemer and Blustein's (2007) helped reinforce Benner and Wang's (2015) findings of the negative impact that marginalization can have on racially marginalized people.

Similar to Diemer and Blustein's (2007) study, Benner and Wang's (2015) analysis can be improved by using a scale to assess for experiences of perceived marginalization instead of solely relying on demographic characteristics when assessing for marginalization. Helms, Jernigan, and Mascher's (2005) hierarchical regression analysis showed that variables which can be conceptualized, measured, and manipulated (e.g. level of depression) produce far more meaningful results compared to the use of race as an independent variable. They report that racial categories are too broad and have limited conceptual significance when compared to other psychological concepts (Helms et al., 2005). Moreover, Diemer and Blustein's (2007) study could have been strengthened had it used a longitudinal research approach to determine if their conclusions would remain relevant in the long-term.

Studies on gender-based marginalization have found similar results as studies about race-based marginalization. Koch, D'Mello, and Sackett (2014) engaged in a random-effects meta-analysis that incorporated one hundred and thirty-six effect sizes (N=22,348) to investigate elements that affect hiring practices. Their findings suggest that employers preferred employing men in jobs that have historically been dominated by males, gender-role congruity bias. They also found that hiring officials did not have an inclination towards either gender when hiring for occupations that have historically been dominated by women (Koch, et al., 2014). Koch and colleagues (2014) also revealed that male recruiters are more likely than women to follow gender stereotypes when attempting to fill male-dominated jobs. A limitation to their meta-analysis is that it incorporated a very limited number of articles that explored woman-dominated work; therefore, their ability to make concrete conclusions about the hiring disparities between woman-dominated work sites is diminished, as the authors pointed out.

Like many of the articles included in their meta-analysis, Koch and colleagues (2014) failed to answer calls for intersectional research studies pertaining to marginalization in the workplace. There continues to be a lack of intersectional investigations within the field of vocational psychology. Similarly, most vocational studies fail to assess for with-in group differences when examining marginalized communities; such limitation is visible in all the studies reviewed here. However, a few vocational scholars have recently used an intersectionality lens when investigating workplace disparities.

Hollis (2018) conducted a quantitative study to determine if women are increasingly targeted by workplace bullying as their intersecting identities become increasingly complex. The author recruited 669 participants via online survey software. Hollis (2018) used a chi-square examination to analyze the prevalence of workplace bullying/harassment and its relationship

with intersectionality. The author analyzed the frequency of harassment experienced by all participants, women, Black women, and Black women who were members of a religious minority group (i.e. Not protestant or catholic). Their results showed that people who report increasingly complex intersectionality are increasingly likely to experience bullying in the workplace; Black women who also identified as being from a minoritized religious group were significantly more likely to report experiences of harassment. Such results stood when the author accounted for vicarious bullying (i.e. when an aggressor directs a subordinate to bully another).

Another study by McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017) used an intersectionality perspective to examine organizational experiences of athletic directors. McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017) conducted in-person interviews with 10 African American women who were directors of an NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) athletic department. Their content analysis suggested that the interaction between race and gender along with mainstream and workplace stereotypes resulted in an array of challenges. Patterns in the data showed the participants' identity and authority was constantly questioned due to social and workplace stereotypes. For instance, people challenged their level of leadership because they did not fit the archetype of a sports director (i.e. White Male). Colleagues and community members assumed they were lying about their leadership status or that they led women sports teams, not men. Moreover, it was often assumed that they were simply hired due to their demographics rather than their knowledge and capabilities. A strength in McDowell and Carter-Francique's (2017) study, having in-depth interviews, is also a limitation; a small sample size makes the study difficult to generalize to the larger population. However, the article provides preliminary evidence showing how intersecting identities and stereotypes can result in challenging experiences for African American women in leadership roles.

Another study by Velez, Cox, Polihronakis, and Moradi (2018) assessed the impact that both sexism and racism have on employed women of color. After surveying 276 participants, a latent variable structural equation model analysis showed that second-order latent variables produced a better model fit compared to modeling racism and sexism independently (Velez et al., 2018). The authors also found that discrimination in the work environment was linked to mental distress and intention to abandon employment. The study highlighted a positive relationship between discrimination and experiences of workplace burn-out. The authors determined that womanist perspectives diminished the connection between discrimination at work and mental distress. Velez and colleagues (2018) demonstrated evidence indicating the importance of intersectional research.

There has recently been an increase in intersectional research designs within vocational counseling, but additional qualitative and quantitative investigations are still needed to reinforce and supplement the literature reviewed here. Future investigations pertaining to marginalization in the workplace should expand their focus to include alternative minoritized groups (e.g. Indigenous communities, Latinx/o/a, communities with alternative abilities, undocumented workers, and elderly workers). The studies should continue exploring within-group differences. Investigators should also consider incorporating longitudinal designs to ensure their results are sustainable over time. Furthermore, vocational studies should consider recruiting participants of low-wage occupations, assessing for economic status, and experiences of classism.

Economic Constraints

In PWT economic constraints are defined by limited financial resources (e.g., limited wealth) which can be an obstacle to acquiring decent work. Economic constraints are conceptualized as limitations that impact a person's ability to acquire the financial resources

needed for career development. According to investigators (Dimer et al., 2013), social class, defined in PWT as an individual's status in the social-economic-cultural ladder, is intrinsically connected to economic constraints. Duffy, Blustein, and colleagues (2016) state that class status impacts access to cultural capital, social capital, as well as economic resources, all of which facilitate vocational growth.

While economic resources provide advantages for those who have them, economic constraints can have a detrimental impact on the working poor and their children. In 1998, McLoyd conducted an examination of publications pertaining to the impact that poverty has on children. McLoyd (1998) explained that living in long-term poverty impacts academic preparedness and ultimately negatively impact students' ability to thrive academically. One year later, in a long-term mixed-methods investigation using exploratory field analysis and surveys, Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, and Sameroff (1999) examined how social context impacts children living in inner-cities. The authors found that working-class parents encounter more financial stressors than wealthier parents. The study suggested that such financial stress lessens the quality of parent-child relationships and parent health, ultimately diminishing the opportunities for enriching parent-child interactions.

Mistry, Vandewater, Huston, and McLoyd (2002) also investigated the impact of economic constraints on children. Mistry and co-authors (2002) surveyed a diverse sample of 419 individuals to test the family economic stress model which posits there is a connection between economic stability and child well-being. After conducting latent variable structural equation modeling, the authors found that low levels of financial stability and accompanying increases in perception of financial strain indirectly influenced parenting patterns via a negative impact on parental mental health. Mistry and colleagues (2002) explained that parents who

reported feeling distressed also state they felt less effective at having disciplinary communication with children. Distressed parents also showed less affection towards their children (Mistry et al., 2002). Additionally, children of distressed parents scored lower on instructor evaluations of children's pro-social interactions and higher marks on behavioral concerns in school. The early learning challenges associated with economic constraints were also highlighted by Hart and Risley (1995) and Putnam (2015) when reporting on the "30 million Word Gap." They argued that wealthier parents talk to their children more regularly, and more often in ways that encourage learning when compared to financially strained parents. That disparity in communication is linked to children's' vocabulary upon entry to school, which can ultimately leave impoverished children at a disadvantage (Hart and Risley 1995; Putnam 2015). Some of the articles reviewed here utilized a deficit-based discourse which can potentially lead to further stigmatization of low-income communities. Although it is important to acknowledge challenges associated with being economically disadvantaged, the literature is limited in examining potential strengths that are unique to being from a low-income background. Hence, future investigators should consider adopting a resilience-based perspective when analyzing the impact that economic constraints can have on children.

After conducting a review of poverty literature, Huston and Bentley (2010) explained that poverty research has primarily been attentive to childhood experiences of poverty; he called for more investigation about long-term poverty and research pertaining to adulthood poverty.

In 2010, Kahneman and Deaton (2010) answered Huston and Bentley's (2010) proposition by analyzing the effects that income has on life satisfaction and emotional well-being (e.g. frequency of happiness) among a sample of employed adults. The researchers studied approximately four hundred and fifty thousand surveys from the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being

Index, a survey focused on adults living in the U.S. They determined that income level is, at first glance, positively correlated with life satisfaction; however, they found a plateau effect once respondents reached a level of income which was enough to meet basic needs (i.e., \$75,000; Kahneman and Deaton 2010). On the other hand, emotional distress associated with bad general health and loneliness worsened with lower income levels. That is, more income didn't necessarily predict more happiness, but less income predicted more distress. The authors concluded that failure to reach the minimum threshold to meet basic needs is more predictive of outcomes than financial excess (Kahneman and Deaton, 2010).

The literature pertaining to economic constraints has limitations. For instance, none of the studies took an intersectional approach or sought to investigate within-group differences. Additionally, the majority of studies used self-report measures which are subject to personal interpretation; some surveyees may underreport while others over-report. Mixed method studies (e.g. surveys and in-depth interviews) may resolve such shortcomings while providing supplemental information about the influence that economic constraints have on economically marginalized workers. Moreover, causal studies should be conducted given that the majority of literature on the topic is correlational. A critical limitation to most studies reviewed is their use of objective measures (i.e. income level) to assess for economic constraints. Such an assessment of financial difficulty is limited because it does not account for familial wealth, subjective perspectives of economic status, or historical economic difficulty. On a similar note, the measures used to evaluate economic constraints varied based on the study; the inconsistency in measures used may lead to contradictory findings. However, the inconsistency in measurements used to assess for economic barriers does not come as a surprise given the lack of validated instruments to assess for financial constraints (Duffy, Gensmer, Allan, Kim, Douglass,

England, Autin, & Blustein, 2019). Despite the limitations, the literature on economic constraints makes clear the negative influence that economic constraints can have on economically marginalized workers.

Work Volition

According to PWT theorists, the impact that exclusion and economic constraints have on a person's ability to acquire a decent job is mediated by work volition (a person's perception of choice in vocational decision-making despite constraints; Duffy et al., 2012). Duffy et al. (2012) explain work volition is a perception that may be created by two forces: systemic and individual barriers as well as constraints that prevail in communities that experience elevated levels of financial difficulties and/or social exclusion. Although work volition is heavily influenced by external structural and financial barriers, its distinct from these variables because it is a *perception* of work-choice; thus, two people may have very similar contextual circumstances, but report different levels of work volition (e.g., Autin, Duffy, Jacobson, Dosani, Barker, & Bott, 2018). Work volition has only recently been introduced into the vocational psychology field, however, there are recent articles that demonstrate its impact on psychological variables and work fulfillment.

Duffy, Douglass, Autin, and Allan, (2016) analyzed possible predictors of work volition among a sample of college students. The authors conducted a hierarchical regression procedure testing the impact that job-related constraints, positive affect, perception of control over their future job, and demographics variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and social class) have on work volition. They concluded that social class status, vocational constraints, and perception of control in one's future vocation significantly predicted work volition. Gender and ethnic identity, on the other hand, were not significant forecasters of work volition. Therefore, the authors propose that

limits in financial and social assets likely lead to lower work volition in disadvantaged communities.

Duffy, Douglass and colleagues (2016) conducted a second analysis involving an alternative sample of undergraduate students. The new sample was surveyed on two occasions over three-months using a cross-lagged structural model. They discovered career constraints and social class status (at survey one) predicted perception of volition in future career decision-making (at survey two). The analysis also demonstrated that work volition in the first survey predicted career constraints three months later. Their results indicate there is a temporal connection between a worker's perceptions of choice and career constraints. The results also suggest there is a reciprocated link between perceptions of volition and vocational obstacles. According to the authors, their findings indicate that perceptions of future work volition may decrease the belief that vocational constraints will be prevalent in the future.

