WORKER WELL-BEING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK: BRIDGING THE GAP

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Abstract

The importance of worker well-being is widely-embraced both in theory and policy, but there are numerous perspectives on what it is, how to measure it, whether it needs improving, and, if needed, how to improve it. This paper argues that a more complete approach to worker well-being needs to go beyond job-related approaches to consider workers as full citizens who derive and experience both public and private benefits and costs from working. A broad framework on the meanings of work is used to expand the boundaries of worker well-being to better reflect the breadth of work's importance in human life.

There is longstanding concern with the well-being of workers. Early observational analyses by Friedrich Engels (1845) and Henry Mayhew (1861), novels by Charles Dickens and Émile Zola, the photography of Lewis Hines (Sampsell-Willmann 2009), and diverse secular and religious reform movements focused attention on poverty wages and dangerous working conditions as industrialization became widespread in Britain, the United States, and elsewhere. The academic field of industrial relations was born in the early 20th century out of a deep unease with imbalances in the employment relationship that led to exploitative wages and working hours, arbitrary supervisory methods, and frequent industrial accidents (Kaufman 2004). Concerns with worker well-being similarly underlie the early theorizing of Karl Marx (1844), Georg Simmel (1907), and others regarding the alienation of workers from their work, Max Weber's (1922) work on the repressive nature of bureaucracies, and Henri de Man's (1927) search for factors that enabled or prevented workers from fulfilling a variety of human needs such as activity, creation, and self-worth.

Today, many scholars, policymakers, advocates, and business leaders continue to embrace the importance of worker well-being (Guest 2008). Modern exposés again illustrate the low pay, long working hours, and hazardous working conditions endured by some workers (e.g., Ehrenreich 2001; Harney 2008), but the most systematic attempts to measure worker well-being focus on crafting integrated measures of 'job quality,' especially in Europe (Guillén and Dahl 2009; Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011). Subsequent to the declaration of the Lisbon Strategy's goal of creating 'more and better jobs,' the European Council endorsed a comprehensive framework for monitoring and analyzing job quality (European Commission 2001). Notable follow-up efforts include the European Trade Union Institute's European job quality index (Leschke, Watt, and Finn 2008) and Muñoz de Bustillo et al.'s (2011) job quality index.

Importantly, many of these efforts take a multidisciplinary approach and include diverse dimensions in their overall measures of job quality. But this focus on job quality has effectively reduced work to a set of job-related tasks, and in turn has treated workers as mere performers of physical and mental tasks. Yet work is much more than this. A fuller respect for work entails asking deeper questions about the meanings that workers and societies derive from work. Yes, the literature on job quality recognizes that work provides diverse material as well as psychological rewards, but work can also be a source of identity and the means to care for others, achieve independence, serve society, and build democratic communities (Budd 2011). In other words, and reminiscent of Marx's critique of the hidden abode of production, work needs to be embraced not as a private set of tasks done behind closed doors in a factory or an office, but as a very public activity with deep personal as well as societal meanings (Boyte and Kari 1996). We therefore seek to bridge the existing gap between current thinking on worker well-being and the deeper importance of work for human life.

To be clear, the quality of a job is clearly a significant determinant of worker well-being, but job quality measures are largely job-centric while conceptualizations of worker well-being should be worker-centric.[1] We are not asking how 'good' or 'bad' a job is, rather we are asking how well or badly off a worker is, in so far as he or she resides as a citizen in society. There are aspects of worker well-being that the literature on job quality has excluded as not related to the nature of specific jobs. For example, Gallie (2007a) largely excludes pay from his analysis of job

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[1] Some approaches to job quality start to bridge job quality and worker well-being, such as Muñoz de Bustillo et al.'s (2011) inclusion of work-life balance. But this bridging is limited. For example, work-life balance is assessed through measures related to working time. This is consistent with our argument that worker well-being is dependent on avoiding conflicts with other obligations, but stops short of recognizing that work itself can be a source of caring and service. In other words, our thesis is that we need to continue to extend this movement toward bridging the gap between job quality and worker-well-being.

quality because pay is viewed as part of the terms of employment rather than inherent in the job itself. As a second example, Muñoz de Bustillo et al. (2011) exclude measures of social protections for workers because such protections are features of a labour market or welfare state, not a particular job. A more complete approach to worker well-being needs to go beyond job quality to consider workers as fully-functioning citizens who derive and experience both public and private benefits and costs from working. This echoes Cooke, Donaghey, and Zeytinoglu's (2013: 507) advocacy of broadening job quality into a measure of work quality that reflects individuals' 'values on work and life' such that worker well-being is high when work helps individuals in 'achieving personal life goals'.[2] This approach is also consistent with Rothausen's (2013) development of the construct of eudaimonic (purposeful) job-related well-being that goes beyond satisfaction with job tasks to include development and growth, role in society, impact on family, and impact on life construction.

