Antiwork Offers Many Opportunities for I-O Psychologists

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We have no known conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Both authors contributed equally to this article. They are grateful to the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and ideas.

Abstract

Antiwork philosophy holds that work, in and of itself, tends to be harmful for most people. Some antiwork theorists even advocate for the abolition of paid employment altogether. We argue that, although endorsement of the radical ideology of antiwork is in no way necessary for I-O psychologists, considering the thinking behind these ideas can be beneficial. In fact, reviewing the tenets of antiwork may prompt some to a broad reconsideration of the nature and purpose of the I-O field and its role, nested as it is in potentially problematic power dynamics both within organizations and in broader society. In this article, after describing antiwork's core tenets, we outline a number of research directions and practical applications inspired by the perspective. Although in some cases these may involve the creation of new theory, constructs, and interventions, they often simply entail the repurposing or refocusing of existing ones that are more attuned to the problematic nature of work. Possibilities for research include, but are not limited to, the examination of the prevalence and nature of "managerialism," how we might better understand the psychological character of organized labor and its outcomes, and how to encourage healthier manifestations of employee engagement. In terms of practice, we bring to the reader's attention how antiwork might inspire extensions or adjustments in how we recruit and onboard, train managers, improve job characteristics, measure performance, and work with unions and other political advocates. Ultimately, consideration of antiwork's assertion of the inevitable authoritarian character of employment, combined with I-O psychology's emphases on objectivity and the translation of science into practice, can spark inquiry and innovation.

Antiwork Offers Many Opportunities for I-O Psychologists

I-O psychologists traditionally tend to have a nonideological perspective on work, and scholars in other fields that study work sometimes appreciatively recognize that I-O is unique in that it generally avoids "explicitly political or social-theoretical issues" (e.g., Ball, 2021, p. 11). But any overarching claim to objectivity in the study of work may also appear to some an ideologically charged viewpoint (Fisher, 2009; Lefkowitz, 2016), and in recent years a nascent critical direction in I-O psychology has called attention to the field's frequently unacknowledged ideological leanings (e.g., Bal & Dóci, 2018; Gerard, 2017). The desire to perceive the reality of work as objectively as possible has been obviously fruitful but represents an empiricism that is probably best understood as a framing philosophy rather than an ultimate position. In contrast to the often top-down, management-centric frameworks through which I-O theory and practice have historically evolved, critical I-O has begun to develop alternative ways of understanding work and the role that I-O can play in improving it (e.g., Bal, 2017; Bazzoli et al., 2023).

Outside of I-O, critical perspectives on work and its place in the world are nothing new. Many can be subsumed into a loose set of "antiwork" perspectives. Antiwork is not a discipline, domain, or even a construct in the way we usually use those words, but a multifaceted, negative appraisal of work (i.e., the tradition of paid employment) *in and of itself*. It suggests that there may be a negative relationship between work, on the one hand, and overall life satisfaction, on the other.

This perspective emerges from a set of divergent sources, most outside of I-O, outside of psychology, and even outside of science (unless philosophy can be called a science). Antiwork may even be a contemporary movement of a kind (as testified to the existence of the popular English language Reddit community, r/antiwork; internationally, consider the Tang Ping or "lie flat" phenomenon, where "people leave their jobs to pursue hobbies and personal interests while trying to minimally sustain themselves"; Serenko, 2023). Currently, antiwork is perhaps best summarized in a set of overlapping propositions or tenets (Alliger, 2022a). Taken together, these tenets paint a remarkably negative picture of work. Some

antiwork thinkers, in fact, propose abolishing employment altogether, outlining visions for a work-free future that are interesting if utopian (e.g., Black, 1986).

Antiwork ideas like those we discuss below may feel too radical to be worth genuinely considering, especially for those in the I-O community, but our goal is to introduce readers to this topic, not convince them of its correctness. One need not ideologically endorse the perspective to see that there are benefits to taking it seriously. Radical though antiwork's proposed solutions to the world's problems may be, the reasoning behind them is worth examining, not least because that reasoning has become increasingly popular among workers themselves in recent years and even societally influential (e.g., Gurley, 2021). Nor has popular antiwork thinking gone unnoticed in I-O psychology (cf. "'Nobody wants to work anymore': Reflecting on I-O psychology's assumptions and values through the lens of the antiwork movement"; Brossoit & Wong, 2023).

Although work is central to the very identity of I-O psychology, all antiwork proponents stress its negative effects and some would like to see work abolished entirely. So, what is the truth of the matter? How, we can ask ourselves, is work itself inherently damaging to well-being and life satisfaction? In what ways might we examine the actual reality that this question premises, and what might we do to address what we find? These kinds of questions can inform our professional research and practice.

With this aspiration in mind, the purpose of our focal article is threefold. First, we define and describe antiwork by identifying what appear to be its underlying tenets. Second, we investigate how antiwork could influence I-O research, providing a number of research questions that should initiate fruitful inquiry. Last, in keeping with the practical spirit of the field, we also outline several areas of I-O practice that can be improved upon right now via the application of some of the less radical aspects of antiwork praxis.

We wish too to emphasize that I-O psychology and antiwork have much to offer *each other*. Not only do antiwork perspectives have the potential to revitalize I-O, but scientifically rigorous

psychological insights, particularly those relating to individual differences, are vastly underrepresented in the antiwork sphere (Alliger, 2022a). These insights, in tandem with I-O's unique emphasis on translating science into practice, suggest that the integration of I-O and antiwork could be a highly effective one that tangibly improves lives in a way many other critical scholarly traditions struggle to do.

What Is Antiwork?

"Antiwork" is a broadly discussed and researched perspective outside of psychology. It in fact has a "vast" literature (Lanci, 2020) and a "long tradition" (Danaher, 2018). There is a "gamut of antiwork positions" (Chamberlain, 2011), and *no simple or clear delineation of antiwork exists*. Nor do thinkers on whom we rely to help define it always use the terms "antiwork." We have chosen this term, however, rather than other related phrases, such as "refusal of work" (e.g., Frayne, 2015) or "abolition of work" (e.g., Black, 1986). Antiwork is meant to be an organizing umbrella term, embracing a number of perspectives. It is an endeavor similar to positive organizational scholarship, in that it is a "concept used to unify a variety of approaches" (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012, pp. 1-2). In the case of antiwork, however, the topics under its umbrella relate to the toxic qualities of work rather than focusing on the positive.

Given the breadth of the topic of antiwork and in order to help bound it, we list a number of "tenets" or theses that reside within it. In a sense, these might *in toto* be thought of as a first take on defining antiwork in the same way a constellation of symptoms may delineate a particular condition or a set of traits define a specific character. These are listed in Table 1, along with illustrative quotes drawn from a broad range of thinkers.