Duffy, Douglass, and Autin (2015), investigated relations between career adaptability, academic satisfaction, career decision self-efficacy and work volition. First, they analyzed the connection that four factors (*control, concern, curiosity, confidence*) of career adaptability have on academic satisfaction. Their survey involving a diverse sample of approximately 400 college students showed that the four subscales were moderately correlated with satisfaction in academia. After determining such correlation, Duffy and colleagues (2015) investigated work volition and career decision-making self-efficacy as possible mediators between the four adaptability subscales (i.e. *control, concern, curiosity, & confidence*) and satisfaction in academia. A structural equation modeling procedure suggested that work volition was a significant mediator between *control* and academic satisfaction. Career decision self-efficacy significantly mediated the *control, concern, and confidence* connections to satisfaction in

academia. Once the investigators incorporated all the variables into their analysis, none of the four adaptability factors significantly connected with satisfaction in academia. Their results indicate that feeling adaptable in one's occupation may be connected to increased levels of satisfaction in academia partially because people experience greater sense of control and confidence in their career decision making.

While Duffy and colleagues (2015) demonstrated a significant connection between work volition and other important vocational variables, there are some shortcomings to their study that should be acknowledged. Similar to Duffy, Douglass and colleagues (2016), Duffy and co-authors (2015) conducted their study among a sample of university students. Although research on university students is important, it may limit the generalizability of their finding. For instance, the results may be less applicable to the working poor. It is possible that having access to higher education, academic resources, and an academic network (e.g., mentors and career counselors) can lead to higher work volition for students compared to people living in poverty who do not have such resources.

Duffy, Autin, and Bott, (2015) analyzed mediators that may explain the relationship between work volition and job satisfaction on a sample of employed adults. The survey included 135 women and 145 men. They predicted that *work meaning* and *person-environment fit* mediates the relationship between work volition and work satisfaction. The results from a structural equation model confirmed their hypothesis: greater perceived work meaning and higher sense of fit with work mediated the connection between work volition and job satisfaction. Together, the two mediators accounted for over 80% of the variance in work contentment. In other words, people who feel they have more control over their employment decisions will seek employment they find meaningful and that fits their personalities, which

ultimately result in job satisfaction. On the other hand, individuals who report minimal levels of volition feel a decreased sense of hope and perceive their jobs as a means to an end, for survival.

There are additional limitations within the work volition literature that should not go unnoticed. Future investigation should consider further tests on non-student populations. Moreover, the investigations neglected to recruit samples from populations that are most likely to experience constraints that can lead to poor perception of choice in career decision making (e.g. migrant workers and the previously incarcerated). Similarly, the online sampling methods used in the majority of studies further limits the likelihood of reaching those who are most economically marginalized. Future studies should consider using multiple recruitment methods and survey approaches to best reach populations that don't have the luxury to afford a computer and/or internet connection, or the training necessary to navigate the internet. Furthermore, the studies heavily relied on correlational statistical analysis; the finding should be complemented or reinforced with qualitative investigations.

Career Adaptability

Career Adaptability, a person's preparedness to cope and adapt to predictable and unanticipated changes in the work environment, is critical in the 21st-century economy (Savickas, 2002). Career adaptability, similar to work volition, is proposed to be affected by experiences of marginalization and economics (Duffy, Blustine, et al., 2016). According to Savickas and Porfeli (2012), vocational adaptability is composed of four factors: (1) *concern*, defined as worry about future career; (2) *curiosity*, defined as having a desire to learn more about one's own person and about existing professions/jobs; (3) having a sense of *control* over one's future and environment; and (4) *confidence*, defined as self-efficacy in capability to adequately accomplish work assignments and in the ability to manage constraints. Like marginalization, economic constraints,

and work volition, career adaptability has been linked to several psychological concepts that impact job-related outcomes.

Duffy (2010) conducted a study to examine the relationship between sense of control (e.g., work volition) and career adaptability among a sample of approximately 1,990 university students. His quantitative analysis revealed that participants who expressed feeling more in control of their future had an increased likelihood of perceiving themselves as adaptable to changes in the job market. The author also examined whether or not sense of control plays a mediating role between career adaptability and 3 of its recognized predictors (i.e., self-esteem, optimistic outlook on future profession, and supportive relationships). The investigator reported that sense of personal control partly mediated the connection between the three established predictors and career adaptability. Such finding compliments PWF while highlighting the importance of incorporating both work volition and career adaptability within the same vocational model, as was done in PWT.

Guan, Deng, Sun, Wang, Cai, Ye, and Li (2013) conducted a vocational study to investigate the impact that career adaptability has on job search experiences. They recruited 270 Chinese graduate students to participate in their longitudinal investigation. Their three-wave survey analysis involved conducting three distinct surveys: (1) Career Adapt-Abilities Scale and demographics; (2) Job Search Self-Efficacy Questionnaire; (3) Occupational Status and Person-Environment Fit Perception Scale. Results showed that *concern*, *curiosity*, *confidence*, and *control* positively correlated with student job-search self-efficacy. The four components of career adaptability also correlated with their third wave of surveys measuring employment status. Those with higher scores on career adaptability were more likely to be employed. Moreover, there was a positive relationship between career adaptability and students' perceptions of fit within their

new job placement. Results also showed that job-search self-efficacy moderated the relationship from employment and person-environment fit to career adaptability, such that when job search self-efficacy was high/low, the relationship was strengthened/weakened.

Guan and co-authors' (2013) analysis reinforced the notion that career adaptability is critical among people with minoritized racial identities in addition to White Americans. However, it is also limited by the fact that investigators only surveyed graduate students. It is possible that graduate students, who typically have access to career support services and a broader array of career opportunities, have higher levels of confidence and sense of control in career selection when compared to economically marginalized Chinese communities. Hence, it may be helpful to replicate such studies among a sample of less privileged Chinese individuals.

Two years after Guan and colleagues' (2013) publication, Buyukgoze-Kavas, Duffy, and Douglass (2015) published a report where they examined if a person's preparedness to cope with a changing work environment predicted satisfaction with life. They also sought out to determine if the relationship between career adaptability and life satisfaction was mediated by life meaning and work volition. Buyukgoze-Kavas and co-authors (2015) also used a convenience sample of college students (approximately 1,720). However, Buyukgoze-Kavas and colleagues (2015) added a unique perspective to the research on adaptability given their survey sample was composed of a previously unrepresented sample, Turkish students.

After conducting a statistical analysis, the authors found that *control* and *concern*, two attributes of adaptability, were positively correlated with life satisfaction. Furthermore, a structural equation model showed that work volition and life meaning individually mediated the relation from concern and control to satisfaction with life. By using a sample of Turkish individuals, the authors helped demonstrate the reliability of career adaptability and its

applicability to non-U.S. populations. However, their finding revealed possible limitations within career adaptability and the four corollaries used to assess it. Similar to the findings in Duffy, Douglass, and Autin (2015), Buyukgoze-Kavas and co-authors (2015) did not find a noteworthy correlation between curiosity and adaptability; therefore, the most prominent measure of career adaptability (CAAS) may need continued examination.

Researchers recently conducted a meta-analysis of career adaptability publications (Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017). The study was conducted to test the connection between vocational adaptability and constructs of adaptableness. Among the constructs of adaptableness, they look at general adaptability via dimensions of adaptive personality (i.e., openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extraversion) along with cognitive ability, optimism and other similar measures; ability to engage in adaptive responses such as career exploration; adaption results (e.g., job satisfaction, job commitment, intention to quit, and work stress); and demographics. After analyzing 90 publications on career adaptability, the authors determined there is a significant connection between career adaptability and general adaptability, adaptive responses, and adaption results. Their multiple regression evaluation suggested there is incremental predictive validity of vocational adaptability for products of well-being.

Like the majority of literature reviewed in the previous section, the literature on career adaptability has primarily been quantitative survey investigations requiring participant self-reports. Qualitative examinations such as ethnographic field research may provide critical insight about career adaptability and its impact on people's work lives. Moreover, while researchers have been successful at reaching participants of color, the majority of studies recruited participants who have the privilege to receive university-level pedagogy. Researchers should continue to investigate the predictors, effects, and outcomes of career adaptability among

samples of low-income workers. Doing so will not only help address the limitation in the current literature, but it will help vocational counselors better support communities that have been neglected by vocational theory.

In PWT, career adaptability and work volition are predicted to mediate the relationship from marginalization and economic constraints to the attainment of decent employment. PWT predicts those who are more adaptable to their work environments and experience higher levels of work volition are more likely to secure decent employment despite constraints. However, PWT proposes that there are systemic and intrinsic moderators that play a critical role in one's pursuit of a decent job.

Moderators

The four moderators in the PWT model include proactive personality, critical consciousness, social supports, and economic conditions. While these four variables are important, they were not be included in the current study due to lack of feasibility. Nonetheless, their role will be explained below to provide a holistic understanding of the hypotheses made in PWT and the present essay.

Proactive personality. Proactive personality is described as personal qualities and characteristics geared towards taking action to proactively change/impact one's social context (Rottinghaus & Miller, 2013). Fuller and Marler (2009) summarized proactive personality literature in their review of one hundred and seven publications. Proactive personality was associated with objective accomplishments such as increments in wages and advancement in the workplace (Fuller & Marler, 2009). The meta-analysis revealed proactive personality is also linked with proactive engagement in the workplace, motivation at work, and general well-being. According to the authors, proactive personality is correlated with subjective perceptions of

achievement such as feeling happy with one's job and perceptions of personal success. Lastly, proactive personality was positively correlated with four characteristics linked with career adaptability (i.e., flexibility, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extraversion).

Fuller and Marler (2009) illuminated that proactive personality is an important component that may facilitate a path towards decent work and well-being. PWT proposes that the correlation going from marginalization and economic barriers to work volition, vocational adaptability, and attainment of decent employment is moderated by proactive personality (Duffy, Blustine, et al., 2016). Proactive personality is proposed to serve as a buffer for negative social and psychological attributes that limit access to decent work.

Critical consciousness. Critical consciousness involves three key factors: (1) critical reflection- analytical evaluation of the interpersonal and systemic components that perpetuate oppression; (2) political efficacy- confidence in one's ability to create positive social and/or political change; (3) critical action- engagement in activism to combat perceived social injustice (Freire, 1993; Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011).

Researchers have theorized that critical consciousness would help marginalized communities combat systemic barriers (Freire, 1993) and suppression (Watts, Giffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Sellers, Chavous, and Cooke (1998) investigated the connection between critical consciousness and academic success. Their findings suggest that, among Black adolescents, awareness of oppression moderated the negative influence that discrimination has on academic accomplishments and confidence. Sellers et al. (1998) provided preliminary evidence of the relationship between critical consciousness and academics; current studies have reinforced and expanded their findings.

Luginbuhl, McWhieter, and McWhieter (2014) also investigated critical consciousness in the academic setting. In their survey analysis of Latina/o youth, Luginbuhl and colleagues (2014) found that critical consciousness positively impacts educational outlook, motivation, accomplishment, and vocational expectations. In a similar investigation, Diemer and Hsieh (2008) also determined that critical consciousness influences career expectations among a sample of low-income adolescents. Diemer's (2009) longitudinal investigation reinforced the conclusions made by Diemer and Hsieh (2008) and Luginbuhl and co-authors (2014). While studying the long-term impact of critical consciousness among marginalized youth (from ages 15-25), Diemer and Hsieh (2008) found that critical consciousness in teenagers is positively associated with both attainment of employment that pays better wages and higher-ranking jobs as adults.