There is a need to develop approaches to worker well-being that capture the full importance and meanings of work in human life. As found in the multi-country Meaning of Working study in the 1980s, work is of 'significance to individuals because it occupies a great deal of their time, because it generates economic and sociopsychological benefits and costs, and because it is so interrelated with other important life areas such as family, leisure, religion, and community' (England and Whitely 1990: 66). The following paper therefore seeks to contribute to the literature by arguing for an approach that sees work in its broadest terms, rather than just links it to a distinct set of tasks, and explicitly considers the wide-ranging private and public benefits and costs of work.

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[2] Developing a stronger connection between job quality and broader contextual factors that tie to the community and society is also consistent with Acker's (2002) call for expanding industrial relations research beyond the bounds of the formal rules and practices of the workplace.

CONCEPTUALIZING WORKER WELL-BEING

There are several different ways to approach the issue of worker well-being. Below we set out two main approaches: a subjective and an objective approach. The two approaches offer very different and sometimes opposing views about how worker well-being is to be defined, how it is to be measured, and how it is to be improved upon. This section offers a basis for subsequent discussion that draws out further the different meanings attached to work and their implications for the understanding of worker well-being. A later section will then consider how a broader approach to worker well-being might be constructed.

Subjective vs. objective approaches to worker well-being

Researchers have defined worker well-being in one of two ways. Firstly, some have defined worker well-being by the responses that workers give to questions regarding their satisfaction levels with different aspects of work. We can label approaches that fall under this category as 'subjective,' given that they focus on the subjective well-being of workers and propose the use of job satisfaction as a measure of worker well-being. Approaches that fall under this heading include those in the psychology literature (Stride, Wall, and Catley 2007) and modern labour economics (Clark 2011). Secondly, other researchers working within sociology (Gallie 2007b) and elsewhere (Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011) have proposed explicit criteria for assessing the well-being of workers, say through reference to a list of factors (e.g., skill, autonomy) that give workers the opportunity to achieve well-being. Such approaches can be labeled as 'objective' since they prescribe what factors must be present for worker well-being to be realized. These two approaches have influenced national and international debates on job quality and remain important reference points in the theoretical and empirical literatures on both

worker well-being and job quality (see Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011). We consider both approaches below.

Subjective approaches to worker well-being lay stress on workers' subjective reports of well-being. A particularly important and widely used indicator of worker well-being is self-reported job satisfaction taken from surveys that ask workers questions about their attitudes about their jobs (Brown, Charlwood, and Spencer 2012). A key argument is that workers accurately report their well-being through their reported job satisfaction. Although it is understood that worker well-being is a function of a set of work characteristics, the effect of these characteristics on worker well-being is assumed to be fully captured by workers' reported job satisfaction. Following this approach, high reported job satisfaction is seen to equate to high worker well-being, and in turn, high job quality.

Such an approach has several implications. One is the simplicity with which worker well-being can be defined and measured. The definition and measurement of worker well-being is seen to involve asking workers questions about their levels of job satisfaction. Subjective accounts of worker well-being then give a high priority to the use of surveys that include questions on job satisfaction and other items. Another implication relates to the identification of proposals to raise worker well-being. Subjective approaches effectively stress the need to target improvements in workers' reported job satisfaction as the main route to higher worker well-being.

With objective approaches to worker well-being, the strategy for defining and measuring worker well-being is very different. A central argument is that worker well-being must be defined and measured by reference to a set number of factors whose presence is seen to be important for the ability of workers to achieve well-being in work. High worker well-being is not

then associated with work that leads workers to report high job satisfaction but rather with work that meets with certain objective standards of quality. Work that offers some opportunity for creative activity and for some level of autonomy, for example, is seen to be more conducive to worker well-being than work that entails drudgery and is tightly prescribed. The focus in objective approaches is on the characteristics of jobs and how those characteristics enable or thwart the ability of workers to achieve well-being.

