

# **Work as a Social Problem?**

Jan. 13, 2020

# Who works?

- Almost 8/10 (78%) of people aged 15 to 64 participate in the paid workforce
  - 86% of people between age 25-54
    - 79% for young adults (age 20-24)
    - 57% for older adults (age 55-64)
  - 78.7% of women with employed spouses
- Most of us will be involved in the job market in our lives

# What do we get from work?

- We work for a living and our pay is essential to our economic well-being (ourselves and our families)
  - Standard of living
  - Personal identity
  - Connections

# Society and the Value of Work

- Ancient Greece and Rome viewed work negatively
- Early Hebrews saw as divine punishment for 'original sin'
- Saint Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> century) ranked occupations
- Martin Luther (16<sup>th</sup> century) felt was a central component of human life

# Paradigm Shifts in History

- Pendulum swings between two opposite poles, may between right wing and left wing, conservatism and compassion for the poor—social reform
- Progressive Era—1900-1914
- World War I—conservative
- Great Depression—social reform
- World War II and the '50s
- 1960s
- Reaganism—trickle down theory
- From the Bushes to Obama—attempts to address the plight of the poor
- Disillusionment today with capitalism and big banks and big business as a result of economic crisis of 2008

# Work Ethic

Max Weber and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

- Argued that the religious sect, Calvinists, embraced hard work, rejected worldly pleasures and extolled the virtues of frugality, which in turn fuel capitalist expansion

# Work Ethic

Humanist tradition

- Karl Marx argued that based on this idea Capitalism stifled human potential because workers had little control over their labour and its products

# What do we look for in work?

- Talk to the people around you...

# What do we look for in work?

- Just a good pay cheque?
- Good jobs are ones:
  - that allow some autonomy,
  - where there is room for advancement,
  - opportunity to learn and expand on skills and knowledge,
  - decent hours of work,
  - job security,
  - interesting work

# How do we evaluate work?

- We evaluate our work based on intrinsic and extrinsic values
  - **Intrinsic** = interesting work, sense of accomplishment, freedom to decide develop skills and abilities, receive recognition
  - **Extrinsic** = pays well, good benefits, job security, career advancement, balance of work and family

- **Take a moment and think about the last job you had, evaluate it using these criteria and determine whether or not you feel it was a good job or a bad job, be prepared to explain why you have come to that decision**
- **For those of you who have had or are in a bad job, was/is quitting an option? Why or why not?**

# Not satisfied at work?

- What happens when workers are not satisfied with work?
  - Overt acts of deviance (theft, sabotage, drug use)
  - Increased number of complaints and grievances
  - Increased tardiness and absenteeism

# Exploitation

- The extraction of surplus value, or the difference between the value of what a worker receives in wages and that which is produced and appropriated by the capitalist
  - Labourers not paid based on the value of what they produced, but on the basis of what it takes in the way of food and other necessities of life to enable them to continue presenting themselves and their offspring for work
  - In other words, the exchange value of the workers' labour is less than the value it produces for the capitalist

# Alienation

- Renders workers powerless with respect to the content, conditions, products and processes of their work

“You try to fill up your time with trying to think about things: what you’re going to do on the weekend or about your family. You have to use your imagination. If you don’t have a very good one and you bore easily you’re in trouble...

.. I always dream I’m alone and things are quiet. I call it the land of no-phone, where there isn’t any machine telling me where I have to be every minute...

... I’ll be home and the telephone will ring and I get nervous. It reminds me of the telephone at work...”

-Receptionist interviewed by Studs Turkel for *Working* (1974)

# Necktie

- <https://www.nfb.ca/film/necktie/>

# Question

- What has happened to make an “important necessary, and potentially pleasurable social activity which is capable of satisfying both material and psychological human needs into a source of strife, resentment, and boredom”?

# Marxist Approach

- When Marx wrote in 1844 conditions harsher, but with mechanization, bureaucratization and standardization ideas remain relevant today

# Rinehart

- Marx's concept of alienation arises as part of a materialist critique of industrial capitalism. In his early work Marx identifies five dimensions of alienated labour (see Rinehart, 1996):
  - (1) Alienated from the products of one's labour;
  - (2) Alienated from the work process itself  
(when labour belongs to someone else)
  - (3) self-alienated (from self-expression and self-development)
  - (4) Alienated from one's own essence of nature
  - (5) Alienated of individuals from one another  
(e.g., by class)

- According to Marx, workers share an alienated consciousness of the effects of structural alienation: their class consciousness is what will give rise to resistance and (perhaps) revolution.