Such research led to the PWT's proposition that critical consciousness helps counter the impact that contextual constraints have on work volition, adaptability, and on one's ability to acquire decent employment (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016).

Social Support. PWT uses Cohens and Wills (1985) definition of social support; Social Support is the degree that people feel supported by loved ones and the general society for dealing with distress linked to experiences of exclusion and financial barriers. Research pertaining to social supports within vocational development has been plentiful. Psychologists have concluded that high levels of social support moderate (lessens) the negative health effects produced by experiences of marginalization (Graham & Barnow, 2013). Similarly, high social support weakens the links from economic insecurity to poor well-being (Aslund, Larm, Starri, & Nilsson, 2014), and low SES to educational performance (Malecki & Demaray, 2006). Studies have also revealed social supports have a positive impact on grade-point average and reduced perception of

barriers (Malecki & Demaray, 2006; Raque-Bogdan, Klingaman, Martin, & Lucas, 2013).

Drawing from such literature, PWT proposed that social supports may assist in countering the influence that financial barriers and marginalization have on career adaptability, work volition, and obtaining decent work.

Economic Conditions. Unlike economic constraints that focus on individual-level factors, economic conditions refer to the impact that macro-level forces (e.g. unemployment rate, minimum wage, career advancement openings, educational training opportunities) have on society. It is nearly undeniable that economic conditions can have an impact on job attainment. One can simply look at the work done by the ILO (1999-2013) where they explain that unemployment, work opportunities, educational opportunities, governmental minimum wage policies, and the general state of the economy all impact a person's capability to find and successfully acquire a decent job. With that understanding, the PWT proposes that good economic conditions may assist in countering the influence that financial barriers and marginalization have on career adaptability, work volition, and on acquiring decent work.

Outcomes of Decent Work: Needs Satisfaction, Work Fulfillment, and Well-being

Up to this point, the first half of the model has been discussed. Literature pertaining to the primary predictors (marginalization and economic constraints), mediators (career adaptability and work volition) as well as the moderators (proactive personality, critical consciousness, social supports, and economic conditions) and decent work has been reviewed. The present sub-section will discuss the outcomes of decent work which include satisfaction of three basic human needs (survival, social connection, and self-determination), work fulfillment, and well-being. While such outcome variables are meaningful in PWT, they were not incorporated into the present

dissertation due to lack of feasibility. Nevertheless, their function will be explained to offer a comprehensive understanding of the hypotheses put forth in PWT and the present study.

Survival Needs, Social Connection Needs, and Self-determination Needs.

The outcomes section of the PWT model suggests that decent jobs result in fulfilment of three basic human needs (self-determination, social contribution, and survival) which then result in satisfaction from work and positive well-being (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016). Although the outcomes section of the PWT model were not incorporated into the current dissertation, a brief review of the three human needs is included to provide a holistic understanding of the model.

Survival needs are compromised by basic essentials for human existence like social capital, adequate housing, safe environment, and proper nutrition to promote good health and development (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016). Humans have a need to seek resources that will secure their continued survival (Maslow, 1943; Blustein, 2008). The need to seek means required for survival is a fundamental human experience (Maslow, 1943; Blustein, 2008). Individuals who lack access to jobs that provide livable wages and secure working environments may be at an unfair disadvantage when trying to meet their basic survival needs. Central to decent work are wages that can cover housing and nutritional costs, a safe working environment, and job security (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016; ILO, 2013). The ILO (2013) suggest that decent income, a safe work environment, and security in the workplace are critical elements to attain the resources needed for survival. Hence, the PWT model proposes that a decent job with proper income, benefits, and protections would help people satisfy survival necessities (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016);

Social connection is the second human need included in the PWT. Social connection needs emphasize the human need to have meaningful relationships with other human beings.

Research has explained that humans are intrinsically social beings that require interpersonal engagement, attachment, and intimate relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Blustein, 2011). Baumeister and Leary, (1995) also posit that social connections influence well-being. Vocational psychologist explains that employment settings can provide a setting for positive interpersonal engagement among co-workers, colleagues, customers, interns, managers, and business owners (Blustein, 2011). Investigators proposed that positive employment settings can help serve as a route towards social interactions that foster meaning and connection to life (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, 2011). Psychologists also suggest that decent employment helps people believe they are contributing to the good of their community (Blustein, 2011). In addition, work indirectly helps people meet their social-relational need by connecting them to national economic and social systems (Blustein, 2011). Work that promotes diversity an inclusion may also help employees feel connected to their culture (Blustein, 2011). On the other hand, discrimination in the labor market may hinder one's ability to meet social connection needs. According to the ILO (2014) poor work environments can promote toxic relationships between workers and employers. Given the relationship between work and social connection needs, the PWT proposed that decent work would help workers fulfill the need for social connection (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016).

Self-determination needs are defined as participation in engaging undertakings which provide internal and external motivation in a meaningful and controlled manner (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to the theory of self-determination, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation help foster well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci, (2000) also state that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation leads to favorable educational and work achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The theory of self-determination provides helpful information about the impact that work can have on the lives of working people. Blustein (2006) reports that employment can foster extrinsic

motivation by exposing workers to meaningful assignments and challenging tasks. As such, the PWT predicts that decent employment will cultivate the experiences needed to meet self-determination needs (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016).

Work Fulfillment and Well-being. After decent work satisfies the three basic human needs, it can lead to improvements in other areas of life (Duffy, Blustein et al., 2016). Researchers have consistently demonstrated that meeting social connection (Ducharme & Martin, 2000; Harris, Winskowski, & Engldahl, 2007), survival (Clark, Oswald, & Warr, 1996) and self-determination needs (Andreassen, Hetland, & Pallesen, 2010) leads to *work fulfillment* (e.g. satisfaction at work and/or feelings that one is engaged in meaningful work). Drawing from such research, PWT developers proposed that fulfilling survival needs, social connection needs, and self-determination necessities via attainment of decent employment will lead to job satisfaction.

Moreover, satisfying basic human needs is also connected with indicators of well-being such as increased self-esteem, positive sense of self-worth, positive mental health, and happiness. Investigators have reliably determined that meeting survival (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010), social connection (Grant, 2007), and self-determination needs (Deci & Ryan, 2008) leads to improvement in indicators of well-being. With such research in mind, PWT theorist proposed that securing the essentials to survive, as well as social connection and self-determination needs in the workplace will predict greater well-being. Lastly, given the fact that studies consistently demonstrate happiness in the workplace leads to improvements in general well-being (Duffy, Bott, Allan, & Autin, 2014; Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013), PWT suggests that satisfaction at work will be positively correlated with general well-being.

Limitations in Literature Examining the PWT Model

Although there has been substantial evidence to reinforce the importance of all the PWT variables, only a few studies have tested the PWT model as initially proposed by Duffy et al. (2016). The following will discuss the limitations in the current literature examining the PWT model.

One of the limitations includes the use of measurement tools that do not adequately measure variables as intended by PWT. Duffy and colleagues (2019) report that the economic constraints and marginalization measures used by Douglass, Velez, Conlin, Duffy, and England (2017) and Duffy, Velez, England, Autin, Douglass, Allan, and Blustein (2018) do not assess for economic constraints and marginalization as conceptualized in the PWT model. The scales used by Douglass and colleagues (2017) and Duffy and co-authors (2018) measured short-term marginalization and financial constraints (e.g. within the last week or year) while PWT conceptualizes both variables as lifelong experiences. Unfortunately, identical and/or similar limited short-term instruments were used in more recent studies that examined select aspects of the PWT (e.g. Wang, Jia, Hou, Xu, Zhang, & Guo, 2019; Kozan & Blustein, 2019). Kim, Fouad, Maeda, Xie, and Nazan (2018) used measures that were not yet validated when examining the outcomes of decent work. The aforementioned studies confirmed several of the hypothesis made by PWT developers (e.g. a negative connection between marginalization and decent work). However, the inadequate measures may explain some of the discrepancies between the studies' results and PWT propositions (e.g. lack of interaction between marginalization and economic constraints).

The use of unsuitable and/or unvalidated measures does not come as a surprise considering that there was a lack of adequate measures to test PWT tenants. However, such

measures have recently been developed and validated; hence, future researchers should consider utilizing the recently developed tools such as Economic Constraints Scale (Duffy et al., 2019) and Lifetime Experiences of Marginalization Scale (Duffy et al., 2019).

PWT literature is also limited by the lack of focus on testing the full PWT model to determine its efficacy and validity. For instance, most research is focused solely on testing the predictors of decent work and excluded the outcomes (Kozan and Blustein 2019; Wang et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2018; Douglass et al., 2017; Kim, Kim, Duffy, and Nguyen, 2019; and Tokar and Kaut, 2018). Other researchers only examined the outcomes of decent work (Kim et al. 2018; Duffy, Kim, Gensmer, Raque-Bogdan, Douglass, England, and Buyukgoze 2019). To holistically understand marginalized workers, investigators must consider testing all variables of the PWT model. Doing so may provide practitioners with a much-needed evidence-based lens to support the communities that have been disproportionately underrepresented in vocational theory.

The limitations mentioned above are not the only weaknesses within studies testing the PWT model. Despite being developed for those that are least likely to attain decent work, the PWT has disproportionately been tested among individuals that are most likely to attain decent jobs, college students. Along the same lines, only one known study has had a central focus on midlife workers (between ages 40-60). Future researchers should also consider conducting longitudinal studies as well as qualitative investigations to better understand work experiences.

There is one critical limitation that all the above-mentioned articles share; none have tested PWT model on a sample that can represent working Americans who live under the poverty threshold. The majority of studies are primarily composed of middle-class participants. The one study (Kozan & Blustein, 2019) that specifically targeted low-income workers did not account

for family wealth; such limitation led to an inadequate representation of the working poor. For instance, despite having lower-income participants, their largest group of participants self-identified as middle-class (40.9 %) followed by an adequate representation of the working class 29.2%, upper-middles class 20%, and marginal representation of the lower (7.5%) and upper classes (2.5%). Furthermore, the study was conducted in Turkey, among Turkish participants; therefore, may not be generalizable to economically marginalized Americans.

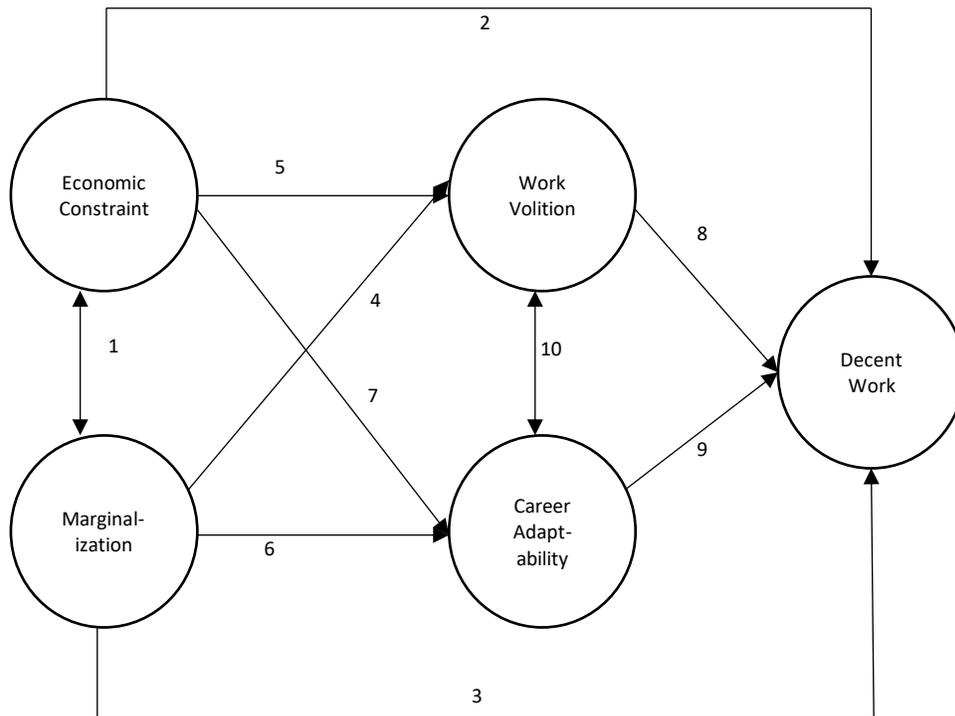
It is critical that future studies consider testing the PWT model among those who are most likely to suffer from the impact of inadequate working conditions, economically marginalized workers. By disregarding the lack of representation of economically marginalized communities, vocational psychologists may be reinforcing the economic inequality that exists between low-income workers and the more economically privileged.