Several implications follow from an objective account of worker well-being. One is the need to decide on the factors that matter to worker well-being. Issues of autonomy, skill, and pay can be seen as vital for workers to achieve well-being and thus can be seen as central to the definition and measurement of worker well-being; however, an objective definition of worker well-being might also include other factors such as work intensity and participation in decision-making. But how (and who) is to decide on which factors to include and exclude? Is theory to be used to guide the selection of factors, and if so which theory? Another issue relates to the measurement of the different factors that are considered to impact on worker well-being: how, for instance, are factors such as the level of autonomy and skill to be quantified? A third issue concerns the weight to be attached to the different aspects of work that are deemed to affect worker well-being. In the definition and measurement of worker well-being, for example, is autonomy over work to be given a lower weight than pay?

The above two approaches have informed both academic and policy debates. Studies in Europe, on the one hand, have used job satisfaction as a proxy for worker well-being (Souza-Poza and Souza-Poza 2000; Clark 2011). ILO-inspired debates on 'Decent Work' (1999), on the other hand, have argued for more objective indicators of worker well-being. Below we consider further the theoretical and methodological aspects of these two approaches.

Theoretical and methodological issues

Subjective and objective approaches to worker well-being have competed against one another for a number of years. Although recently in the ascendency thanks to the turn to 'happiness' research in psychology and economics (see Layard 2005), subjective approaches to worker well-being remain vulnerable to the criticisms made by advocates of objective approaches. The following discussion will address some of these criticisms, though without necessarily jettisoning *in toto* a subjective approach to worker well-being.

As argued above, subjective approaches ask us to accept the validity of the answers that workers give in response to questions about their well-being at work. They draw insight and inspiration from the utilitarian tradition in philosophy and economics. The best way to tell how 'happy' someone is with their work, it is argued, is to ask them directly how satisfied they are with work. Yet, there are several weaknesses with the subjective approach. To begin with, workers are capable of adapting to the conditions and circumstances they face at work (Brown, Charlwood, and Spencer 2012) and outside it (Cooke, Donaghey, and Zeytinoglu 2013). As a result, their reported job satisfaction may mask or distort their actual well-being. Imagine a worker who reports high job satisfaction. She may do so not because she is ecstatic about doing her job but rather because she has adapted to her job and has become resigned to doing the said job chiefly because she has no other realistic alternatives open to her. The job that the worker does in this case may be low quality in several key aspects – for example, it may be low paid and low skilled – but because she has adapted to her job these aspects will not be picked up by her reported job satisfaction; indeed they are likely to be masked by the latter. Moreover, empirical evidence shows that workers in different countries and in different occupations report similar levels of job satisfaction, even though they face huge differences in work and employment

conditions (Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2011). What this evidence suggests is the potential unreliability of job satisfaction data as a measure of worker well-being and gives credence to the argument that researchers should be looking to measure and define worker well-being in a way that does not rely solely on a purely subjective approach (Brown, Charlwood, and Spencer 2012). The subjective approach that focuses on measures related to job satisfaction can also be criticized for overlooking the deeper meanings and purposes of work, including its important connections with other aspects of life (Rothausen 2013).

The objective tradition in the study of worker well-being has a long history. Marx (1844), for example, stressed the objective limits to fulfilling work under capitalism. In sociology, there has been a tradition of stressing the importance of issues of skill and autonomy in the determination of worker well-being (Gallie 2007b). In economics, a more objective approach to well-being has been pioneered by Sen (1999). The latter's work has been applied to the understanding of the quality of work by Green (2006). Sen's approach, in essence, is that well-being is dependent on the 'capabilities' of people to achieve certain 'functionings' (where the latter refer to doing and being things of value). As applied to the work domain, well-being relates to the capabilities afforded to workers to do and be things they value. Green (2006), following Sen, suggests that the quality of work can be defined in relation to several key factors, namely pay, skill, effort intensity, risk of personal harm and job loss, and personal discretion. The degree to which these factors are present then is seen to determine whether workers are capable of achieving well-being in work.