# Alienation

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfGs2Y5WJ14>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnbNcQlzV-4>

# Task

- Get into a group with two to four students and try to think of a job that typifies alienation using the criteria discussed earlier. Be prepared to have a spokesperson discuss the alienation found in your job.

# Tommy Douglas

- Leader of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) from 1942 and the seventh Premier of Saskatchewan from 1944 to 1961, he led the first socialist government in North America and introduced universal public healthcare to Canada. When the CCF united with the Canadian Labour Congress to form the New Democratic Party, he was elected as its first federal leader and served in that post from 1961 to 1971.

# Tommy Douglas: Father of Medicare



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE5fOJfKRNk>

# Theories applied to work

# Self-Actualization

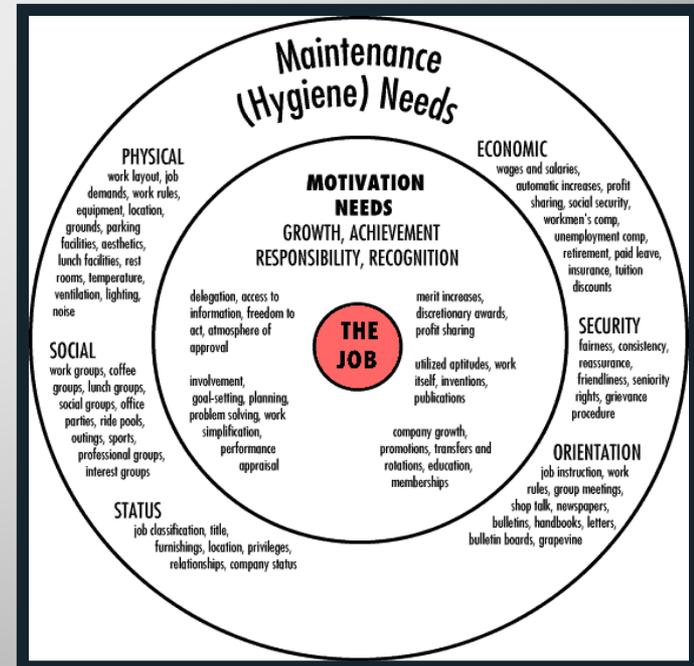
Maslow's hierarchy of needs

1. Physiological needs for things like food and sex
2. Safety needs for a secure physical and emotional environment
3. Belongingness needs for acceptance and friendship
4. Esteem needs for recognition, attention, and appreciation
5. Self-actualization needs for developing one's fullest potential

# Herzberg's Approach

Frederick Herzberg (1966):

- Satisfied and dissatisfied workers stress different aspects of work
- Led to two-factor theory of job satisfaction
  - Hygiene factors
  - Motivators