While this dissertation was unable to address all the limitations mentioned in this section, It contributes to the current literature by conducting an analysis of economic constraints, marginalization, work volition, career adaptability, and decent work among a sample of economically marginalized workers.

Hypotheses

In this study, I sought to answer two questions while testing 14 PWT propositions. The questions investigated are: (1) do contextual factors (i.e., economic constraints and marginalization) impact a person's ability to secure decent work? and (2) does career adaptability and work volition mediate the relationship from contextual barriers to attainment of decent work? All hypotheses formulated for the current study are based on the propositions suggested by Duffy, Blustein, and colleagues (2016).

Figure 2: Predictors of Decent Work



Hypothesis 1: Economic constraints and marginalization will be positively correlated (see path 1 in Figure 2).

Intersectionality theory suggest that multiple facets of identity and social-economic-cultural systems are intrinsically interconnected (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016). Recent literature has demonstrated such connection when examining marginalization and economic constraints.

For instance, people who report elevated levels of marginalization also report having minimal access to economic resources (Shields, 2008; Rodgers, 2008). Similarly, individuals who report lower household income also report higher levels of social exclusion (Cole, 2009).

Two studies that examined the PWT model reported there was no significant relationships between economic constraints and marginalization (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy et al., 2018). Such results contradict the proposition made by PWT developers (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016). These findings may be attributed to the survey scales failing to adequately assess for marginalization and economic constraints as it is conceptualized in PWT. Instead of focusing on life-long experiences of marginalization and economic constraints (as is proposed in PWT), the researchers use measures that only capture current financial difficulty and marginalization (e.g. within the last week). In a recent study designed to develop scales for marginalization and economic constraints as defined in PWT, the investigators found that there is in fact a significant positive association between lifelong experiences of marginalization and economic constraints (Duffy, Gensmer, et al., 2019). As such, I predict that life-long experiences of marginalization and economic barriers will be positively correlated.

Hypothesis 2: Economic constraints (a) and marginalization (b) will directly, negatively predict decent work (see paths 2 and 3 in Figure 2).

The PWT model hypothesizes marginalization and economic constraints to directly and negatively predict attainment of decent work. Previous research on employment barriers support this claim. For instance, researchers have found that individuals with Japanese and Mexican accents are less likely to get hired for jobs when compared to people with a U.S. English accent (Hosoda, Nguyen, & Stone-Romero, 2012). Moreover, undocumented individuals are often marginalized and encounter an array of challenges that inhibit their ability to attain decent

employment (e.g., lack of access to a social security number, driver license, and financial aid for educational purposes; Marfleet & Blustein, 2011). Similarly, individuals who experience economic constraints are often left without the resources that facilitate career development (e.g., access to higher education; Reardon, 2011; Duncan, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil 2010; Heckman, 2006).

PWT studies have investigated the links between marginalization and economic constraints to decent work. Investigations using racially and ethnically diverse samples have reported that people who experience higher levels of marginalization are less likely to secure decent work (Duffy, Gensmer, et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2018). This finding was echoed in an analysis of PWT among a sample of people with minoritized sexual identities (Douglass et al., 2017). The negative association between marginalization and decent work parallels the theoretical claim of PWT (Duffy, Blustein, et al., 2016).

Studies examining the link between economic constraints and decent work have found conflicting results. Douglass and colleagues' (2017) study supported the hypothesis that greater economic constraints will decrease the likelihood of securing decent employment; however, they reported a weak relation that is evidenced by a small effect size. Duffy, Gensmer and colleagues (2019) and Duffy and co-authors (2018) both found that economic constraints do not directly relate with decent work. It is possible that Duffy and co-authors (2018) did not find a significant relation between economic constraints and decent work because they used an instrument that measure short-term constraints instead of lifetime economic constraints as theorized in PWT. Similarly, Douglass and colleagues' (2017) small effect size may be a reflection of inadequate measures. Another limitation that was consistent in all three articles that may further explain the inconsistency between their findings and the PWT proposition is that they failed to recruit a sample representative of the most economically marginalized workers; the samples were

overwhelmingly middle-class and/or highly educated. For instance, Duffy, Gensmer and co-authors (2019), the only study that used an economic constraints scale consistent with the PWT definition of economic constraints, surveyed a sample in which the working poor encompassed less than one percent of all participants. Over 80% of their sample reported having some level of upper education (i.e. some college, undergraduate degree, and/or a graduate degree). It is possible that the relationship between economic constraints and decent work would be best tested among a sample of the population that is more likely to suffer from life-long experiences of economic barriers (i.e. economically marginalized communities).

Thus, given previous research supporting marginalization as a predictor of decent work together with limitations in previous testing of economic constraints, I hypothesized that both marginalization and economic constraints will directly and negatively predict decent work.

Hypothesis 3: Marginalization and Economic constraints will negatively predict work volition (see paths 4 and 5 in Figure 2).

The PWT model suggests marginalization and economic constraints negatively predicts work volition. Investigations studying the relations from marginalization to work volition have found inconsistent results. Studies analyzing the connection from economic constraints to work volition have supported the PWT proposition.

Two studies, albeit the two that used measure of marginalization inconsistent with PWT's perception of marginalization, reported a significant and negative relation between marginalization and work volition (Duffy et al., 2018; Douglass's et al., 2017). Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues (2019), which used a marginalization measure consistent with PWT's conceptualization of life-long marginalization, failed to find a significant relationship between marginalization and work volition. The inconsistency in measurement tools utilized to capture

marginalization may again explain the variable results. The relation between marginalization and work volition needs further investigation.

Studies examining the link between economic constraints and work volition have consistently supported the propositions suggested by PWT scholars. Three manuscripts that analyzed the connection between economic constraints and work volition have reported that economic constraints negatively predict work volition (Duffy Gensmer et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2018; Douglass's et al., 2017). This hypothesis is further reinforced given it was supported by all three studies regardless of the distinction in instruments used to measure economic constraints.

Provided only one study has found evidence contradicting the PWT's suggestion that marginalization is negatively associated with work volition joined with unanimous support for economic constraints as a predictor of work volition, I hypothesized that both marginalization and economic constraints will negatively predict work volition.

Hypothesis 4: Marginalization and economic constraints will negatively predict career adaptability (see paths 6 and 7 in Figure 2).

According to previous studies, individuals from privileged economic backgrounds who have minimal experiences of marginalization are more likely to live in an environment that helps foster career adaptability (Diemer & Blustein, 2007). Investigators also that report experiences of discrimination are negatively interconnected with features of workplace adaptability (Barto, Lambert, & Brott, 2015). The PWT model suggests marginalization and economic constraints will negatively predict career adaptability.

Studies analyzing the relations from marginalization and economic constraints to work volition have contradicted those propositions. The investigations failed to find significant links between experiences of marginalization and financial constraints with career adaptability (Duffy,

Gensmer, et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2018; and Douglass et al., 2017). Such finding may suggest that the PWT model needs modifications; however, we must also acknowledge that two (Duffy et al., 2018; & Douglass et al., 2017) of the three studies used career adaptability instruments that are more appropriate for college students than for working adults. And, as mentioned earlier, those same studies also used measurements for economic constraints and marginalization that are not consistent with the PWT's conceptualization of financial constraints and marginalization. It is critical that future investigations utilize instruments congruent with the PWT's conceptualization of marginalization, economic constraints and work volition to accurately test PWT hypotheses.

Given the precedent of theory, along with limitations in previous testing of economic constraints, marginalization, and career adaptability, I hypothesized that marginalization and economic constraints will negatively predict career adaptability.

Hypothesis 5: Work volition and career adaptability will positively predict decent work (see paths 8 and 9 in Figure 2).

As mentioned in earlier sections, career adaptability and work volition are recognized by vocational psychologist as constructs that influence several facets of career development. It is reported that career adaptability instils confidence in those searching for work (Guan et al., 2013) and helps develop self-efficacy in making career-related decisions (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Others have reported that optimism and hopefulness are fundamental factors that connect career adaptability to positive employment outcomes (Tolentino, Garcia, Lu, Restubog, Bordia, & Plewa 2014; Rottinghaus, Day & Borgen, 2005). Similarly, work volition has been associated with positive vocational outcomes including academic satisfaction, increased sense of fit with one's career, and job satisfaction (Jadidian & Duffy, 2011; Duffy, Autin, & Bott, 2015; Duffy,

Bott, Torrey, & Webster, 2013). The PWT model suggests work volition and career adaptability will positively predict decent work

PWT investigations have reported that greater work volition was positively linked to attainment of decent employment (Duffy, Gensmer et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2018; and Douglass, et al., 2017). Such consensus reinforces the proposition in the PWT model. Duffy colleagues (2018) and Douglass and co-authors (2017) did not find a significant link between career adaptability and attainment of decent work. Such lack of support for the PWT proposition is also likely due to the use of career adaptability instruments that are not measuring adaptability as conceptualized in the PWT. The use of adequate measurements may produce results consistent with the PWT model. For instance, Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues (2019), which used measures consistent with the PWT, found a significant positive link between career adaptability and attainment of decent work.

Hence, given the consistent support for work volition as a predictor of decent work together with the promising results found in Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues' (2019) study linking work-based adaptability to decent work, I hypothesized that both variables will directly and positively predict attainment of decent work.

Hypothesis 6: Work volition and career adaptability will be positively correlated (see path 10 in Figure 2).

Earlier research on work volition and career adaptability claim that both variables are interrelated (Buyukgoze-Kavas, Duffy, & Douglass., 2015; Duffy et. al., 2015). They claim that individuals who report having higher perceptions of choice in work-related decision-making are more likely to develop higher degrees of career adaptability. The PWT model hypothesizes there is a significant positive correlation between work volition and career adaptability.

Previous research on work volition and career adaptability supports this claim. The three studies that analyzed the predictor portion of the PWT model concluded that greater work volition was positively linked to general adaptivity (Duffy et al., 2018; Douglass et al. 2017) and work specific adaptability (Duffy, Gensmer et al., 2019). As such, I hypothesized that work volition and career adaptability will be positively correlated.

Hypothesis 7: Work volition will mediate the relations from economic constraints and marginalization to decent work.

In addition to having direct relations with economic constraints, marginalization, and decent work, PWT scholars theorize that work volition mediates the link from predictor variables to decent work. Research examining work volition as a mediator between economic constraints and decent work have consistently supported this hypothesis; those same studies have reported inconsistent results when examining work volition as a mediator between marginalization and decent work. For instance, Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues (2019), Duffy, and colleagues (2018), and Douglass and colleagues (2017) all reported that volition operated as a mediator in the path from economic constraints to decent work. Duffy and co-authors (2018) and Douglass and colleagues (2017) reported that work volition also served as a mediator between marginalization and decent work; however, Duffy, Gensmer and co-authors' (2019) study did not support such finding. The discrepancy in results is likely due to the inconsistency in instruments utilized to measure marginalization. Given this previous support, I hypothesize that work volition will mediate the links from economic constraints and marginalization to attainment of decent work.