A problem with objective approaches, however, is that there is no universal agreement over which items to include in the definition of worker well-being or how to weight them in constructing a multi-dimensional measure. Even where there is agreement, there is the issue of

finding appropriate measures of the key items; ironically, here data may be sought in subjective measures (e.g., of discretion and skill use) drawn from surveys. Moreover, objective approaches could be seen as elitist expressions of perceived academic expertise. Workers' subjective appraisals of their well-being are overlooked, and the relative weights specified for each objective dimension might differ from workers' relative preferences.

So we are left with the critical question of what dimensions of work to include in the definition of worker well-being. In answering this question, we agree with Muñoz de Bustillo et al. (2011) who emphasize the need to rigorously draw on the wider social scientific literature for theoretical justification for the factors that matter to worker well-being. The debate between subjective and objective approaches underscores the need to be inclusive in the identification of dimensions of worker well-being, as now appears to be the case, for example, in the literature on career success in which objective and subjective measures of career success are recognized as valid (Hall and Chandler 2005; Ng et al. 2005). One of our major contributions is the use of a theoretical foundation that we believe is the most inclusive framework of work available, and this in turn leads to a broader approach to worker well-being than has previously been constructed. More specifically, we argue for an approach to worker well-being that transcends the level of individual jobs and brings into consideration the broader meanings of work in human life.

THE BROAD MEANINGS OF WORK

This paper's premise is that measures of worker well-being should incorporate the full spectrum of private and public benefits and costs of work that reflect the different meanings of work. If work is solely about money, then worker well-being can be limited to the consideration of pay and benefits. If work is simply the performance of physical and mental tasks, then

consideration of those tasks will be sufficient to measure worker well-being. But if, as we will contend below, work is about much more than money and the performance of specific tasks, then worker well-being needs to be an equally broad concept.

We follow Budd's (2011) comprehensive examination of the diverse meanings of work from across the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences. We assert that this provides a valuable and provocative framework for re-thinking the nature of worker well-being because the framework integrates a much greater diversity of thinking on work than is typically the case. In this way, specific meanings of work are uncovered that cause us to broaden the understanding of worker well-being. In particular, the framework implies six key meanings of work for workers and their communities: physical health and consumption, mental health and personal fulfillment, identity, freedom, caring for others, and service. We consider each of these in this section. After that we consider what these meanings imply for broadening the conceptualization and measurement of worker-well-being.

Firstly, physical health and consumption goes to the heart of work as a means to income and consumption. Work provides the basis for society to live. Individually, workers gain from work the income they need to live. There is private gain or sufferings for workers depending on the level of wages they receive. But at what price is this ability to live achieved? In other words, the physical health aspect of work additionally brings into consideration the health risks of work and more directly the state of working conditions. As with the level of pay, there are also private gains and losses depending on the health risks of work. Broadening the meaning of work entails recognizing not only these private aspects, but that this aspect of work has public meaning in that these private gains and losses spill outwards. Low paid work, for example, creates a workforce that is dependent on welfare. It also creates poverty and the lack of opportunity. Dangerous work

is costly to a community through health care costs, the loss of productive resources, and income maintenance and other support programmes.

But work is much more than just a way to achieve consumption and a source of physical health. This is directly obvious in the case of voluntary work but it also extends to the wider meanings of work that transcend its effects on consumption and physical health. Secondly, then, mental health and personal fulfillment capture the traditionally-recognized non-pecuniary aspects of work. On the one hand, there is the stress and anxiety of working under high pressure or oppressive conditions. There is also the hardship and degradation for workers of performing monotonous and mind-numbing work. Yet, on the other hand, there is the personal fulfillment that comes from doing work that matches with one's skills and that offers one opportunities for challenge and initiative. There are personal costs and benefits here for workers but there are also social costs and benefits. A worker who is stressed by work may be more prone to absence and more likely to be in the care of the health service. A worker who is deskilled by his or her work may be less able to function as a fully rounded human being outside of work. Mindless work leads to mindless leisure. A worker who is animated and uplifted by his or her work, by contrast, may be more likely to be engaged and participative in society. This suggests why a measure of job satisfaction may not be adequate for the purposes of capturing worker well-being, for work's meaning extends beyond its effect on workers' feelings about work. Also, to the extent that workers adapt to the work they do, their reported job satisfaction may conceal the true quality of their lives at work.