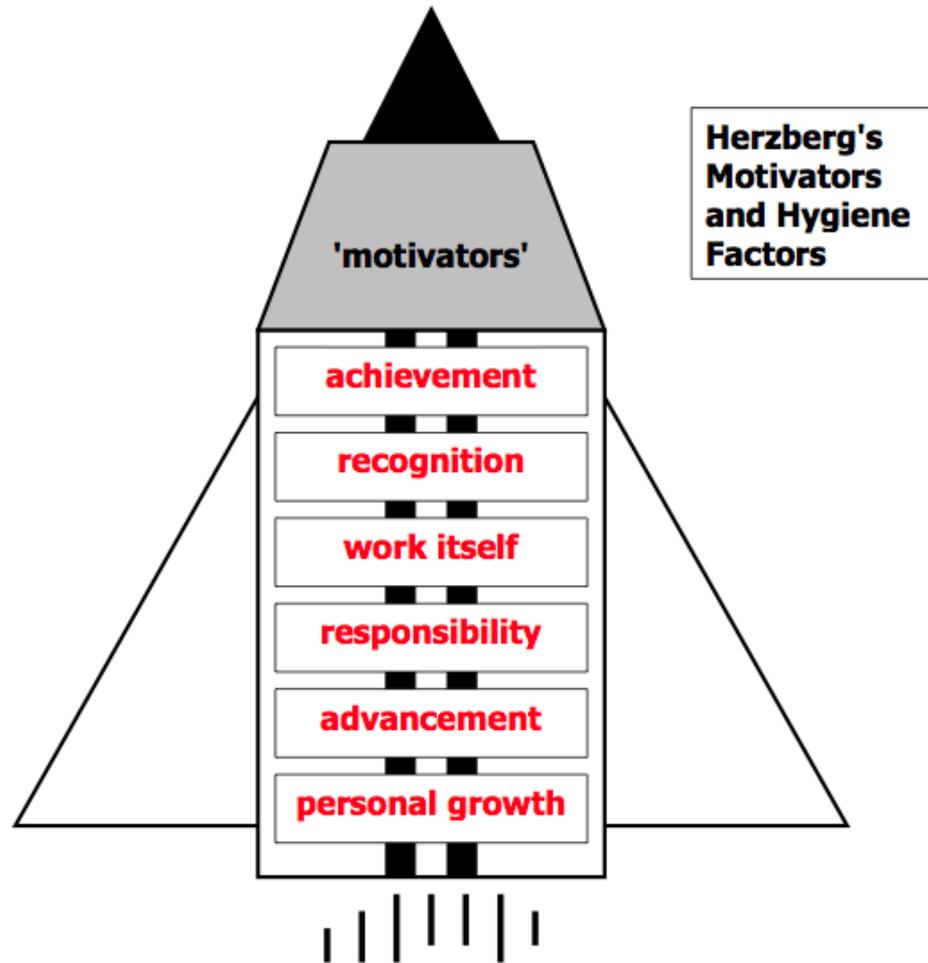


- Workers consider different issues when determining whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied
- Satisfied workers stress professional growth, achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement
- Dissatisfied workers stress negative factors such as managerial incompetence, close supervision, low wages and poor working conditions

Hygiene factors: Workers are dissatisfied if they have to work in unpleasant physical or social settings

Negative conditions need to be removed or neutralized to avoid alienation, however not sufficient for satisfaction

Also need to have personal development needs met – like autonomy, challenge, recognition, and opportunity for developing new skills



**Herzberg's  
Motivators  
and Hygiene  
Factors**

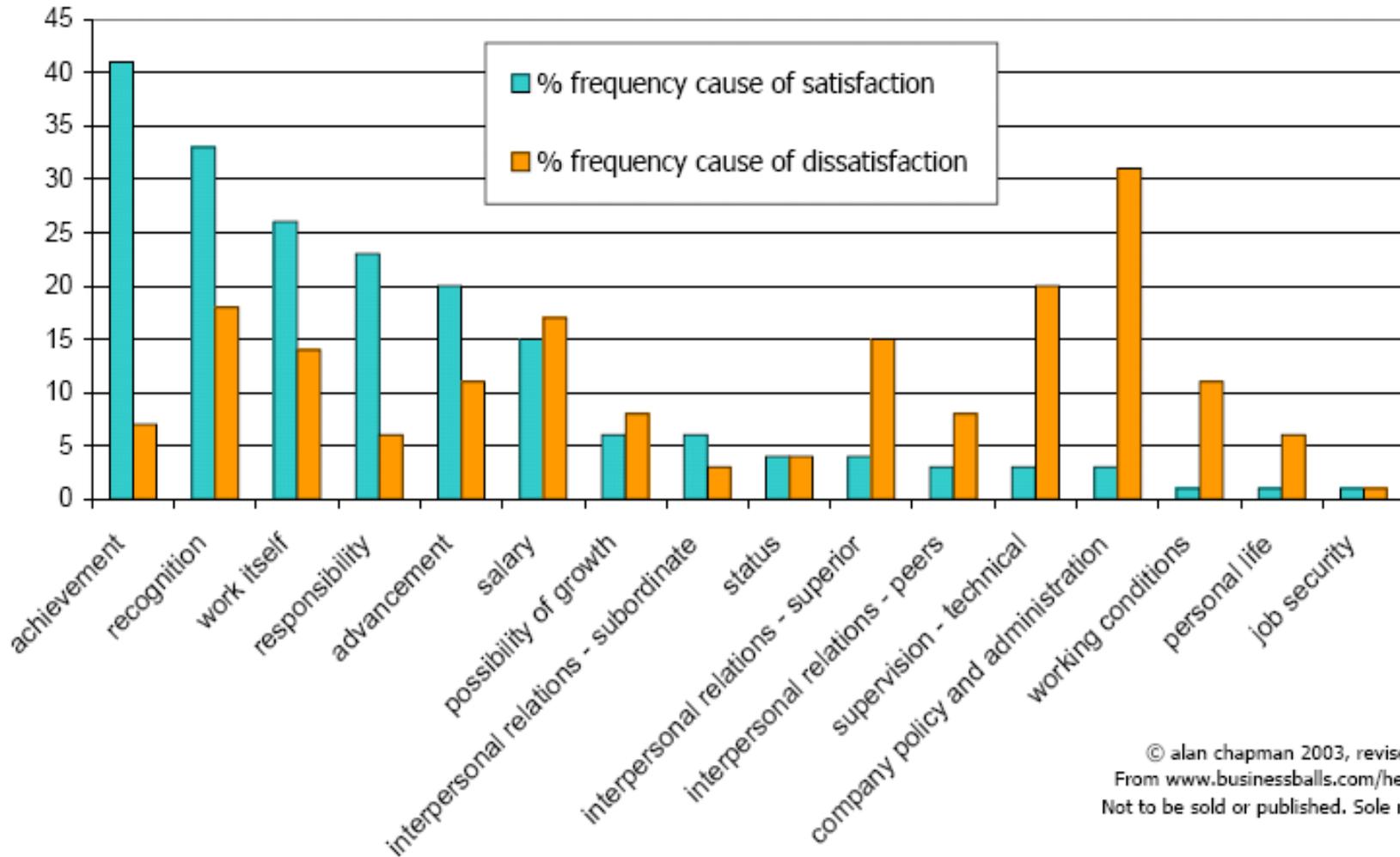
<b>'hygiene' (or 'maintenance') factors</b>			
<b>status</b>	<b>security</b>	<b>relationship with subordinates</b>	
<b>personal life</b>		<b>relationship with peers</b>	<b>salary</b>
<b>work conditions</b>		<b>relationship with supervisor</b>	
<b>company policy and administration</b>			<b>supervision</b>