Hypothesis 8: Career adaptability will mediate the relations from marginalization (A) and economic constraints (B) to decent work.

PWT scholars also suggest that career adaptability mediates the relations from marginalization and economic constraints to decent work. Scholars have found evidence that contradicts these hypotheses. For example, three studies have failed to find that career adaptability significantly mediates the links from marginalization and economic constraints to decent work (Duffy, Gensmer et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2018; and Douglass, et al., 2017). In fact, with the exception of the link between career adaptability and decent work, almost all PWT propositions involving career adaptability failed to acquire statistical support. Although such findings may indicate that researchers must reconsider the role that career adaptability plays in the PWT model, one must consider that two of the three PWT investigation utilized instruments that do not measure economic constraints, marginalization and career adaptability as conceptualized in the PWT. Therefore, more investigations may be needed to better understand the role of career adaptability within the PWT.

Given the shortcomings in measurements utilized to test economic constraints, marginalization, and career adaptability, I hypothesized that career adaptability will mediate the connections from marginalization and economic constraints to decent work.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

The sample was composed of 233 individuals ages 18 to 79 (mean age = 33.16 years, SD = 12.69). The participants identified as, women ($n = 111$, 47.6%), men ($n = 111$, 47.6%), and gender non-binary ($n = 11$, 4.7%). Participants self-identified race and ethnicity as White/European American ($n = 145$, 62%), Asian/Asian American (28, 12%), Latino/a/x and Hispanic ($n=22$, 9.4%), Black/African-American ($n = 17$, 7.3 %), Indigenous/ American Indian/Alaska Native ($n = 4$, 1.7%), Southwestern Asian and North African/Middle Eastern ($n = 1$, .4%), other-Jewish American ($n = 1$, .4%) and Bi-racial or Multiracial ($n = 15$, 6.4%),. Participants reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual ($n = 159$, 68.2%), gay ($n = 7$, 3%), lesbian ($n = 6$, 2.6%), bisexual ($n = 37$, 15.9%), pansexual ($n = 9$, 3.9%), asexual ($n = 8$, 3.4%), other-demisexual ($n = 2$, .9%), other-pan-asexual ($n = 1$, .4%), other-panromantic asexual ($n = 1$, .4%), queer ($n = 2$, .4%). The majority of the sample identified as never married ($n = 154$, 66.1%) followed by living together ($n = 31$, 13.3%), married ($n = 22$, 9.4%), divorced ($n = 17$, 7.3%), separated ($n = 2$, .9%), and widowed ($n = 6$, 2.6%).

Participants were asked to select their subjective social class status based on the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000) where selecting rung 10 represented having the most money, education, and a respected job while selecting 1 represented being among the worse-off in society. The majority of participants (90.1 %) selected rung 5 or below (i.e., rung 8 = 1, .4%; rung 7 = 6 2.6%; rung 6 = 16, 6.9%; rung 5 = 28, 12%; rung 4 = 43, 18.5%; rung 3 = 76, 32.6%; rung 2 = 52, 22.3%; rung 1 = 11, 4.7%). Participants were also asked to report their current social class status, which was reported as

follows: lower class ($n = 97, 41.6\%$), working class ($n = 89, 38.2\%$), lower-middle ($n = 32, 13.7\%$), and middle class ($n = 15, 6.4\%$). Their childhood social class was identified as lower class ($n = 52, 22.3\%$), working class ($n = 52, 22.3\%$), lower-middle ($n = 53, 22.7\%$), middle class ($n = 52, 22.3\%$), upper-middle ($n = 22, 9.4\%$), and upper-class $n = 2, .9\%$). When asked about homeownership the majority ($n = 148, 63.5\%$) of participants identified renting their home while 17% ($n = 41$) own their house, 2.6% ($n = 6$) were unhoused, and 15.9% ($n = 37$) selected other (e.g. living rent-free with parents/friends). The debt owed by participants ranged from 0 to \$666,000 (mean = 18936.09, SD= 58,013.84).

Participants highest level of education completed ranged from middle school to doctorate/professional degree (middle school $n = 1, .4\%$; high school $n = 42, 18.0\%$; some college $n = 94, 40.3\%$; associate's degree $n = 26, 11.2\%$; bachelor's degree $n = 58, 24.9\%$; masters $n = 9, 3.9\%$; doctorate/professional degree $n = 3, 1.3\%$). Ninety participants (38.6%) who attended college identified as first-generation college students while 132 (56.7%) had at least one parent who previously attended college.

Participants reported their pre-COVID employment status as full-time ($n = 73, 31.3\%$), part-time ($n = 76, 32.6\%$), involuntarily unemployed ($n = 32, 13.7\%$), voluntarily unemployed ($n = 51, 21.9\%$); and, their current employment status as full-time ($n = 41, 17.6\%$), part-time ($n = 63, 27.0\%$), involuntarily unemployed ($n = 73, 31.3\%$), and voluntarily unemployed ($n = 55, 23.6\%$). While the 2019 annual household income of all participants fell below \$50,000, a large majority of participants ($n = 184, 79.1\%$) reported yearly income ranging from below \$5,000 to \$25,751 (i.e. below \$5000 $n = 41, 17.6\%$; \$5,001 - \$10,000 $n = 30, 12.9\%$; \$10,001 - \$15,000 $n = 47, 20.2\%$; \$15,001 - \$20,000 $n = 30, 12.9\%$; \$20,001 - \$25,750 $n = 36, 15.5\%$; \$25,751 -

\$30,000 $n = 22$, 9.4%; \$30,001 - \$40,000 $n = 20$, 8.6%; \$40,001 - \$50,000 $n = 7$, 3.0%). The number of jobs held by participants ranged from 1- 6 with a mean of 1.67 and SD of .87.

Procedure. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was attained via the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee before collecting data for the present dissertation.

To adequately test all the predictors of decent work within the PWT model, I recruited 233 survey participants. The number of participants was selected based on expert recommendation to have a minimum of twenty participants per variable in the analysis (Kline, 2016).

Participants were recruited through Prolific, a crowd-sourcing platform that gives investigators the ability to advertise questionnaires to survey-takers with specific characteristics. I used Prolific filter settings that made my survey visible to only U.S. based participants whose annual income fell below \$50,000. Participants were compensated based on Prolific's fair wage guideline which recommended paying an average reward of \$9.81 per hour. I embedded a validity check (e.g., please choose "Strongly Disagree") to filter out participants who answered questions at random or failed to read the survey questions. Of the 248 completed surveys, 15 were excluded from the analysis; one participant who failed the attention check item and 14 that identified having income greater than \$50,000.

Instruments

Demographics. A brief demographic questionnaire was included in the study. In addition to asking about current level of household income, the survey inquired about gender, ethnicity, race, sexual identity, age, employment status, home ownership, level of education completed, college generation status, subjective social status, marital status, number of dependents, family wealth, debt, and household income in 2019.

Economic Constraints. The present study employed the Economic Constraints Scale (ECS) developed by Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues (2019) to measure perceived economic constraints. The scale was specifically developed to measure economic constraints as it is conceptualized in the PWT model. Unlike previously used scales that primarily focus on assessing current economic difficulties, ECS was designed to assess economic constraints experienced across a lifetime, as conceptualized by the PWT (Duffy, Gensmer, et al., 2019). Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues (2019) conducted a series of three studies, two of them sought to determine the validity and reliability of ECS. The first study recruited a racially diverse sample of 196 adult participants from MTurk and involved conducting an exploratory factor analysis. The exploratory factor analysis revealed that one of six survey questions did not meet their .80 factor loading cutoff score; thus, it was removed from the ECS survey. Their final solution for the five remaining items resulted in significant loadings ranging from .81- .93. The 5-item ECS also demonstrated high internal consistency (.94) and strong validity and reliability.

The second analysis involved conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on the 5 question ECS scale and two previously validated measures, the Poverty Wage Employment Scale (Allan, Tay, & Sterling, 2017) and Financial Deprivation Scale (Brief, Konovsky, Goodwin, & Link, 1995). They evaluated goodness of fit and determined that three-factor model highlighted strong fit ($\chi^2(175) = 364.45, p < .001, CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.09, p < .001$); ECS was determined to be a unique measure for testing economic constraints as they apply to PWT. The authors also tested and showed that the scale has convergent validity; it appropriately correlated with subjective social class ($r = .43$), social status ($r = .40$), and yearly income ($r = .37$) as well as decent work ($r = -.29$).

A sample question from the scale includes: “For as long as I can remember, I have had very limited economic or financial resources” (Duffy, Gensmer, et al., 2019, p. 203). The survey volunteers are asked to respond on a 7 item likert-Scale that spans from “strongly disagree” (score=1) to “strongly agree” (score = 7). To score the survey, researchers add the participant’s answers. The scores can range from 5 – 35 points; Lower scores reflect minimal experiences of economic constraints while high scores represent the opposite. In the current study the estimated internal consistency reliability of ECS was $\alpha = .95$.

Marginalization. As mentioned previously, Velez and colleagues’ (2018) intersectional investigation provides support for measuring marginalization as a higher-order factor (e.g. general marginalization) rather than breaking the construct down by dimensions of identity (e.g. requiring participants to answer questions solely based on social class status). Although there may be benefits to examining marginalization in response to specific dimensions of identity, for the purposes of the current study I adopted Velez and co-authors’ (2018) recommendation by measuring for marginalization broadly rather than specific to one domain of identity. Although this approach limits the ability to explore nuances unique to specific identities and their intersections, it aligns with the study’s purpose to conduct overall model testing aimed at generalizing to diverse populations that experience economic marginalization.

To assess for general experiences of marginalization, I used Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues’ (2019) Lifetime Experiences of Marginalization Scale (LEMS). Similar to the ECS scale described above, this scale was selected because its good reliability, validity and because it was specifically developed and tested to capture “marginalization” as defined in the PWT. Duffy, Gensmer, and co-authors (2019) developed the LEMS after realizing that alternative scales did not adequately account for broad, lifelong marginalization as defined in PWT.

Two of Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues' (2019) three studies tested the validity and reliability of LEMS. The first study of 196 racially diverse participants included an exploratory factor analysis. The analysis highlighted that one of four survey questions did not meet their factor loading cut off score (.80). Such item was removed from the survey. The final result for the three-item marginalization scale proved its adequacy; loadings scores ranged from .83 - .96. LEMS also had high internal consistency with a score of .94.

Duffy Gensmer, and colleagues' (2019) second study included a confirmatory factor analysis between the final 3-item LEMS questionnaire, the Microaggressions subscale from Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (Nadal, 2011), and General Ethnic Discrimination Scale (Landrine, Klonoff, Corral, Fernandez, & Roesch, 2006). Their results showed the three-factor model had strong fit ($\chi^2(175) = 18.21, p < .001, CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.02, p < .001$); LEMS proved to be a unique and effective measure for assessing experiences of marginalization as conceptualized by PWT (Duffy et al., 2019).

To complete LEMS, survey participants were asked to read the following passage (Duffy et al., 2019, p. 203):

We are interested in the degree to which you consider yourself to be marginalized in the United States. By marginalized, we mean being in a less powerful position in society, being socially excluded, and/or having less access to resources because you are a member of a specific group, have a specific identity, or life history. This often occurs due to one's gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, religious beliefs, physical appearance, or being a part of other minority groups/identities. With this definition in mind, please respond to the following items below considering the experiences you have had throughout your entire life as a result of having a marginalized identity.