Insert Table 1 about here

A glance through Table 1 will reveal that the tenets are overlapping and do not possess the kind of construct clarity that psychologists tend to prefer. But their fully negative framing of labor illumines the interests and methodologies of I-O in a nontypical light. This is mainly accomplished through

antiwork's skeptical understanding of the relationships that characterize work and the negative implications these have for the experience of work and human flourishing in general. The tenets and associated illustrative quotes in Table 1 may strike some readers as somewhat overstated or even hyperbolic. And "literary exaggeration," as Bourdieu and Farage (1994, p. 1) point out, "always risks self-effacement by de-realizing itself in its very excess." But such strong and even over-the-top statements are also (a) delimiting, a good quality when trying to define the essential character of a topic, and (b) actually representative of much thought in this area.

Of antiwork's propositions, the central and most defining is that work inevitably demands submission of the will, with all the undesirable concomitant personal effects such a submission entails. Fundamentally, the argument is that a kind of coercion inevitably operates in employing organizations, such that employees are required to set aside their own desires—or those which they might have had, had they not needed to work—for those of the organization (Lordon, 2014). This deformative phenomenon is not restricted to any particular class of jobs. It includes not just lower skilled and "precarious" jobs whose problems are well-documented but management jobs and elite, cognitive work as well (cf. Berardi, 2009, who pointed out the oppressive nature of knowledge jobs, and coined the term "cognitariat"—a designation that presumably would apply to the writers and readers of this article). Though this submission on the part of workers takes on many different context-dependent forms, every worker submits to someone (e.g., a supervisor) and/or something (e.g., the profit motive). Even owners and the highest levels of management cannot be said to be "free" (Fisher, 2009; Lordon, 2014; Radimská, 2002). Arguably, all other antiwork propositions flow from or are illuminated by this central idea of work's inherent coerciveness.

From the propositions listed in Table 1, it might be said that antiwork sees the institution of paid employment as a vehicle for maintaining seemingly unjust social power dynamics and that only incidentally satisfies people's basic (and less basic) needs. It maintains that the social incentives to which

the institution of work lends the most support tend to reflect the interests of a few, inordinately powerful individuals rather than the dignity, well-being, and autonomy of all people (Bal, 2017). This is not to say that at least some of these powerful individuals do not value these humanitarian ideals, but rather that those ideals are of secondary importance to the preservation of existing social power structures (cf. Graeber, 2018). And it can be argued that the ability of any entity with any amount of political power (which can and does include power within the workplace) to improve human lives is severely limited in its scope by the need to preserve the existence of the system that has given the actor power—even including the system's intrinsic social inequality.

Given I-O psychology field's propensity for quantitative thought (Zickar & Gibby, 2020), readers may be tempted to ask how antiwork (or aspects thereof) might be systematically measured. That is not a simple undertaking. Although antiwork's propositions are multidimensional and high-level with potentially distinguishable facets, these facets lend themselves less to quantitative measurement than to changing our understanding of measurement's purpose. That is, antiwork deals in large part with dimensions and states of being that psychologists, as well as people in general, do not usually address, because to examine these things is to question the underlying assumptions that frame most of the work that psychologists, and people in general, do. This would include human will and sovereignty, and the way these may be bent or impinged upon, as well as the perception that many human organizations seem to organically engender troubling power differentials. This is relevant to employment; it results in "the omnipresence of the bossing relations under which we live," as Lordon (2014, p. 4) puts it. In other words, many antiwork thinkers would argue that work, via its centrality to society, diffuses its coercive sensibilities into virtually all of existence—to humanity's detriment. In fact, consumption and work are now so entwined that all of society can be envisioned as a "factory" (Tronti, 1962), allowing the control requirements typical of a factory reach into and require our compliance in all facets of life, including our nonworking hours.

It is true that existential psychology, in which positive psychology may have its roots (Wong, 2010), has long posited that, for humans, *being itself*—that is, existence—tends to give rise to difficulties or even is itself a difficulty. But to date, this psychological subbranch or specialty has focused on the therapeutic, examining how individual persons can be helped to live responsible lives in the face of obstacles, loneliness, and death. To the extent that work forms a barrier to finding meaning in life, it is clear that existential psychology could be extended to understand antiwork critiques; this has not occurred thus far, to our knowledge. Yet, antiwork perspectives hold that work's everyday nature—its unquestioned acceptance—can hide the fact that many of the social and psychological processes underlying oppression and exploitation (major sources of the pain that characterizes existence) play out in the workplace every day (cf. Fisher, 2009).

In any case, trying to grasp antiwork by, say, developing and deploying a Likert scale because that is our usual approach may be problematic, rather on the order of trying to cut wood with a hammer because that is the tool most readily available. Instead, the role we envision for antiwork is as a general and generative framework for I-O psychology research and practice. The objectivity for which I-O psychologists strive is not in itself problematic. But the questions we ask may be limited by a strict adherence to it (Gerard, 2017; Lefkowitz, 2017; McEachern & Kuykendall, 2021). This is also not to say that antiwork itself is unobjective. To put it in terms at least somewhat relevant to the quantitative measurement with which I-O psychologists feel familiar and comfortable, we might say that the perspective draws attention to a systematic issue with content validity, wherein many if not all of the tools employed by I-O psychologists to understand and measure aspects of work and workers take on a largely unacknowledged authoritarian bias. And, if the scope of the issue really is so large, then perhaps only a perspective as radical and far from the norm as antiwork can help reveal unexamined or less than fully examined issues and offer alternative paths forward. On the theory side, it can help indicate assumptions infused into many I-O constructs, the way these constructs relate to each other, and why we

choose to examine these constructs and not others using particular methods and measures rather than others. On the application side, antiwork may help lay out new paths toward solving traditional issues of interest to I-O.

Toward an Antiwork Research Agenda

Antiwork's central focus is on the purported inherently oppressive, deforming nature of the employment relationship (Alliger, 2022a). As a totalizing, framing philosophy, this would seem to have implications for most everything within the purview of I-O. Management or organizational culture and climate are not single variables to be captured in isolation but actual social forces that permeate every aspect of work (Anderson, 2017; McEachern & Kuykendall, 2021). If, then, antiwork is to be integrated into I-O psychology, it should begin with the building of alternative perspectives on the root nature of employees as they exist within organizations (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007).

Like most other I-O topics, the employment relationship has heretofore primarily been framed more from a managerialist perspective than from the understanding of employees as individuals who exist prior to being hired and who strive to retain their personhood after being hired. Current questions often address how organizations can win loyalty and cooperation from their workers through fulfillment of perceived obligations (i.e., the psychological contract) so that the organization may more easily and completely fulfill its goals (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006). Any challenges with employees are understood as occurring solely in this perspective, to be solved through top-down action from managers and executives. The literature on employee involvement, for example, makes this clear: Granting greater decision making power to employees is not recommended unless industry conditions favor it and top management buys in (Gravenkemper, 2016). Moreover, most frameworks of employee involvement (e.g., Benson & Lawler, 2016) seem to treat it antiseptically, examining only the work task realm without addressing power dynamics between employee and employer (e.g., who has the authority to determine the desirable level of involvement or even the need for such involvement? How is that authority conferred?

What are the implications of such an arrangement?). Employee agency, therefore, is bounded within the desires of the organization and specifically those people within it who possess the most political power, consistent with antiwork's central tenet on work's coerciveness (Lordon, 2014).