Beyond these commonly-recognized intrinsic aspects, there is increasing attention on the deeper importance of work for self-understanding. The third dimension of a framework of broadened meanings of work, therefore, is identity. Work can have meaning for individuals'

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identity construction on various levels, including the development of a sense of individual purpose, group identification with one's occupation or employer and the social status attached to these associations, and a sense of humanness. Work can facilitate a positive self-understanding along these dimensions, or work roles can conflict with one's true sense of self, leading to an inauthenticity that Marx labeled alienation.

A fourth meaning of work focuses on the importance of freedom. Western liberal thought, on the one hand, embraces the idea that workers should be free to dispose of their labour services as they please and endorses the virtues of a flexible labour market with limited regulations. In this view, workers are seen to benefit from being able to choose forms of work that meet with their preferences. The argument would be that workers could opt for work they like doing trading off higher quality jobs for lower wages (this argument forms the basis of the theory of compensating differentials found in standard labour economics). The problem, of course, is that in the real world workers are not to 'free to choose' in the way envisaged by liberal political and economic theory; rather workers have to accept work on terms set by employers and therefore often find themselves in forms of work that fail to meet their preferences. Marxian political thought, on the other hand, gives emphasis to freedom, but in this case, the freedom to self-determine work. It argues that truly free labour is the source of worker well-being. The Marxian notion of alienation argues that capitalism prevents workers from achieving self-realization by imposing un-free labour on them. The lack of freedom in work reflects on the unequal class basis of capitalist society and leads to conflict at work.

Fifthly, a comprehensive consideration of the meanings of work for individuals and societies needs to recognize that work provides the physical, cognitive, and emotional effort required to attend to and maintain others. In other words, work is the source of a society's caring

activities. These activities take place not only in the home through (typically unpaid) household, child-rearing, and eldercare activities, but also outside the home, especially through paid jobs in the health care and educational sectors. Consistent with longstanding feminist scholarship, we need to fully value the broad private and public contributions of unpaid and paid reproductive work. Caring might frequently involve elements of love, but it is also real work that requires physical and emotional effort and that generates economic and social value, even when unpaid. It is also time to reject the mythical production/reproduction duality that disconnects paid productive work with unpaid reproductive work. Not only does this dichotomy marginalize and devalue certain forms of work—typically 'women's work'—while privileging other forms, it also fails to recognize the interconnected nature of a society's full breadth of work activities. The idealized male breadwinner, for example, cannot devote himself exclusively to paid employment without someone to prepare his meals and otherwise care for him; equally, the idealized housewife cannot remove herself from the public sphere of paid employment without a male breadwinner.

Sixthly, we also need to broaden the standard domain of the meanings of work to move beyond individual-centric meanings that currently dominate thinking about work. Yes, work serves an individual's and his or her immediate family's needs for income, mental health, identity, and freedom as well as fulfilling the family's caring needs. But work also has important meanings for individuals and society as serving others. This can include service to God, humanity, or one's country, community, or family. For example, some might see the deepest meaning of work being achieved when work is viewed as a calling. When work is a calling, not only does it draw on one's special gifts or talents, but these talents are used to serve others. Indeed, the idea of work as a calling has religious roots such that one's special gifts are created

by God and should be used to serve God's kingdom. Volunteer work and civic service, by contrast, are also valued for secular reasons in terms of helping others and helping build a community or a nation. Working in the military service is frequently seen as patriotic service for one's country while work can also be seen as serving economic nationalism, as was true in English mercantilist thought (Spencer 2009).

So the true importance of work for individuals and societies goes beyond the typical extrinsic and intrinsic rewards commonly recognized in research on work. That is, work has broad meanings beyond income in support of consumption and job satisfaction in support of psychological health. Robust measures of worker well-being, or what Cooke, Donaghey, and Zeytinoglu (2013) label 'work quality,' therefore need to go beyond the construct of job quality to better reflect a fuller range of private and public benefits that can be derived from work as well as a full range of costs that should be avoided.