After reading the passage, participants were asked to answer three questions. A sample inquiry includes “Throughout my life, I have had many experiences that have made me feel marginalized” (Duffy, Gensmer, et al., 2019, p. 203). Participants answer the questions on a 7-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree (option= 1) to strongly agree (option= 7). Participant answers are added together to total the survey score. The scores can range from 3 – 21; the higher scores indicate greater levels of perceived lifetime marginalization.

In the current dissertation, the estimated internal consistency reliability of LEMS was $\alpha = .95$.

Work volition. The Work Volition Scale (WVS; see Appendix C) developed by Duffy, Diemer, et al. (2012) was used to assess participants perceived ability to make work-related decisions despite constraints. WVS is a self-reported measure with a total of 13 questions that target three domains: general volition, structural constraints and financial constraints. The volition subscale is composed of 4 items ($\alpha = .78$). A sample volition question includes “I can do the kind of work I want, despite external barriers.” Structural constraints ($\alpha = .80$) assess the way systemic factors impact individuals. One of the four items on the structural constraints subscale includes “I feel that outside forces have really limited my work and career options.” Financial constraints subscale is the largest subscale with 5 items ($\alpha = .81$). A sample item is “Due to my financial situation, I need to take any job I can find.” A 7-point liker-scale spanning from “strongly disagree” (option 1) to “strongly agree” (option 7) is utilized to record the responses for all three subscales. WVS uses reverse coded items for the structural constraints and financial constraints sub-scales; therefore, greater overall scores signify greater levels of work volition. Survey scores can be determined by adding the number selected on the 7-point liker-scale; the scores span from 13 to 91.

The development of the scale involved a study with 232 participants, 143 parents of low-income middle school and high school adolescents as well as 89 graduate students. The sample was moderately diverse: 52% of participants identified as Black, 35 percent White, 10 percent biracial, 3 percent had Puerto Rican origins, 2 percent Asian, and 3 percent identified with “other” racial group. Approximately 198 participants identified as women and the remainder as men. Ten percent of the sample reported being unemployed, 5 percent described having intermittent employment, 16 percent worked part-time, and the majority (65 Percent) were full-time employees. The mean age reported was 38, $SD = 10.08$. The authors established factor structure by testing the scale on a second sample composed of 185 participants. The sample included 40 percent male and 60 percent female surveyees with a mean age of 46, $SD = 11.03$. Eighty five percent were Caucasian, 4 percent Black, 2 percent Asian, and 9 percent identified as “other.” Out of the 185 surveyees, a small percentage were either unemployed (4 percent) or irregularly employed (4 percent), while 9 percent held part-time work and 83 percent had full time jobs. The authors demonstrated the scale’s adequate construct validity by comparing WVS with similar concepts (Agreeableness, $r = .32$; self-appraisal, $r = .60$; work locus of control, $r = .43$; and neuroticism, $r = -.37$).

Following the guidance from PWT researchers (e.g., Duffy et al., 2018), this study only incorporated the general volition subscale which helped provide a more appropriate comparison between the current study and formerly published PWT studies. In the present study the estimated internal consistency reliability of work volition scale was $\alpha = .90$.

Career Adaptability. The present study measured career adaptability with the Career Adaptability subscale from Rottinghaus, Day, and Borgen’s (2005) Career Futures Inventory (see Appendix D). The complete Career Futures Inventory is a 25-question scale formulated to

assess for individuals positive career preparation attitudes. After conducting an exploratory factor analysis and an item evaluation of scale homogeneity on a sample of 690 participants, the researchers found three sub-measures: Perceived Knowledge ($\alpha = .73$; e.g., a person's confidence in their ability to understand changes in the job market); Career Confidence ($\alpha = .87$; e.g. I am excited about the outlook of my career) and Career Adaptability ($\alpha = .85$; e.g. I am confident about my ability to adapt to new experiences in my place of work). Their confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated the three-factor model has a strong fit. Construct validity was also shown; the scale correlated well with previously validated constructs (e.g., career confidence, problem-solving self-efficacy, and dispositional optimism).

The career adaptability sub-survey contains 11 of the 25 total items. The sub-measure is intended to capture a person's perceived ability to: cope with change, benefit from the fruits of a changing job market, and capability to recuperate when unexpected occurrences change their vocational plans. While the subscale has strong validity and reliability, two of its items loaded poorly and the content of the two items seem to capture work volition instead of career adaptability as defined in PWT (Duffy, Gensmer, et al., 2019). In the current dissertation, I followed the guidance provided by Duffy, Gensmer, and co-authors (2019) to remove the two items and utilize a revised 9-item adaptability scale. Duffy, Gensmer, and colleagues (2019) tested the 9-item survey and determined that the internal consistency of the revised survey remains strong (0.90) and that it is a better fit for PWT studies. With the exception of the two eliminated questions (i.e. "I am not in control of my career success" and "I am rarely in control of my career success"), the questionnaire remains identical to the original scale. It uses a Likert scale that spans from strongly agree (option 1) and strongly disagree (option 7). A sample question includes "I am good at adapting to new work settings" (see appendix D for the complete

scale). In the current study the estimated internal consistency reliability of the career adaptability subscale was $\alpha = .91$.

Decent Work. The Decent Work Scale (Duffy, Allan, England, Blustein, Autin, Douglass, Ferreira, & Santos, 2017) was used to assess for decent work experiences pre/post-COVID pandemic. Decent Work Scale is a 15-item scale composed of 5 subscales that each target a unique component of decent work (appropriate rest, company values that mirror familial/social values, fair pay, satisfactory health care access, and safe working environment). Each of the subscales contains 3 questions. Sample items include: “At work, I feel safe from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind” (safe working environment); “I have a good healthcare plan at work” (satisfactory health care access); “I am not properly paid for my work” (adequate compensation); I have no time to rest during the workweek (appropriate rest time); and “My organization’s values align with my family values” (company values that mirror familial/ social values). Survey-takers rate each item on a Likert-scale ranging from strong disagreement (option 1) to strong agreement (option 7). The final survey scores can span from 15 to 105. The lower scores indicate lower experiences of decent work and higher scores represent greater experiences of decent work.

Duffy et al. (2017) claimed the scale has satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = .86$). Each of the 5 subscales has demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability with alpha values spanning from .87 - .97. Duffy et al. (2017) also demonstrated convergent validity; the Decent Work Scale correlated with related measures including withdrawal intentions ($r = -.51$), job satisfaction ($r = .56$), and work meaning ($r = .48$). A regression analysis was conducted and confirmed decent work scale has predictive validity; the five components of decent work scale predicted intent to withdraw from occupation, work meaning, and job satisfaction.

In the current study the estimated internal consistency reliability of the total decent work scale was $\alpha = .88$. The estimated internal consistency reliability of the subscales were $\alpha = .82$ (safe work environment), $\alpha = .97$ (satisfactory health care access), $\alpha = .88$ (adequate compensation), $\alpha = .90$ (appropriate rest time), and $\alpha = .91$ (company values that mirror familial/social values).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the preliminary analyses and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) for model testing. After surveying the participants, descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of variables were conducted to ensure the manifest variables met standards for univariate normality. Univariate normality was determined based on Weston and Gore's (2006) guidance where kurtosis is < 10 , and Skewness < 3 . Mahalanobis distance indices were assessed to determine if there are any multivariate outliers where $ps < .001$. No multivariate outliers were found. I assessed for univariate outliers via standard Z scores. None of the Z scores exceeded ± 3.29 to be considered potential outliers. A visual examination of the dataset was conducted to determine if survey answers were selected at random (e.g. choosing one answer for all questions or selecting incorrect answers for attention check items) or did not meet the study participant criteria. In total, 14 participants, who identified household income above the 50k study cut-off, were removed from the data set. The dataset was over 99% complete. As such, for preliminary analysis, I used listwise deletion. For latent modeling, I estimated means and intercepts using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation to account for missing data.

Model Specification

All variables were modeled using latent factors. For marginalization and economic constraints, I used individual scale items as observed indicators, with five indicators for economic constraints and three indicators for marginalization. For work volition, I used the four items from the general volition subscale from the work volition scale (Duffy, Diemer, et al.,

2012) as observed indicators. Because career adaptability had nine items and no subscales, I created item parcels based on the recommendation of Weston and Gore (2006). Item parcels are aggregations of survey items that are then used as indicators of latent factors in a structural equation model (Weston & Gore, 2006; Matsunaga 2008). The use of items parcels is recommended to increase model fit and to reduce the chance of random error (Matsunaga 2008). To create item parcels, I ran an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and summed the items in groups of three in countervailing order. As such, three career adaptability indicators loaded onto the latent factor. Finally, I modeled decent work using a bifactor structure in which individual items were loaded onto both a general decent work factor and to their respective subscale factors. This bifactor structure was recommended for PWT research by scale developers (Duffy et al., 2018).

Model Testing

As recommended by experts (Weston & Gore, 2006), I conducted model testing in two steps. In the first step, I tested a correlational model in which all latent variables were allowed to correlate with one another. In the second step, I tested directed and indirect paths in a full structural model. To determine how well the PWT model fit the data, I used three of the most widely used fit indices that reduce the likelihood of Type I and Type II error, the chi-square test (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Hu & Bentler, 1999). A significant chi-square suggests the model fits poorly; however, the chi-square test is frequently unreliable when examining large samples. Therefore, I also assessed model fit using the RMSEA and CFI as recommended by Chen (2007). Hu and Bentler (1999) explained that CFI outputs $\geq .95$ and RMSEA values $\leq .08$ suggest good model fit.

I used R package (RMediation) to examine for indirect effects. According to MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets (2002), Rmediation uses a distribution of product method to assess for significant/non-significance levels of indirect effects. Indirect effects are significant if the 95 percent confidence intervals (CI) generated by RMediation are not equal to zero (Tofighi & MacKinnon, 2011).

Measurement Model. Measurement model indices demonstrated good fit to the data, χ^2 (N = 233) = 740.432, $p < .001$ (χ^2 (N = sample size) = chi-square statistic value, p = p value), CFI = .95, and RMSEA = .06, 90% CI [.05, .07]. All variables correlated in expected directions (See Table 1 in appendix H). With the exception of decent work, all indicators loaded onto their latent factors at .81 or above. Decent work items loaded onto their subscale factors at .45 or above and loaded onto the general decent work factor at .32 or above. My finding of lower factor loadings on the general decent work factor is consistent with previous PWT studies (Duffy et al., 2018, Autin, et al., 2021), and likely because the general decent work factor is, by nature, broader than other variables in the model.

Structural Model. The full structural model included all direct and indirect hypothesized pathways from economic constraints and marginalization to decent work. Results showed good fit to the data, χ^2 (381) = 697.018, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, 90% CI [.06, .07]. The model explained 32% of the total variance in decent work.