Antiwork, on the other hand, holds that individual autonomy is an end in itself rather than simply a means to greater productivity and profit (e.g., Black, 1986). I-O theory and interventions built on this assumption are largely nonexistent (but for exceptions on the theory side, see Bal, 2017, and McEachern & Kuykendall, 2021). This is not to say that I-O is incapable of promoting genuine worker autonomy. This has in fact been a goal, though usually at the level of the task (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) rather than the level of the individual existentially understood.

In the section below, we introduce, first, two topics that we discuss in some depth: managerialism and leadership and the psychology of organized labor and worker solidarity. Next, we cover more briefly a number of additional topics: will and work, individual differences, work orientations/ideologies, surveillance at work, new employee orientation, counterproductive work behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors, workplace democracy/worker ownership, work teams, "mischievous methods," and the benefits of not working. Table 2 lists these topics along with sample associated research questions.

Insert Table 2 about here

Managerialism and Leadership

Managerialism occurs when companies attempt to create employee engagement and otherwise manipulate worker feelings and attitudes, for example through orientation and perks, but for the companies', not the employees', benefit. Topics related to engagement, company culture, and the like frequently find themselves among SIOP's top research trends each year (e.g., Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2022). It is true as well that modern corporations often try to make work and

the workplace engaging in various ways. However, from an antiwork perspective, work's inherent coerciveness makes engagement and culture initiatives at least potentially problematic. With power distributed as unevenly within organizations as it usually is, top-down engagement interventions often seem to be less about egalitarian coordination and more about molding workers' interests to be consistent with those of the organization's most powerful members (i.e., executives and their management representatives; see, e.g., Burghardt & Möller, 2023; du Plessis & Vandeskog, 2020). Workers' own dignity and well-being thus become secondary ends.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, attempts at engagement and culture building may take on a calculating quality, such as the launching of employee resource groups, purportedly to address employee DEI concerns while apparently in some cases deployed primarily to flare off employee energies that might be directed toward more management-threatening concerns such as union activism (Fang, 2022). Or consider a company that employs the tropes of "love" or "family" (e.g., Casey, 1999; Gabriel, 1999). Such messages, paradoxically, can serve to divide employees (e.g., who is "loved" the most?). Thus, one might expect negative outcomes in "we are family" organizations for employees, except perhaps in very small, high-trust companies (which do exist). Because, whatever else they are, corporations are not families. Some employees, however, may be beguiled to accept, at perhaps a deep level, assertions that they are in some way part of a familial unit (Bailey et al., 2017; Hewlin, 2003). And, of course, even credulous employees are nonetheless subject to abrupt and unexpected dismissal perhaps (remarkably enough) while simultaneously hearing protestations of the company's "love" for them (Griffin, 2020).

In any case, appeals to any of work's existentially meaningful aspects (e.g., social bonds, service to others, self-actualization; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009) can distract employees from recognizing the organization's role in creating the problems they experience at work. For example, employees asked to work onsite during a pandemic without proper safety equipment or other measures may be motivated by appeals to the importance of making sacrifices for their work family or the populations they serve,

diverting attention from the fact that the organization is making record profits and has the resources to enact better measures (Brogan, 2020; Manjoo, 2020). Even if the organization is not making record profits, antiwork perspectives would agree that human dignity and well-being are more important than those profits and that temporary losses are worth it if it means preserving employee and customer/client health and well-being. In many large companies, however, this was and remains clearly not the case (Kinder et al., 2022).

Managerialism is a topic that highlights shortcomings of both antiwork and more traditional I-O psychology perspectives. First, even if managerialism is operative in organizations, as many think, inadequately considered to date in this regard is how individual differences come into play. For example, are robust, toughminded, or even perhaps cynical personalities naturally resistant to managerialistic policies or communications, thus limiting or avoiding entirely negative repercussions for themselves? Strong identification with one's organization may intensify the adverse effects of organizational paternalism (Conroy et al., 2017; Irshad & Bashir, 2020), whereas cynicism can breed strategies for mitigating such effects, though it may also intensify other negative outcomes for employees depending on how it motivates those employees to respond (du Plessis & Vandeskog, 2020; Llewellyn & Harrison, 2006). Regardless, this question's existence points to a current limit in most antiwork thinking: the tendency to view humans as psychologically identical, so that if one worker expresses a sense of oppression at work then this must be true of all.

On the other hand, a limitation of much existing I-O psychology research on workplace injustice, oppression, and exploitation—outcomes that antiwork perspectives argue managerialism is meant to obscure—is that these constructs are treated as entirely psychological (Lefkowitz, 2016). Neither research nor practice tend to be particularly concerned with identifying the kind of manipulative conditions implied by managerialism or the consequences of not perceiving them when they may, in fact, exist. Therefore, if workers do not *feel* that their working conditions are unjust, problems with their

employment relationship are usually presumed not to exist. Yet, empirical study from our sister fields of management and social psychology shows this is a legitimate problem (Kim et al., 2020). Journalist Jaffe (2021) has attempted to document the hidden characteristics of managerialism, where "doing what you love" is revealed as requiring submission and the passive acceptance of exploitation. In any case, it might be asked whether the apparent tendency not to study this topic is a sign of the subtle cooption of the field of I-O by managerialism and other ideologies (Bal & Dóci, 2018).

A reasonable line of antiwork I-O research, then, may be whether and under what conditions organizational efforts to increase employee engagement can really be described as "managerialism," that is, specifically designed to align employees' goals with those of the organization to the benefit not of employees but of management, and what the implications for workers might be. Lordon (2014) theorizes in some detail about this and finds it difficult to believe that the "enlistment" of persons into, or their "co-linearization" to, the goals of the organization can actually be fully consented to by those persons, even when they report such consent. Muirhead (2004) likewise wonders whether the justice of work can be established sufficiently by an employee's apparently formal consent to a job, even when this is combined with the right of exit. This is in part true because an employee's right to leave an organization does not mean there is employer/employee symmetry of power during employment. To claim such symmetry would be to suggest that "wherever individuals are free to exit a relationship, authority cannot exist within it. This is like saying that Mussolini was not a dictator, because Italians could emigrate" (Anderson, 2017, p. 55).

Research Directions for Managerialism

How, then, might managerialism be best operationalized, and what is its extent across and within organizations? In which situations and to what extent is it a conscious organizational strategy? Do organizational leaders see downsides or have qualms about aspects of it (e.g., about encouraging company loyalty), and if so, what are the antecedents, correlates, and outcomes of such feelings? When is

the attempt to align the goals of workers with those of the organization harmful, if at all, and in what ways? When layoffs occur, do employees have worse outcomes in companies where a "we are family" ethos is promoted versus those where it is not?