**Hygiene factors are merely a launch pad - when damaged or undermined we have no platform, but in themselves they do not motivate.**

<http://www.businessballs.com/herzberg.htm>

## Herzberg's motivators and hygiene factors

(Achievement to advancement are motivators; the others are hygiene factors. Based on percentages of total factors causing high and low attitude effects; Herzberg - The Motivation To Work, 1959.)



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# Who is satisfied?

*2010 study:*

- 70% were satisfied
- 21% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 9% dissatisfied

*Gender:*

- 71% of women and 72% of men

*Race:*

- Visible minorities less satisfied than white workers

*Age:*

- 74% of workers over 45, compared to 71% between 25-44, and 66% of those under 25

# Work?

- Does my work have to be this unsatisfying?
- What can I do about it?

# Why not keep workers happy?

- Usually economic factors are a major concern – benefits, training and pay are costly
- Way work is organized often make workers easily replaceable and less expensive (reserve army of labour)
- "The higher levels of mental health problems for those with low job satisfaction may be a precursor to future physical problems," Zheng said.
- [https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2016-08/asa-ljho82016.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-08/asa-ljho82016.php)

# Positive Psychology

- The Study of Happiness
- When people are happy they are also mentally healthy
- Work: Are you happy in your job?
- Happier people are markedly more satisfied in their jobs than less happy people
- Research shows that happiness actually causes more productivity and higher incomes

- One study (TOYOTA) 275 employees measured their positive emotion and followed their job performance over next 18 months.
- Happier people went on to get better evaluations and higher pay
- Happy people endure pain better and take more health and safety precaution when threatened

# 3 Kinds of Work Orientation

- **Job:** for the pay cheque, no other rewards sought, means to an end
- **Career:** deeper personal involvement, achievement marked through money/advancement / promotion brings more prestige, power, money (When opportunities close we start looking elsewhere)
- **Calling:** Passionate, fulfilling in its own right

People will be healthier and happier by

- Identifying and developing individual strengths.
- Ensuring sufficient levels of self-engagement are involved in the work setting

# Solutions to Alienation?

- Leisure:  
“Each day men sell little pieces of themselves in order to try to buy them back each night and weekend with the coin of fun” – C. Wright Mills
- Automation:  
Enormous productive capacity could simultaneously provide secure jobs and drastically reduce the time people spend doing paid labour

# Solutions (cont'd)

- Participative management  
Link worker cooperation and superior work performance to consultative and participative relationships between bosses and subordinates
- Unions  
Workers have received some measure of economic and social justice at the workplace
- Workers' Control  
Unlike profit-sharing or participatory programs, this is initiated by workers for workers' purposes

# Work and happiness

- [Experimental Economics \(Behavioral Economist\)](#)
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_ariely\\_what\\_makes\\_us\\_feel\\_good\\_about\\_our\\_work?language=en#t-167402](http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_ariely_what_makes_us_feel_good_about_our_work?language=en#t-167402)

# Thoughts/Reflection I

- Question: How does the short movie “The Necktie” typify Marx’s theory of alienation found in Rinehart? Can you relate the situation in the Necktie to the behaviour experiments found the Dan Ariely presentation?
- Use the text and films to put forth an idea. Your piece should be approximately two pages long.