Regarding direct effects, structural analysis supported several of the hypothesized pathways to decent work. Marginalization negatively predicted decent work (Hypothesis 2b: see path 3 in Figure 3) The direct paths from marginalization and economic constraints negatively predicted work volition (Hypothesis 3: see paths 4 and 5 in Figure 3), economic constraints negatively predicted career adaptability (Hypothesis 4: see path 7 in Figure 3), work volition and

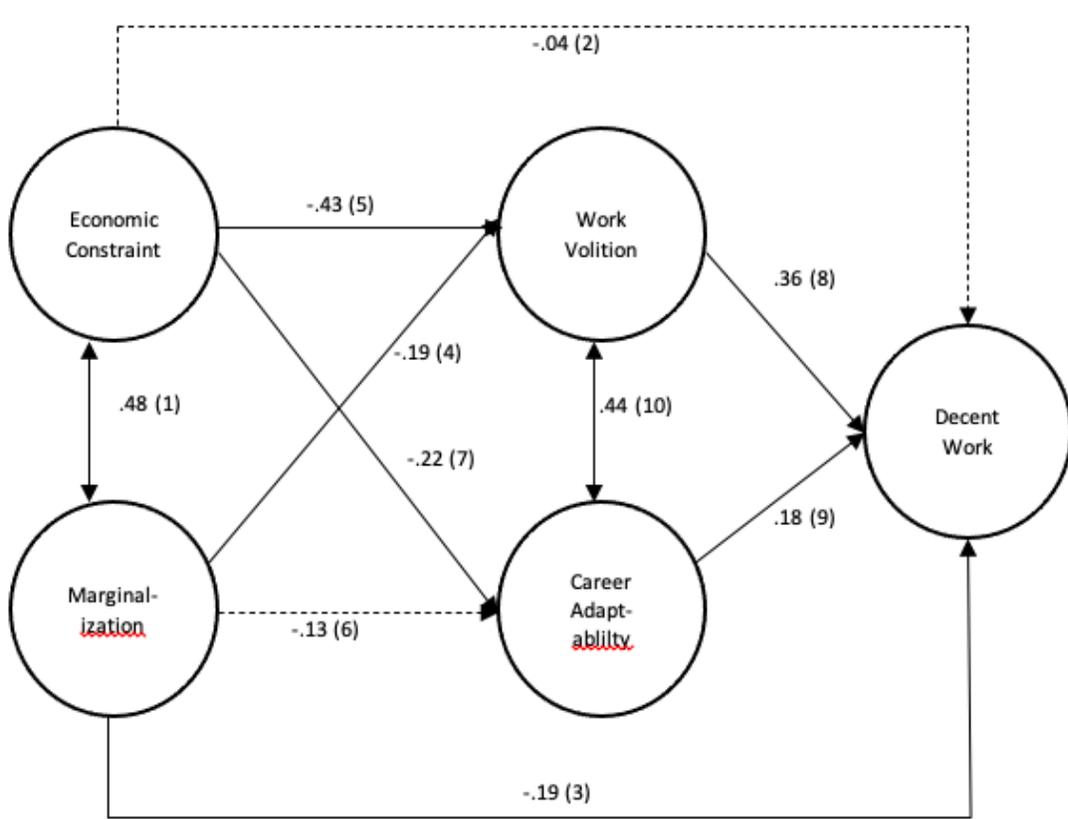
career adaptability both positively predicted decent work (Hypothesis 5: see paths 8 and 9 in Figure 3). The correlations between economic constraints and marginalization (Hypothesis 1: see path 1 in Figure 3) as well as work volition and career adaptability (Hypothesis 6: see path 10 in Figure 3) were both significant and positive. The remaining direct hypothesized pathways were nonsignificant. See Figure 3 below for the full model and standardized beta weights.

In addition to testing the direct paths to decent work, I tested the indirect effects of marginalization and economic constraints on decent work through work volition. The confidence intervals (95% CI [-0.16, -0.04]) showed work volition significantly mediated the link from economic constraints to decent work (Hypothesis 7). Similarly, work volition significantly mediated the relation from marginalization to decent work (95% CI is [-0.073, -0.008]; Hypothesis 7).

I tested the indirect effect of economic constraints on decent work through career adaptability. The confidence intervals (95% CI [-0.16, -0.04]) showed career adaptability significantly mediated the link from economic constraints to decent work (Hypothesis 8B). The indirect path from marginalization to decent work via career adaptability (Hypothesis 8A) was not examined given the lack of significant path from marginalization to career adaptability.

Figure 3

Structural Model Predicting Decent Work



Note. Dashed lines represent nonsignificant paths.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to test the PWT among a sample of economically marginalized U.S. workers. The results demonstrate that the majority of PWT propositions were supported among economically marginalized workers. To achieve the goal of this study, I tested a structural model including all 5 variables in the predictor portion of the PWT model. My model predicting decent work from marginalization and economic constraints was a good fit to the data and explained 32% of the total variance in decent work. Thus, results suggest that PWT is a suitable framework for predicting decent work among economically marginalized populations.

PWT among Economically Marginalized Workers. In the present study, 11 of the 14 PWT proposed pathways were supported. This section will discuss theoretical implications in the context of previous PWT research as well as practical implications for research and practice with economically marginalized populations. Given that previous PWT studies have had few participants from economically marginalized backgrounds, the results of this dissertation will be situated in the context of investigations that have studied PWT within other marginalized groups, which have primarily focused on minoritized ethnic and racial communities (Duffy et al., 2019; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Douglass et al. 2019; Autin et al., 2021).

In the current study, I found a significant link from economic constraints to work volition and career adaptability, but not decent work. In other words, people who experienced a lifetime of financial challenges were less likely to experience freedom of choice in their work lives and were less likely to report adaptability in the work world. The direct relationship from economic constraints to work volition aligns with PWT hypotheses and has been found in most PWT studies (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2019). The nonsignificant direct path from economic constraints to decent work, although inconsistent with PWT hypotheses, is consistent with previous research (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2019; Autin et al., 2021). My nonsignificant finding adds to the growing evidence that the direct link between economic constraints and decent work may not be needed within the model. The nonsignificant relation between economic constraints and attainment of decent jobs is likely due to the indirect effects of career adaptability and work volition, which will be further discussed later. My finding of a significant direct link from economic constraints to career adaptability is consistent with PWT hypotheses but diverges from previous findings (Duffy & colleagues 2018; Douglass & co-authors 2017; Duffy et al., 2019). There are a couple

possible explanations for such deviation from previous studies. For instance, two (Duffy et al., 2018; & Douglass et al., 2017) of the three studies used career adaptability instruments that are more appropriate for college students than for employed adults. Moreover, all three studies recruited participants from privileged social classes and academic backgrounds. It is possible that individuals from economically marginalized backgrounds have experiences that are different from more privileged individuals. It is likely that the variance in economic constraints is marginal among middle-class and upper-class individuals, who have enough income to meet their basic needs, when compared to economically marginalized populations who may be living paycheck to paycheck. Future studies should consider conducting comparative analysis to further assess for group differences.

I also found significant direct links from marginalization to work volition and decent work, but not career adaptability. In other words, people who endorsed life-long experiences of marginalization were less likely to experience freedom of choice in their work lives and were less likely to report having jobs that meet basic minimum standards (adequate health care, safety, compensation, rest time, organizational values that complement family and social values). The direct relationships from marginalization to work volition and to decent work have received consistent support across several studies (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2019; Autin et al., 2021). Consistent with my findings, the direct relation from marginalization to adaptability has been found nonsignificant in previous literature (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2019; Autin et al., 2021). The consistent lack of connection between life-long experiences of marginalization and adaptability suggest that adaptability may need to be repositioned in the PWT model. However, its role as a mediator

must be taken into account before re-positioning. The mediating role of career adaptability will be further discussed later in this section.

Regarding mediations, I found that work volition mediated the link between economic constraints and decent work as well as the link between marginalization and decent work. Hence, economic constraints may not be a direct predictor of decent work, but findings suggest that it is an indirect predictor by way of limiting people's perceived capability to make work-related choices. My findings also support the notion that experiences of marginalization can indirectly affect a person's ability to access decent jobs by negatively impacting their perceived ability to make job-related decisions. The mediating role of work volition has been one of the most consistently supported pathways in PWT literature (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2019; Autin et al., 2021). These findings are noteworthy given that communities with lower financial resources are more likely to experience economic barriers, marginalization and discrimination when compared to those who are economically well-off (Parker, 2019). For instance, Mongey, Pilossoph, and Weinberg (2021) recently found that COVID-19 layoffs are more likely to impact individuals with lower economic resources, lower financial assets, and less education while middle and upper middle class members were more likely to have jobs that became virtual during the pandemic. The fact that work volition consistently mediates pathways to decent work indicated that practitioners may be able to minimize the impact that contextual forces have on a person's ability to obtain decent work by increasing their perceived ability to make work related decisions.

Furthermore, I found that career adaptability mediated the link between economic constraints and decent work, but not the connection between marginalization and decent work. In other words, my results demonstrate that life-long experiences of economic constraints can

indirectly impact a person's ability to access decent jobs by impacting their ability to adapt to changes in the work environment. Life experiences of marginalization do not impact access to decent jobs by limiting a person's ability to adapt to changes in the workplace. One possible explanation is because economic constraints are likely interconnected with social capital (e.g. expansive professional network) that is helpful for career planning and future-thinking whereas there is no concrete reason why career adaptability would be interconnected with marginalization.

Although inconsistent with PWT hypothesis, many PWT researchers also failed to find that career adaptability mediates the relation from marginalization to decent work (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2019; Autin et al., 2021). On the other hand, although consistent with PWT propositions, most studies have not found adaptability mediates the relation from economic constraints to decent work (Douglass et al., 2017; Duffy, Velez, et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2019). In fact, researchers have suggested that career adaptability should be repositioned in the model from its mediator position to solely being a direct predictor of decent work. My findings suggest that career adaptability needs to be given further consideration as a mediator between economic constraints and decent work. It is possible that the higher level of economic constraints among my sample (i.e., economically marginalized sample) makes them more vulnerable to psychological impacts when compared to the middle-class populations surveyed in other studies. If career adaptability was to be repositioned within the PWT model, my findings suggest that it should be positioned as a direct predictor of decent work as well as a mediator for economic constraints but not marginalization to decent work. It must be acknowledged, however, that my sample is primarily white identified therefore experiences of marginalization may be minimal. Hence, future investigators should consider analyzing the

mediating role of career adaptability among a sample that not only experiences economic barriers but also identifies with additional oppressed groups.

Practical implications. This dissertation highlights the negative impact that life-long experiences of marginalization and financial barriers can have on a person's ability to acquire a job that meets basic standards of decency. It also emphasizes that both systemic and individual level interventions can help increase access to decent employment.

Given that marginalization and economic constraints can directly and/or indirectly impact access to decent employment, it is critical that practitioners engage in social justice work to decrease contextual challenges and increase access to decent jobs. It may be helpful if researchers develop policy recommendations that foster an inclusive work environment, transparency of wages, as well as recommendations to address financial constraints. In addition to research and practice curricula, academic programs should consider emphasizing advocacy and social justice to provide future psychologists with tools needed to advocate for changes to systems that have historically benefited wealthy corporate owners at the expense of workers.

Individual level interventions can also be implemented to help individuals feel empowered to navigate inequitable systems. For instance, results showed that life-long experiences of marginalization and economic barriers can decrease a person's ability to develop work volition and adaptability. Therefore, it may be important for practitioners to incorporate therapy intake questions about experiences of marginalization and financial constraints. Given that critical consciousness has been identified as a protective factor that can lead to empowerment (Diemer, 2009), economically marginalized clients may benefit from learning about the effects that marginalization can have on their ability to make work related choices. Consciousness raising dialogue may be particularly useful for clients who engage in self-blame

(e.g., self-blame for being unable to acquire a decent job). Such dialogue may help motivate clients to engage in other forms of self-empowerment such as social activism in support of economically marginalized workers.

The results also suggest that a person's ability to adapt to changes in the work environment is positively related to work volition and the acquisition of decent employment. Therefore, psychologists should consider assessing clients' perceived ability to adapt as well as the extent to which clients feel they can make job-related decisions despite constraints. Practitioners should use interventions that help increase client's perceived ability to make job-related choices when encountering constraints as well as strategies that can increase levels of career-adaptability. Given that the COVID pandemic has forced companies to make structural changes, it may be particularly important to help economically marginalized clients improve their ability to adapt to a changing work environment.