In terms of leadership, the premise that all employees, from top to bottom, are caught in a nexus of power relationships may suggest that research into this topic should increasingly take on a collectivistic and nonhierarchical emphasis. Current research along these lines includes servant leadership (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021), inclusive leadership (Ferdman et al., 2020), and workplace democracy (e.g., Frega, 2021). In conjunction, we might suggest a renewed emphasis on leadership behaviors (Lord, 1977) rather than on those with permanent leader status. This could help prevent a pure emphasis on authority that antiwork insists on always being to the fore, which some more mainstream organizational studies perspectives do caution against (Collinson et al., 2018). A recent line of research combines functional and collectivistic perspectives, using social networks to map which team members perform different leadership functions at different time points (e.g., Contractor et al., 2012). Looking at authority as apt to move rapidly from person to person thus may reveal a reality much different than antiwork perspectives assume.

The Psychology of Organized Labor and Worker Solidarity

Organized Labor

Organizations comprise a variety of people, each of whom join for the satisfaction of a variety of different needs and interests. Organizations dominated entirely by a managerialist ethos are not equipped to adequately satisfy most of these needs; a narrow set of interests related to productivity and profit and the maintenance of power relations is prioritized over all others (Mumby, 2019). Identifying the problems that come with social power imbalances is a far easier task than genuinely solving them (cf. Prilleltensky, 2008), but this is not to say that mechanisms for solving these problems do not exist.

Labor unions are well established as one of the most powerful equalizing forces in industrial society. Their decline in power in the United States explains a large portion of the variance in stagnating wages from the 1970s onward (VanHeuvelen, 2018; Western & Rosenfeld, 2011). Although unions are as imperfect as any other organization and need not be the only vehicle through which managerialism's potential problems are solved (some especially radical antiwork thinkers even dislike unions; e.g., Black, 1986), they are the most well-established power centers within organizations whose goals are distinct from those supported by managerialism. Moreover, union membership—previously often perceived negatively even by members—is related to positive employee satisfaction among more recent generations of workers (Blanchflower & Bryson, 2020), a fact that should interest I-O psychologists.

However, as some have previously noted, I-O psychologists (at least in the US) do not tend to work *within* organized labor (Lott, 2014; Zickar, 2004). There are a number of reasons that this is the case. The most important, especially for academics whose income is not directly contingent on client organizations' performance, is that the field's historical leanings draw it toward top-down, management-led solutions to work's problems rather than bottom-up, worker-led ones—even amid pushes to center workers' perspectives and experiences in I-O research (e.g., Weiss & Rupp, 2011).

Without considering other bases from which to build solutions that do not go through management, the field would seem to be closing itself off to a broad spectrum of potential research lines and resulting interventions that, to date, have received little if any consideration. Given the frequency with which workers' and employers' interests clash, working with unions seems imperative to a professional field aiming to maximize the success of SIOP's mission statement: that both organizations' *and* their workers' well-being are addressed. A profession that works exclusively from the more powerful management side might be likened to a legal environment where all criminal lawyers are prosecutors. Such an arrangement surely cannot produce the full range of possible desirable outcomes for the areas the profession covers.

Beyond restoring a more balanced power dynamic between employer and employees, membership in labor unions would appear to be one way for workers to recapture some of the autonomy and self-identity sometimes lost in employment. The I-O field's traditional foci may have led to an underemphasis on the possibilities for social and psychological health when employees can identify with each other, *distinct from identification with the company*. This assumes, of course, the correctness of the antiwork position that a worker can benefit by attaining and maintaining a kind of lean relationship to their employer. Perhaps the study of work-contingent self-esteem (e.g., Crocker & Park, 2004; Kuykendall et al., 2020) could be expanded to more existential spaces to further test the validity of this position.

Research directions for organized labor.

I-O psychology research on unions is not unprecedented. The 1990s and 2000s saw a steady stream of research on the constructs of union commitment and voluntary involvement, some of which was conducted by I-O psychologists (e.g., Kelloway & Barling, 1993; Tetrick et al., 2007). More recent work has uncovered the potential importance of perceived behavioral control and socioeconomic status as antecedents of union-related attitudes and voluntary involvement (Fiorito et al., 2014; McEachern & Budnick, 2020; Mellor, 2016; Mellor & Golay, 2017). This area of research is helpful to organized labor due labor's extreme reliance on voluntary participation by members to accomplish its goals. In other words, unions lack much of the coercive power held by employers. Thus, whatever union-related research questions rise to prominence may provide clues as to the most truly pressing issues for employees, as well as the most appropriate theoretical angles from which to analyze and address these issues. I-O psychology can verify and extend research on the potential importance of perceived behavioral control and socioeconomic status as antecedents of union-related attitudes and voluntary involvement. They can continue to refine the study of characteristics not only of those most likely to join a union (e.g., per Parkes & Razavi, 2004) but also of the various benefits of union membership and to whom such benefits might apply.

Importantly, organized labor is not a monolith. Just as organizations even in the same industry can have a wide variety of production methods and structures, so too do unions in their own way (e.g., McIlroy, 2012). I-O research could identify the various benefits reaped and challenges faced by hierarchically organized and often more powerful "business" unions such as those aligned with the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) versus those of more horizontally organized, cross-industry unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). There are even worker advocacy collectives that neglect to become unions at all (e.g., Amazonians United; Press, 2021), believing that remaining as loose and decentralized as possible is the best way to avoid corruption and agilely coordinate activities to the benefit of workers—a notion consistent with the reasoning behind antiwork's abhorrence of sociopolitical hierarchy (cf. Graeber, 2018). The stronger the relationship that I-O can establish with worker advocacy entities of all types, the more nuanced, interesting, and impactful the research questions that can be developed.

That said, we recognize that pivoting to working with unions independent of or even in opposition to management may be difficult for those in a field so thoroughly oriented around management and executive needs. Thus, one approach I-O psychologists may wish to take in making inroads with organized labor might be to orient existing tools toward the goals of organized labor, without directly working with it. This may get around issues stemming from the field's historically stressed relationship with organized labor that make direct work with unions difficult due to their distrust of specialists such as psychologists (Zickar, 2004). For example, although research on reducing the prevalence of counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) is common, some of these CWBs can be signs of worker efforts to improve their working conditions (Kelloway et al., 2010). In fact, Mumby and colleagues suggest that such resistance may be a sign of a healthy and dignified workplace (Mumby et al., 2017; Mumby, 2019). The field/ground character of this duality (CWBs as organizationally negative/resistance as individually positive) should be a fruitful area of study—though it is possible that it might be a rather challenging or even

risky one for I-O psychologists employed within industry, given that organizations may automatically frown on any resistance of whatever level or character (cf. McEachern & Kuykendall, 2021). Therefore, it may be incumbent on academics to branch out, if possible, into part-time consulting with unions to help establish an infrastructure that would eventually allow practitioners to make full-time careers out of such work. This way, new areas of research and practice can be explored while maintaining job security. The research of Mellor and colleagues (e.g., Mellor, 2022) demonstrates that there is indeed a path for I-O academics to assist unions in practical matters the way a consultant might. Finally, instructors of graduate I-O classes with an applied project component might even consider inviting unions to seek help from their students, providing valuable exposure to and experience with union issues and priorities.