CONNECTING WORKER WELL-BEING TO THE BREADTH OF MEANINGS OF WORK

The conceptualizations outlined in the previous section provide a needed foundation for crafting a novel approach to worker well-being that sees work as more than a source of immediate material and psychological benefits that largely flow from the nature of the job tasks. This approach is summarized in Table 1. The first domain we focus on is derived from the importance of work as a critical means for supporting consumption. Workers cannot live by leisure alone and wages must be earned to survive in capitalist society. The level of living standards experienced by a worker and his or her family is importantly tied to income earned at work. When work fails to support a decent level of living standards, it is not only the worker and his or her family that suffers; there can also be negative consequences for society including

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health care costs, negative educational outcomes, crime, and withdrawal from political and civic society. Pay must therefore be given central prominence in the understanding of worker well-being. This approach to worker well-being discards the fiction of wages as being a 'just' and 'fair' return for the contribution made by workers in production which is a feature of mainstream economics. Instead, workers should be seen as entitled to a level of remuneration that allows them and their families to live at a socially acceptable level. Adequate pay and benefits from work overall can also be seen as vital to the securing of positive identity in our consumption driven society and the pursuit of higher pay and improved work-related benefit can be justified on the basis of the identity conceptualization of work (see below).

Since a major role of work is to support physical life through enabling consumption, the quality of work itself should not imperil physical well-being. Dangerous work creates both private and public costs. A robust approach to worker well-being therefore needs to include standards for physical well-being and for health and safety at work. This should include measures such as protection against workplace hazards and risks, positive indicators of a worker's physical health, and protection against unwanted intimacy and sexual harassment.

Moving beyond work's direct importance for consumption and physical health, the traditional non-pecuniary aspects of work indicate that psychological and mental health should also be a dimension of worker well-being. Much of the psychological literature emphasizes subjective self-appraisals of job satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-identity. These are important aspects of a comprehensive approach to worker well-being, in the sense that they can signal, albeit noisily, workers' well-being in jobs. But they are incomplete by themselves: for the reasons set out above, they need to be assessed alongside other objective indicators of worker well-being. To see work as a source of personal fulfillment also highlights the possible stressful

nature of forms of work which impose excessive demands on workers. Research on the detrimental mental health effects of low control, high stress, high effort, and long hour jobs reinforces the importance of insuring against low levels of psychological and mental health (Siegrist 1996). In practical terms, it can be seen as important that workers are protected from stressful work, say by promoting forms of flexible working and greater levels of autonomy at work. Curbs on intensive effort and long work hours are also important to the promotion of higher worker well-being. The point here is that the mental well-being of workers needs to be considered in addition to their physical well-being especially as many jobs are now carried out in the service sector where physical injury from work is low. This highlights again the benefits of integrating across perspectives and moving to an inclusive approach to worker well-being that encompasses both the mental and physical demands of work.

The deeper meaning that work can provide in terms of shaping one's identity indicates that another dimension of worker well-being is the extent to which work supports a positive identity. As noted by Rothausen (2013: 12), 'in healthy individuals, job-related identities and roles do not exist in isolation but as part of, and instrumental to, a coherent, positive sense of a whole self.' One concern here is whether work roles create a sense of inauthenticity by conflicting with one's true sense of self. For example, work with high degrees of emotional labour that require frequent suppression of one's true emotions results in feelings of inauthenticity (Erickson and Ritter 2001). Such instances need to be accounted for in a measure of worker well-being. Other work-related threats to personal identity include being forced to present one's self in certain ways, such as wearing ugly uniforms, following corporate scripts in interacting with customers, and being required to suppress one's national identity (Leidner 1993; Poster 2007). The external recognition and social standing attached to someone's work are also

important elements of the deeper significance of work with respect to identity, and should also be considered as part of worker well-being.

A fourth meaning of work relates to freedom. This has a number of implications for worker well-being. At one level, work should provide socio-political-economic independence. Worker well-being should therefore include the ability to freely quit and seek whatever employment or occupational opportunities are desired. Employment discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, and other qualities violates this standard and should be seen as counter to worker well-being. Socio-political-economic independence also requires a lack of coercion in the employment relationship. Workers then should have the economic and political independence from their employers that is consistent with being fully-functioning worker-citizens. This should include legal protections against discrimination, harassment, abusive treatment, and unjust dismissal. That is, high levels of well-being require that workers have stable employment and are not vulnerable to dismissal and lacking in employment rights. The opportunity to establish independent labour unions, exercise free speech in the workplace, and pursue other forms of workplace voice, are additional elements of worker well-being in this regard. In other words, workers should be treated with dignity and respect and not treated as commodities or factors of production, consistent with a more rounded picture of worker well-being that recognizes workers as free human beings with inalienable rights (Budd 2004; Kaufman 2005).