Vocational psychologists may be reinforcing the economic inequality that persists in the U.S by primarily focusing research and practice on supporting those who are economically and/or academically privileged. Vocational psychologists should seriously consider shifting the focus of their research and practice to include economically marginalized workers with limited educational backgrounds. Vocational practitioners should consider providing low-costs or free services for financially strained communities. In addition to individual or group services, vocational psychologists may consider offering free workshops at local community-based organizations or public libraries. By taking actions that align with APA's (2017) multicultural and justice-oriented guidelines, vocational psychologists can help economically marginalized workers overcome their financial challenges and enjoy the benefits of a dignified job.

Limitations/Future directions

This study has shortcomings that must be considered when interpreting the results. The study was limited because it only analyzed half of the PWT model. It is crucial that future studies examine PWT predictors in conjunction with PWT moderators and outcome variables. Such analysis would help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact that decent work can have on people's overall well-being. It must also be acknowledged that mediations cannot be adequately tested with cross-sectional data. Moreover, given the cross-sectional design of the current study, causal relations between variables could not be inferred. It is necessary that future studies use experimental designs to test for mediations and causal relations. Longitudinal investigations should also be conducted to better understand how PWT variables impact individuals over time.

Furthermore, the majority of my study participants identified as economically marginalized white communities; it is important that future researchers recruit more participants from economically marginalized BIPOC communities. While my online survey was effective at reaching financially marginalized communities, mixed-method designs may be more effective for reaching economically marginalized BIPOC communities. In addition, this study did not examine for within-group differences among low-income populations. Future studies should consider recruiting low-income samples from specific communities (e.g., LGBT+, Indigenous) to test for within-group differences and intersectionality. Moreover, the current investigation only recruited participants living in the U.S.; hence, the results cannot be generalized to those living in other countries. Given that countries have varied degrees of economic inequality, researchers should assess the applicability of PWT on samples outside the U.S. Moreover, the career adaptability instrument used in this study is limited in examining potential strengths in coming

from an economically marginalized background. Investigators should consider using a strengths-based perspective when testing the PWT variables. Mixed methods studies may help researchers better understand the strengths in coming from economically marginalized communities and the extent to which those strengths impact attainment of decent work.

Conclusion

In summation, I tested the predictor portion of the PWT model among a sample of economically marginalized workers. I found support for most hypothesized paths. The results demonstrate preliminary evidence that PWT is an adequate framework for which to understand the experiences of economically marginalized workers. My findings also highlight the critical need for psychologists to engage in both individual and system level interventions in order to increase access to decent jobs. The findings in this dissertation also suggest that researchers should consider further examining the role of career adaptability and its placement in the PWT model. Lastly, given that multiple PWT pathways continued to receive support, it may be important for future researchers to move from cross-sectional research to exploratory and/or longitudinal studies of PWT.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Demographic Questions

What gender do you identify as?

1. Woman
2. Man
3. Transwoman
4. Transman
5. Non-binary
6. Another gender

What sexual orientation do you identify with?

1. Heterosexual
2. Gay/Lesbian
3. Bisexual
4. Another sexual identity (please specify)

Please type your age:

Do you identify as:

1. Hispanic
2. Non-Hispanic

What race do you identify with? Please check all that apply.

1. American Indian/Alaska Native
2. Asian American
3. Black/African American
4. Latino/a/x
5. White/Caucasian
6. Biracial
7. Multiracial
8. Another race (please specify)

What is your marital status?

1. Never married
2. Married
3. Living together
4. Divorced
5. Separated
6. Widowed

What is your CURRENT employment status?

1. Full-time employed
2. Part-time employed
3. Involuntarily unemployed
4. Voluntarily unemployed

What was your employment PRIOR to the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. Full-time employed
2. Part-time employed
3. Involuntarily unemployed
4. Voluntarily unemployed

Are you self-employed?

1. Yes
2. No

What was your annual household income in 2019?

1. Below \$5,000
2. \$5,001 - \$10,000
3. \$10,001 - \$15,000
4. \$15,001 - \$20,000
5. \$20,001 - \$25,750
6. \$25,751 - \$30,000
7. \$30,001 - \$40,000
8. \$40,001 - \$50,000
9. \$50,000 - \$75,000
10. \$75,001 - \$100,000
11. \$100,000 - \$150,000
12. \$150,001 - \$200,000
13. \$200,000 or more

Which of the following brackets capture your childhood family wealth (e.g this includes assets like home, land, stocks, savings, and so on)?

14. Below \$5,000
15. \$5,001 - \$10,000
16. \$10,001 - \$15,000
17. \$15,001 - \$20,000
18. \$20,001 - \$25,750
19. \$25,751 - \$30,000
20. \$30,001 - \$40,000
21. \$40,001 - \$50,000
22. \$50,000 - \$75,000
23. \$75,001 - \$100,000
24. \$100,000 - \$150,000
25. \$150,001 - \$200,000
26. \$200,000 or more

Which of the following brackets capture your childhood family wealth (e.g this includes parental assets like home, land, stocks, savings, and so on)?

1. Below \$5,000
2. \$5,001 - \$10,000
3. \$10,001 - \$15,000
4. \$15,001 - \$20,000
5. \$20,001 - \$25,750
6. \$25,751 - \$30,000
7. \$30,001 - \$40,000
8. \$40,001 - \$50,000
9. \$50,000 - \$75,000
10. \$75,001 - \$100,000
11. \$100,000 - \$150,000
12. \$150,001 - \$200,000
13. \$200,000 or more

What is your highest level of education?

1. Elementary School
2. Middle School
3. High School
4. Some College
5. College Certificate
6. Associate's Degree
7. Bachelor's Degree
8. Master's Degree
9. Doctorate or Professional Degree

Are you a first-generation college student?

1. No, one of my parents also attended college
2. Yes, I am part of the first generation to attend college

What is your homeownership status?

1. I own a home
2. I rent my home

Type the amount of debt you currently owe

Type the number of dependents you currently have (e.g. children who depend on you financially)

Instructions: Think of this ladder as representing where people stand in the United States.

At the **top** of the ladder are the people who are the best off – those who have the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs. At the **bottom** are the people who are the worst off – those who have the least money, least education, the least respected jobs, or no job. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to the people at the very top; the lower you are, the closer you are to the people at the very bottom.

Where would you place yourself on this ladder?

Please place a large “X” on the rung where you think you stand at this time in your life relative to other people in your community.



APPENDIX B:

Lifetime Experiences of Marginalization Scale (LEMS)

Instructions

We are interested in the degree to which you consider yourself to be marginalized in the United States. By marginalized, we mean being in a less powerful position in society, being socially excluded, and/or having less access to resources because you are a member of a specific group, have a specific identity, or life history. This often occurs due to one's gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, religious beliefs, physical appearance, or being a part of other minority groups/identities. With this definition in mind, please respond to the following items below considering the experiences you have had throughout your entire life *as a result of being (fill in marginalized group status here)*.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Moderately Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Neutral

5 = Slightly Agree

6 = Moderately Agree

7 = Strongly Agree

1. Throughout my life, I have had many experiences that have made me feel marginalized.
2. During my lifetime, I have had many interpersonal interactions that have often left me feeling marginalized
3. I have felt marginalized within various community settings for as long as I can remember

APPENDIX C:

Economic Constraints Scale (ECS)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate one answer to each of the following statements:

Strongly	Moderately	Slightly	Neutral	Slightly	Moderately	Strongly
Disagree	Disagree	Disagree		Agree	Agree	Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. For as long as I can remember, I have had very limited economic or financial resources.
2. Throughout most of my life, I have struggles financially.
3. For as long as I can remember, I have had difficulties making ends meet.
4. I have considered myself poor or very close to poor most of my life
5. For most of my life, I have not felt financially stable.

APPENDIX D:

Work Volition Scale (WVS)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate one answer to each of the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I've been able to choose the jobs I have wanted.
2. I can do the kind of work I want, despite external barriers.
3. The current state of the economy prevents me from working in the job I want. [R]
4. The jobs I would like to pursue don't exist in my area. [R]
5. Due to my financial situation, I need to take any job I can find. [R]
6. When looking for work, I'll take whatever I can get. [R]
7. In order to provide for my family, I often have to take jobs I do not enjoy. [R]
8. I don't like my job, but it would be impossible for me to find a new one. [R]
9. I feel able to change jobs if I want to.
10. The only thing that matters in choosing a job is to make ends meet. [R]
11. I feel that outside forces have really limited my work and career options. [R]
12. I feel total control over my job choices. [R]
13. Negative factors outside my personal control had a large impact on my current career choice. [R]

APPENDIX E:

Career Futures Inventory-Career Adaptability Subscale (CFI)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate one answer to each of the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I am good at adapting to new work settings.
2. I can adapt to change in my career plans.
3. I can overcome potential barriers that may exist in my career.
4. I enjoy trying new work-related tasks.
5. I can adapt to change in the world of work.
6. I will adjust easily to shifting demands at work.
7. Others would say that I am adaptable to change in my career plans.
8. My career success will be determined by my efforts.
9. I tend to bounce back when my career plans don't work out quite right.
10. I am rarely in control of my career. [R] (removed)
11. I am not in control of my career success. [R] (removed)

APPENDIX F:

Pre-COVID Decent Work Scale (DWS)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate one answer to each of the following statements. As you answer these questions, please think about your job PRIOR to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I feel emotionally safe interacting with people at work
2. At work, I feel safe from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind
3. I feel physically safe interacting with people at work.
4. I get good healthcare benefits from my job.
5. I have a good healthcare plan at work.
6. My employer provides acceptable options for healthcare.
7. I **am not** properly paid for my work. [R]
8. I **do not** feel I am paid enough based on my qualifications and experience. [R]
9. I am rewarded adequately for my work
10. I **do not** have enough time for non-work activities. [R]
11. I have **no time** to rest during the work week. [R]
12. I have free time during the work week
13. The values of my organization match my family values.
14. My organization’s values align with my family values.
15. The values of my organization match the values within my community.

APPENDIX G:

Post-COVID Decent Work Scale (DWS)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate one answer to each of the following statements. As you answer these questions, please think about your job CURRENTLY.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. I feel emotionally safe interacting with people at work
2. At work, I feel safe from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind
3. I feel physically safe interacting with people at work.
4. I get good healthcare benefits from my job.
5. I have a good healthcare plan at work.
6. My employer provides acceptable options for healthcare.
7. I **am not** properly paid for my work. [R]
8. I **do not** feel I am paid enough based on my qualifications and experience. [R]
9. I am rewarded adequately for my work
10. I **do not** have enough time for non-work activities. [R]
11. I have **no time** to rest during the work week. [R]
12. I have free time during the work week
13. The values of my organization match my family values.
14. My organization’s values align with my family values.
15. The values of my organization match the values within my community.

APPENDIX H:

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations

	1	2	3	4	5
1. ECS	-	.48*	-.52*	-.28*	-.37*
2. LEMS	.48*	-	-.40*	-.24	-.39*
3. WVS	-.49*	-.36*	-	.44*	.53*
4. CA	-.27*	-.27*	.42*	-	.38*
5. DWS	-.29*	-.34*	.40*	.25*	-
M	24.58	13.03	12.21	43.86	58.25
SD	8.83	5.42	6.25	10.84	16.26

Note. ECS = Economic Constraints Scale; LEMS = Lifetime Experiences of Marginalization Scale; WVS = Work Volition Scale; CA = Career Adaptability Scale; DWS = Decent Work Scale. Manifest correlations are below the diagonal and latent correlations are above the diagonal.

* $p < .01$.