Worker Solidarity

One construct that may be especially helpful in extending research on union commitment and voluntary organizational involvement more generally is *worker solidarity*. Although no one definition can fully capture this construct and its myriad manifestations (Morgan & Pulignano, 2020), we tentatively define it as the shared social identification and coordinated action of workers across locations or even industries in the name of their own interests. Whatever its exact definition, solidarity is an essential foundation of broad-based social movements attempting to resist coercion and exploitation. An existing social psychological measure of class consciousness (Keefer et al., 2015) may contain a useful template from which to build I-O research on solidarity and its antecedents and outcomes; a similar measure could be developed to capture work-specific perceptions of solidarity. Such a measure might permit an examination of whether and how work and workplaces are organized to minimize worker solidarity (e.g., through the salience of individualistic, achievement-oriented solutions to systemic problems, or intentionally high turnover rates that effectively prevent the formation of group identity among workers; cf. Haslam & Reicher, 2012). It would, of course, seem incumbent upon I-O psychologists to use measures of antiwork-related attitudes, solidarity, and the like to support better worker experiences over and

above goals solely related to organizational success (Lefkowitz, 2017). This is important, because they might just as easily feed the already finely honed messages touted by union-avoidance consultants (cf. Fang, 2022).

Research directions for worker solidarity.

How can we operationalize the construct of worker solidarity? What aspects of work and workplaces might aid or hinder the development of solidarity? Insights may be gathered from existing research on social movements and political resistance. For example, Haslam and Reicher (2012) recontextualized the Stanford Prison Experiment and drew on historical examples of political prisons to argue that prisoners and guards engage in influenced by social identity, the consequences of resistance, and the ease of movement between dominant and subordinate groups. McEachern and Kuykendall (2021) argued that this way of understanding intergroup power relations can be imposed on the employment relationship to explain solidarity and resistance in the workplace.

On the other side of the coin, it would also be interesting to explore the psychology of management resistance to union organizing, difficult though obtaining appropriate samples may be. The National Labor Relations Board provides clear "do nots" for how organizations may respond to organizing activity (NLRB, n.d.): Make no threats (such as that of site closings or layoffs); employ no interrogation (of employees about union attitudes/actions), make no promises (such as, if you do not organize, we will reward you by providing job security, better pay, or other emolument); and carry out no surveillance (such as placing moles at union organizing meetings to learn what is being planned). From a psychological point of view, however, we might ask why leadership resists organizing to begin with. It may well be that there are reasons that are not solely related to productivity. Fear of a loss of psychological ownership and a sense of betrayal may be operative. These may be detected in a video (Starbucks Coffee, 2021) of Starbucks' CEO Howard Schulz' attempt to head off union interest by engaging in "positive voice" (an NRLB-allowed activity) before gathered "partners." But Schulz and his organization also face

accusations of hundreds of illegal labor practices, including, but not limited to, denying raises and other benefits to workers in unionized locations, firing workers involved in union organizing efforts, and permanently closing unionized locations (Iafolla, 2022; Rogers, 2022; Wiener-Bronner, 2022). That worries about employee organizing are strong enough to spur so much (allegedly) illegal activity should pique the interest of work psychologists.

Additional Research Directions

Although questions on the fundamental character of the employment relationship as reflected in managerialism and employee organizing can serve as important context setting, nearly any area of I-O study can be impacted by the antiwork perspective. In this section, we propose additional research questions that may flow from antiwork's insights while acknowledging that this list is nowhere near exhaustive.

Will and Work

To investigate work's coerciveness, a central tenet of antiwork, I-O research could examine more closely the nature of employee consent to work and under what conditions, if any, that consent is full and free. This requires development of (probably at least initially qualitative) personalized data collection such as in-depth and extended high-trust interviews or focus groups where the worker is placed at the center (e.g., Alliger et al., 2012), with the goal being to uncover subtle perceptions about work (e.g., of course you agree to work, but what is the nature, and limits, of that agreement?). Additionally, how might broader sociopolitical conditions influence workers' ability to consent? For example, I-O psychologists have already identified the potential for universal basic income to have a massive impact on the way workers relate to employers (Hüffmeier & Zacher, 2021). Thus, a more systematic look at the political and legal environment surrounding work beyond the narrow (if important) context of discrimination in personnel decision making may be warranted. Bazzoli and Probst (2023) provided one

framework for this in their systematic review demonstrating how organizations are structured to reinforce social inequality.

Individual Differences

What relatively enduring individual characteristics (e.g., personality traits such as cynicism or tough mindedness) insulate employees from the putative bad effects of work? Do employees who personally endorse a meritocratic view of achievement view managerialistic attempts to "co-linearize" their goals with those of the organization differently than do those who have less confidence in the processes and likely outcomes of merit?

Moreover, how might the coercive character of many work and organizational situations influence the social and economic value attached to various individual differences in the workplace? Labor economists (e.g., Pietrykowski, 2017) have already used job analysis data to show that care-oriented work is greatly undervalued relative to other kinds of work and the negative implications that this may have on society (see also Graeber, 2018; Jaffe, 2021). What, at the social and psychological level, reinforces this pattern, and what are the psychological dynamics it engenders in workers? Social cognitive perspectives on career choice have offered some insights already (Fang & Tilcsik, 2022). What might organizations and communities look like if they place a premium, rather than a penalty, on care rather than initiating structure? Even more fundamentally, what organizational and broader social changes might need to happen for this switch in values to take place?

Work Orientations/Ideologies

A major contribution of antiwork philosophy is the attention it draws to the role of ideology in work. There already exists plenty of research on system-justifying ideologies that should be relevant to work-related issues (e.g., Jost & Hunyady, 2005), but little if any of it seems to have been applied by I-O psychologists to day-to-day work issues. Social cognitive theory holds that there are reciprocal relationships among people's attitudes, behavior, and their broader social environment (Wood & Bandura,

1989). Therefore, the ideologies of an organization's most influential members (i.e., management and executives), should have an outsized effect on that organization's social environment (cf. Mumby, 2019), and that environment, in turn, will develop in a way that reinforces those dominant ideologies. A mostly uncritical pro-organization stance in research and practice may miss opportunities to question the broader implications of this process and steer it in more prosocial directions.

One practical example of this issue may be the handling of returns to in-person work after the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a shift to work from home (WFH) for many organizations. Rather than simply going along with executives' desires to return operations to in-person work—many executives were far more eager for this than rank-and-file workers (Sherman, 2022)—or even simply asking whether such a move is warranted, an ideology-focused researcher may wish to ask what is even meant by a return to work being warranted (i.e., who in the organization gets to decide what that means, and why? What are the criteria and where do they come from?). If a push for a return to in-person work in a given organization is driven primarily by concerns about organizational culture and climate, this may have vastly different implications than situations where it is driven by productivity issues—though, because both sets of desires would belong to an organization's most powerful authority figures, their similarities are likely relevant too.