Work as a source of freedom for workers and societies also gives emphasis to the idea of work as a vent for human creativity. The opportunity to acquire, develop, hone, and utilize skills in work thus can be viewed as an important ingredient of a comprehensive approach to worker well-being. Conversely, one can say that worker well-being will be impaired by exposure to mundane and non-creative forms of work. Such work is liable not only to undermine the mental

capacities of workers but also to deny them opportunities for recognition and self-esteem. Elevating worker well-being in this case should entail moves to curtail work that lacks a strong creative content.

To appreciate work as freedom also forces one to consider issues regarding the level of autonomy enjoyed by workers over the work they do and the schedule by which they do it This overlaps with other meanings of work in that work is likely to be more personally fulfilling and identity affirming where it is carried out by workers with a high degree of autonomy and discretion. In other words, work can be seen as meaningful and purposeful if it enables workers to exercise autonomy and to develop and realize their creative competences. On this view, the degree of autonomy offered to workers over their work acts as a key determinant of worker well-being (Schwartz 1982). An ambitious variant of this would include more democratic systems of governance, including mechanisms to involve workers in the management of the firms in which they work (Russell 1985); a more radical step would entail the transfer of ownership of productive assets to workers and the formation of worker-owned firms.

Lastly, connecting worker well-being to the robust meanings and roles of work means that the caring and service aspects of work cannot be overlooked, and that workers—whether paid or unpaid—who engage in reproductive and other frequently marginalized work roles are fully included in measures of well-being. Specifically, worker well-being should include a concern with the extent to which work allows for caring and service activities. For some workers, caring and serving others might be a direct part of their work. For others, well-being may be promoted by reducing aspects of work that prevent carrying out necessary and valued caring and/or service duties (Hansen 1997). In this way, the contemporary emphasis on work-family balance is important, and should be broadened to work-community balance to better

reflect the importance of service in addition to caring. Measuring these aspects of worker well-being can include subjective—e.g., through self-appraisals of the extent to which workers believe they are serving others—and objective approaches—e.g., by analyzing the extent to which policies that promote activities that serve the community, or others are present.

Including caring and service aspects of work is not a standard approach to job quality, but should be included in broader measures of worker well-being. It is important to appreciate that that individuals work for a variety of purposes—not only for income but also 'to have an important role in society' or 'to help loved ones' (Rothausen 2013: 8). Consequently, well-being needs to include "the 'fit' between available [employment and other income support] alternatives and personal life goals at the stage of life of an individual" even as the nature of a specific job is held constant (Cooke, Donaghey, and Zeytinoglu 2013: 507). Indeed, based on interviews with 88 workers, Cooke, Donaghey, and Zeytinoglu (2013) found that some 'viewed work as being good quality when it could be integrated seamlessly into more important life activities' (p. 512), others 'valued any type of employment as a way to contribute to the local community' (p. 514), and a third category of individuals focused on what the community meant for them and how meaningful it was to be back in a caring and friendly community' (p. 518). Such evidence confirms the need to define and measure worker well-being in ways that extend beyond job-related characteristics and encompass the position of workers in society.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars, business leaders, policymakers, and advocates claim that worker well-being is important. But much of the recent attention has focused on job quality. While these efforts often take a multidisciplinary approach and include diverse dimensions of job quality, this focus on job quality largely reduces work to a set of job-related tasks. In contrast, recognition of

the broader scope of the meanings and roles of work means that a full accounting of worker well-being needs to go beyond job quality. In fact, in interviewing workers about their perceived well-being, Cooke, Donaghey, and Zeytinoglu (2013: 520) found that many 'de-emphasized specific job characteristics while accentuating the extent to which work enabled them to live in their chosen community and with their preferred lifestyle.' Therefore, there is a need to bridge this gap by developing measures of worker well-being that reflect the full range of meanings that work can have for individuals and societies.