Another important step in this shift of focus might involve devising new ways to measure the presence and effects of work-related ideologies (e.g., hustle culture, Protestant work ethic, adherence to ideal worker norms, maybe even antiwork attitudes). As mentioned, Likert and similar type measures may suffice in some cases, but, to bridge the gap between attitudes and behavior, policy capturing studies or even experimental paradigms may be warranted, as well as the high-trust individual or small group sessions already mentioned. One promising if unusual direction might be taken from terror management theory, which highlights a bidirectional relationship between defensiveness of one's most closely held beliefs and the salience of one's own eventual death (Greenberg et al., 1986, 1990). Such

experiments could measure the emotional valence attached to different aspects of work as they are experienced by different workers. For example, might those with greater power in their organizations (i.e., management and executives) react more strongly and negatively to the idea of altering certain aspects of organizational life for the benefit of rank-and-file workers (e.g., allowing more WFH flexibility) because these moves attack core aspects of their self-concept? Might such reactions explain certain instances of poor strategic decision making (e.g., strictly hypothetically speaking, purchasing an organization through whose products criticism of the purchaser is frequently leveraged, gutting that organization's workforce, and eliminating so many of its essential processes that the purchaser is sued)? This may raise questions about other, more mundane ways that employers and their management representatives attempt to exert power and influence.

Surveillance at Work

We live in a world of ever greater surveillance of human activities. This includes the activities of work, which are monitored, wherever they occur: in our offices, at our homes, or in the field. Applications of technologies that seemed unlikely yesterday are being employed today to track and guide workers—assessments are pushed down even to the level of saccadic eye movements so that, perhaps, glancing at one's cell phone to change a music track might trigger an alarm (Kaiser-Schatzlein, 2022). Tracking technology in warehouses keeps the workers on the move, one upping assembly lines as controllers of pace. Face recognition software that ensures the employee who works from home is present and attending to the computer screen is now in use (Abril & Harwell, 2021).

Psychologists have studied some of the effects of monitoring. Strickland (1958) focused on the loss of trust on the part of those who monitor; most other researchers have focused on the effects on the monitored. Of foundational importance in this regard is work on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that people perform better on interesting or complex tasks if their motivation in performing their tasks is more intrinsic, versus extrinsically rewarded. But, if one is closely monitored

in their performance *and* senses that this monitoring is controlling and not supportive or just informational, they may develop an external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). In this case, their motivation comes to be understood by the monitored as extrinsic or external. That is, because of the salience of an observing other and the likelihood of evaluation, workers will not interpret their actions to be fully due to their own drive or control. In this way surveillance can damage intrinsic motivation and hence performance, Because intrinsic motives for performance result in better outputs than external motives. Ravid et al. (2022) found that, in addition to damaging motivation and trust, monitoring can cause stress, and decrease creativity. Moreover, and ironically, if the organization's hope is that monitoring might improve performance, this seems to be wishful at best: Ravid et al. report remarkably small average effect sizes in this regard.

From an antiwork perspective, surveillance can be seen as an ever-increasing extension of authority into the employee's "space" at work. The question arises: As such work surveillance becomes fundamentally ubiquitous, how does the human personality respond? One possibility is that a worker learns to distrust themselves. Their ability to, and interest in, exerting executive control over their actions may atrophy. Such changes, moreover, may occur not just as "state" but "trait" modifications (Alliger, 2022b). This would seem an important avenue for research.

We might also suggest that I-O psychologists look into reorienting organizational surveillance tools by placing them in the hands of rank-and-file workers rather than their supervisors. Information on its own is neutral; the purpose for which it is used is what may cause it to take on a nefarious character. Even popular press articles highlighting worrying trends in employee surveillance note that some employees appreciate the information that such tools provide about their work habits (Kantor et al., 2022). It seems that this appreciation is incidental; these workers' organizations just so happen to be using surveillance tools in a way that is agreeable to their workers. In many other instances, monitoring restricts employee autonomy in a way that reduces the quality of the work, such as when a hospital began

emphasizing the number of interactions its chaplain had with patients without regard for the quality of those interactions. Thus, another line of inquiry might center on the interaction of what kinds of information are available about employee activity, who has access to that information, and who controls how it is acted upon. This research may be supported in part through greater understanding of how employees relate to their work.

New Employee Orientation

Does it make sense to foster a new hire's sense of independence from an organization during onboarding into that organization? What messages would be successful in this regard? Similar questions could be asked with regards to the work itself; are individuals who find their work meaningful vulnerable in similar ways to those who identify strongly with their organizations (e.g., Kim et al., 2020)? Should organizations (and others) encourage employees to draw identity and meaning less from work and more from a wider variety of nonwork sources? How might management be convinced of the wisdom of downplaying the role of the organization in employees' lives (both at work and home)?

Counterproductive Work Behaviors and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Many CWBs presumably have positive as well as negative aspects for both organizations and employees. As one example, consider the potential advantages and drawbacks to "quiet quitting." To what extent, if at all, is an employee "just working the job description" helpful for an organization (e.g., reduced employee burnout) and/or harmful (e.g., via lesser productivity, reduced organizational citizenship behaviors [OCBs])? For employees, to what extent is it helpful (e.g., less stress and burnout) and/or harmful (e.g., reduces likelihood of finding satisfaction or other psychological returns from work)?

To what extent do CWBs and OCBs promote worker health and well-being versus organizational success? Under what conditions are CWBs healthy or OCBs not? When CWBs lead to adverse consequences, are these consequences inevitable and unavoidable, or solely due to their clashing with (theoretically modifiable) organizational norms and goals related to coercion and control? Under what

conditions are OCBs less than fully voluntary (e.g., planning a party because it is expected) or have negative psychological impact on the acting employee?

Workplace Democracy/Worker Ownership

The topic of workplace democracy (research into which in management psychology is as yet only a "faint whisper," Han & Garg, 2018, p. 1189) deserves special attention from I-O psychologists. In democratic workplaces, employees are also the owners of the organization. This frequently leads not just to greater autonomy over how different work tasks are done but also over strategic issues that are usually handled only by top-level executives in traditional organizations (Bradley, 2019). One benefit is that both rewards and losses are distributed more broadly and equitably within the organization, creating greater stability for workers (see, e.g., the Mondragón cooperative's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic; Romeo, 2022). What are the dynamics of such arrangements in creating/maintaining worker attitudes? Workplace democracies might be examined for the way that organizational structure and the distribution of power bases influence the actions and characteristics required of leaders relative to more traditionally structured organizations. They may well lend themselves more naturally to the bottom-up leadership paradigms we describe above.

Work Teams

Might work teams foster identification with an organization at the cost of a healthier identification with employees and with other aspects of one's life? If so, when? Moreover, do the same putatively coercive processes that play out within organizations at large also play out within teams? How might these levels interact with each other?

In decentralized, horizontal organizations with minimal coercive elements (e.g., certain labor unions, and workplace democracies), the importance of coordinating the efforts of autonomous or semi-autonomous teams or other work units is tantamount (Frega, 2021). I-O and management research on coordination of this nature already exists in the form of the multiteam systems literature (e.g., Zaccaro

et al., 2020). How might worker advocacy collectives and democratic organizations be studied from a multiteam systems perspective? What contributions might this perspective make to the success of these organizations? From the other direction, how might organizing workplaces as multiteam systems promote greater democracy and minimize coercion?

"Mischievous Methods"

One issue that seems to arise repeatedly when discussing expanding I-O research to more antiwork issues is the likely lack of cooperation from organizations and their most powerful members. Research on unions, ideologies, the positive side of CWBs, and other interesting but politically contentious topics may be difficult to conduct if the only way most researchers have previously gained access to organizational samples is through alliances with management and executives. Indeed, because of antiwork's abhorrence to the existence of power itself, I-O psychologists wishing to develop research inspired by the perspective will likely need to get comfortable with the idea of conducting research not authorized by those in power.

Research on stigmatized people and issues has been conducted in other areas of psychology as well as fields like sociology and public health (such as research conducted with HIV positive individuals; e.g., Wohl et al., 2017). Appropriate approaches in such research can involve taking extra pains to anonymize data collection, collecting data in private places (i.e., not on company time or using workplace-owned devices), and/or snowball sampling to ensure participants need not make themselves known to any parties they do not trust (e.g., their managers). Such techniques could be expanded to the study of exploited and resisting workers as well.

To do this research most effectively and ethically, I-O psychologists need to consider developing ongoing, mutual relationships with the marginalized workers and communities they study (cf. Tuck, 2009). In other words, rather than simply impersonally collecting information from workers and moving on, research projects can be developed with the dual goals of creating publishable findings and tangibly

improving the research participants' working lives. One way this might be done is to enlist participants in the co-creation and generation of knowledge and tools that can be used for practical purposes. Lips-Wiersma and colleagues provide an example of how this was done during the creation of a theoretical framework (and later a quantitative measure) of meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). Notably, this work did not just generate practically useful insights for the worker participants involved, but novel theory that presumably served the researchers' professional goals. We might further ask how knowledge generated in conjunction with rank-and-file workers may differ from that built in implicit partnership with managers and executives.

The Benefits of Not Working

Finally, considering the most radical antiwork tenet—that work as an institution should not exist at all (Black, 1986)—we can ask what benefits accrue to workers from not working? By this, we mean benefits independent from those of recharging via leisure so that productivity and efficiency can increase. Moreover, might there be benefits to not working *at all* (i.e., full separation from the workforce)? Although a large body of research shows that unemployment has myriad adverse health and well-being effects, antiwork perspectives would suggest that these are largely socially constructed phenomena, not naturally occurring ones (e.g., Anderson, 2017). Therefore, similar to questions about consenting to work, I-O psychologists might examine what aspects of society exacerbate the negative psychological effects of unemployment and what might—outside of returning to work—mitigate them for individuals. Relatedly, to what extent might the benefits of recent advances in the reduction of time spent working (e.g., 4-day work week) scale to even less time? Economist Keynes (1930/2010) famously predicted in 1930 that the work week in industrialized societies would be 15 hours long within 100 years (Aitken et al., 2023). Yet, the work week remains about as long now as it did in his time, despite massive technological advances that have allowed productivity to explode (Graeber, 2018). Detailed studies of time use at work (perhaps most safely done without alerting managers to researchers' presence) may

help to better gauge just how much time is wasted working, or even pretending to work, to justify the continued existence of one's job. Importantly, if such studies find that all essential work is being done in a much shorter number of hours than the standard workweek, practical implications should *not* be to lay off the workers or reduce their pay. After all, the economic value of their work output does, in many cases, remain the same no matter how long it takes to do. More humane responses would be to drastically shorten the work week while keeping pay the same or even increasing it (especially in the case of hourly positions), or to at least remove formal and informal incentives to work longer hours. Of course, the way organizations choose to treat their employees in this regard would be much less of a concern with the implementation of a stronger social safety net independent of one's work status (cf. Hüffmeier & Zacher, 2021).

I-O psychologists study work and/or are frequently tasked with making others' work maximally fulfilling and engaging. Thus, it may be easy for some to forget that personal fulfilment can be drawn from other facets of life, and especially that there are many important ways one can contribute to their community and society that paid employment is ill-equipped to facilitate (e.g., parenthood, certain creative outlets). This is why some antiwork thinkers believe that work should be abolished altogether; they argue that the institution of employment orients social progress in the wrong direction. They do not say that human beings should not labor or otherwise act in collective, goal-directed ways (though, notably, most if not all would agree that humans need not labor nearly as much as we currently do; e.g., Russell, 1932/2019) but that the goals and collective action spearheaded by employment are harmful to human health and dignity (Black, 1986). Thus, rather than attempting to mold work to be all things for all people, we might suggest that I-O devote greater attention to work's *limitations*. In this way, the field can maximize the benefits that work does genuinely provide while advocating for an institutional pluralism through which human dignity and flourishing are pursued via the widest possible variety of social

mechanisms. To this end, it may be helpful to better understand how those who do not work at all meet their psychological needs.

Recommendations for Practice

Practicing I-O psychologists have, from the beginnings of the field, trod a knife's edge, where serving management, on the one hand, must be balanced with the imperative of addressing the well-being of workers on the other. I-O psychologists by and large do strive, within the requirements of their taskings, to represent and advocate for workers to the greatest degree possible. Nonetheless, nothing precludes encountering conditions where interests may seem to conflict and difficult decisions need to be made.

But, granted that one even partially accepts a radical criticism of how employees fare within organizations, what practical guidance can we give? Although working more closely with organized labor may be a fruitful path to pursue, it will take time to develop an infrastructure where that can happen, if it is to happen at all. What advice can I-O psychologists give companies *right now* to reduce potentially manipulative or oppressive characteristics of work? Below we look briefly at five areas: unions, job applicants and onboarding, manager training, job characteristics, and performance measurement. As with the research possibilities above, we can only hint at what must be a multitude of suggestions that will occur to readers.

Build Alliances With Unions

In our training, I-O psychologists are advised to learn how to make "the business case" when recommending changes or solutions to organizational problems. However, other entities like unions may be in a good position to help I-O psychologists to implement best practices, especially if they are difficult to justify using the business case (e.g., costly policy changes to improve employee well-being). Evidence from our sister field of industrial and labor relations even suggests that unions' adversarial stance toward their organizations can actually help to improve not just worker well-being but also more

organization-centric goals such as productivity (Cook et al., 2020; Gill, 2009; O'Brady & Doellgast, 2021; Pohler & Luchak, 2014).

Although antiwork perspectives tend to highlight divergences in workers' and management/shareholders' interests, there are plenty of practices that in fact benefit both entities. Flexible work arrangements are one such example. Yet, at times, ideological concerns seem to prevent even these commonsense policies from being implemented. For example, one firm that reduced their workday to 5 hours later, perhaps problematically, reinstated a full day out of concern that employees were losing their enthusiasm for work, despite greater ease of performance measurement and no decreases in productivity (Morath, 2019). An I-O psychologist looking to question such a choice would have much greater freedom to do so in alliance with a union.