To be blunt, we believe that this paper uses the broadest set of theoretically-rich conceptualizations of work available and therefore importantly moves the literature toward the most comprehensive approach to worker well-being developed to date. The value of such an approach can be illustrated by reference to the often bifurcated nature of discussion of worker well-being in much academic research that represents worker well-being as either a subjective construct or an objective one. Our broader framework means that worker well-being has both a subjective and an objective dimension. What responses workers give to questions about job satisfaction convey some important information about their own subjective evaluations of the quality of their working selves. But data on job satisfaction should not be the end of the story as far as worker well-being is concerned (Brown, Charlwood, and Spencer 2012). This is in part because self-reported job satisfaction is affected by workers' expectations and norms about work: two workers with different expectations and norms about work may offer different responses about their level of job satisfaction even if the jobs they do are identical in objective terms. So, from our perspective, consideration must also be given to the objective conditions and circumstances of the work that workers actually perform as shaped by broader life and societal goals.

Drawing together different conceptualizations on work, a high quality job is truly one that meets certain objective standards as well as provides high job satisfaction. The comprehensive approach to worker well-being developed here provides not only a way to integrate subjective and objective approaches to worker well-being, but also the basis for broadly considering the subjective and objective dimensions that should be embraced in evaluations of worker well-being. Some of these dimensions have already been identified by other researchers, but our broadened framework also uniquely adds new dimensions, such as occupational choice and the ability to serve and care for others. Future research should use this framework to develop concrete measures of worker well-being which can then be used by policymakers and others to better understand patterns of workers well-being and needed areas of improvement.

Our analyses are also important for the closely-related literature on job quality. Objective approaches to job quality are implicitly or explicitly based on beliefs about worker well-being. If an author's model of worker well-being is too narrow, then the resulting measures of job quality will be too narrow. We believe that our integrated model of worker well-being provides the strongest foundation for job quality researchers to use in constructing measures of job quality. This, then, can help researchers and policymakers identify the strengths and weaknesses of the European Council's framework for monitoring and analyzing job quality (European Commission 2001), the European Trade Union Institute's European job quality index (Leschke, Watt, and Finn 2008), Muñoz de Bustillo et al.'s (2011) job quality index, and other efforts to define and measure European job quality in pursuit of the Lisbon Strategy's goal of creating 'more and better jobs'. For example, our framework indicates that while these efforts have appropriately highlighted the importance of skills and autonomy, they overlook the importance of non-discrimination and opportunities for caring. Moreover, our broader assessment of worker well-

being indicates that a focus on job quality is not sufficient for policy intervention because social safety nets, other labour market interventions, and personal life goals can be important for worker well-being but are typically seen as outside the scope of a specific job.

Finally, a broad approach to the meanings of work provides greater legitimacy to forms of work that are often invisible. A true picture of the well-being of a nation's working population should include not only the well-being of paid employees in stable jobs, but also workers frequently considered 'marginal' or invisible, whether paid or unpaid, who frequently have caring duties. Feminist perspectives on work reject deep-seated dualities such as production/reproduction, work/family, and labour/leisure (Glucksmann 1995). Consistent with these perspectives, we have tried to advance a holistic approach to worker well-being that recognizes the interconnected nature of a society's full breadth of work activities and does not divorce worker well-being from other (non-work) aspects of well-being.

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Table 1: Domains of Worker Well-Being: A Comprehensive Approach

Pay and Benefits

- An adequate income including a "living wage" and basic benefits coverage
- Economic security via social safety nets

Safety, Health, and Body Work

- Protection against workplace hazards and risks
- Positive indicators of a worker's physical health
- Protection against unwanted intimacy and sexual harassment

Psychological and Mental Health

- Avoidance of undue stress associated with work
- Avoidance of excessive effort and hours of work
- Positive levels of job satisfaction and self-esteem

Identity

- Positive levels of self-identity and consistency with life goals
- Pay, benefits, and other markers of social standing that contribute to positive identity
- Avoidance of excessive levels of emotional labour and other sources of inauthenticity

Freedom and Voice

- Freedom to quit and occupational choice
- Protections against discrimination, harassment, abusive treatment, and unjust dismissal
- Ability to form independent labour unions
- Workplace free speech protections

Skill and Creativity

- Opportunities for skill development and use
- Avoidance of low complex and mundane work

Autonomy over Work

- Opportunities to control how and what work is done
- Opportunities to influence design and planning of work

Governance and Ownership

- Opportunities to participate in how work is managed
- Opportunities to own productive assets

Caring

- Opportunities for caring for others
- Avoidance of conflicts that prevent the fulfillment of caring responsibilities

Serving Others

- Opportunities for serving others
- Avoidance of conflicts that interfere with ability to serve others