Ultimately, then, the prospect of working with unions offers a new perspective on closing the infamous science–practice gap with which our field has long struggled. Rather than simply refining the communication of our scientific findings for a very specific if powerful group of people (business leaders), we could use the systematic inquiry and objectivity and that are our field's strengths in more politically conscious ways (McEachern & Kuykendall, 2021). A plurality of strongly represented adversarial interests within a given organization would facilitate a much wider variety of goals—and interventions toward accomplishing them—than is currently feasible in in today's I-O psychology. If management does not support a given best practice, perhaps the workers might. Teaching students of I-O psychology to make the labor case, in addition to the business case, would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Improve the Experience of Applying for Jobs and Onboarding

It is well known that organizations often do not respond to job applicants who are rejected. This is remarkable, because it would seem that by posting a job opening, the posting entity incurs a kind of mutual responsibility with anyone who responds to the posting. At a minimum, this responsibility would require the timely informing of the applicant of decisions regarding their application. Better would be

thick communication that included acknowledgement of application receipt, explication of next steps and timing, clear justification for any screening tests or assessments, status updates as appropriate throughout the review process, and useful feedback as to negative decisions. As I-O psychologists, we can influence organizations to treat applicants with greater respect. This is the more important, as applicants for elite jobs may be given a great deal of attention, but those for less lofty positions run into a mill that can feel dehumanizing—for example with mandatory, ill-explained testing. It is true, of course, that those in charge of hiring probably do not intend to inflict on applicants these dehumanizing effects of being ignored or subjected to procedures the purposes of which are not clear. As a reviewer of this article pointed out, it is likely that many managers and HR professionals simply do not have the necessary bandwidth to deal with applicants in the manner we are suggesting. Nonetheless, it would seem important for I-O psychologists to stress to management what should be done in this regard, and why. In particular, we could point out that a company's reputation is found in the little things as well as the larger, and that even the "bottom line" might eventually benefit. Too, it may help to remind those responsible just how intense the experience—along many dimensions, including emotional—of applying for jobs can be. A recognition of this could in itself be a motivator for change. At the very least, it should be easy to make the case to managers that they stop posting advertisements for job openings that they have no intention of filling, which is apparently a somewhat common practice (cf. Chen, 2023).

I-O also often helps frame the nature of the onboarding process for new hires. The antiwork critique that organizations strive to align employees psychologically with their own goals should give us pause in thinking of the design of onboarding. Would it be possible to set lower minimums on the degree of expected enculturation? That is, can we, in some management-allowable fashion, onboard employees in such a way that, rather than making them psychologically "loyal" to the company, allows and even promotes leaner, more independent, and therefore more empowered attitudes?

We need not downplay the merits of engagement in work and organizational culture. Rather, we can heed the advice of certain antiwork perspectives that encourage workers to exercise more conscious control in this area. For example, supportive unions were found to make work feel more meaningful regardless of one's identification with the union (Cardador et al., 2019). More broadly, the literature on meaningful work and callings shows that the way individuals prefer to relate to their work is a legitimate individual difference (Pratt et al., 2013; Willner et al., 2020). Thus, efforts to foster engagement might enhance job performance and the achievement of other organizationcentric goals in certain individuals, whereas others may prefer less engagement and more distance while still being perfectly capable of meeting performance standards. Giving employees more leeway in how they engage with their work and their employers may even organically create the engagement that managerialist perspectives seem to suggest must be subtly coerced.

The job titles for new hires also could also be examined. One wonders whether we might recommend against labeling workers titles such as "associates" (e.g., Home Depot) or "partners" (e.g., Starbucks). Slotting an employee into a "partner" title is a stretch in that whatever partnership exists is very limited and asymmetric; such a title may encourage a sense of employee ownership that may have little objective justification. The literature on organizational bullshit offers many insights on the harms and, at times, benefits that purposely imprecise language can bring (e.g., Christensen et al., 2019; du Plessis & Vandeskog, 2020; McCarthy et al., 2020). Notably, however, and consistent with the antiwork perspective, imprecise language seems to be beneficial primarily when it is used for egalitarian, relationship-strengthening purposes rather than in top-down communications from supervisors and executives (Spicer, 2017). Thus, although linguistics may not be our strong suit, I-O psychologists may wish to encourage organizations to be more careful with their use of language more broadly and to find ways to equip workers with the tools to understand how it affects them (cf. McEachern & McEachern, 2022).

Finally, psychologists need to keep a handle about just how, in their organizations, the metaverse and AI will inform job recruitment, interviews, and testing. For example, Chalmers (2022) maintains that it is ethically imperative to inform people when they are interacting with a digital entity rather than a human. Tippins et al. (2021) sum up the ethical dimensions of the AI-in-selection challenge and offer an "urgent call to industrial and organizational psychologists to extend existing professional standards for employment testing to these new AI and machine learning based forms of testing" (p. 1).

Recommit to Improving Job Characteristics

One of I-O's substantial contributions to the understanding of work is the delineation of job and task characteristics, and how these influence job satisfaction and other outcomes. As Hackman and Oldham (1980) maintained over 40 years ago, "We assume that the problems stemming from poor person–job relationships can, in many instances, be remedied most powerfully and permanently by restructuring the jobs that are performed" (p. 66). There is no doubt this is still true, and much research has honed our understanding of optimal redesign. Still, the tendency for management to focus on efficiency and the "bottom line" can militate against efforts to offer workers variety and control. This is the more likely the case for lower skilled and sometimes precarious work rather than for better paid and often cognitive work.

In any case, in light of the premise that work can sometimes have an existentially threatening character, I-O might reasonably renew its commitment to creating and maintaining jobs that maximize worker autonomy and control, provide a breadth of tasks/activities, require the completion of an identifiably complete piece of work, yield appropriately constructed and timed feedback, and tie into some company or societal objectives in a meaningful way. If such moves are to follow the antiwork perspective, it would be especially important to emphasize individual worker autonomy and to either subordinate company objectives or, taking a page from workplace democracy, give all workers collective control over them. All the while, of course, we need to recognize the role individual differences such as need for

achievement or growth need strength may play in any job design or redesign for any particular subpopulation. Job crafting, where workers themselves redesign their jobs, might help workers obtain not just autonomy *within* the organization but even to some extent *from* the organization. In fact, exactly that kind of job crafting effort may be seen in the recent employee pushback against giving up working from home only to return to a more monitored office environment.

Train Managers

Managers are subject to the same kind of psychic pressures that all employees endure: "Dominators," Bourdieu says, "are dominated by very own domination" (cited in Lordon, 2014,, p. 100). This is a statement with many levels of meaning (cf. Alliger, 2022a) and can help us understand managers better. But despite their own domination, bosses can, of course, also be sources of dominating others. Therefore, we need to teach managers, to the extent possible, to act as fire walls, able to halt contagion from above to spreading below. Such training would include making managers aware of their own power and how easily it can be transmitted, including in negative ways (e.g., Bohns, 2016).

Social psychological experiments and field studies have found tradeoffs between social status and the formation of empathy for others as well as engagement in prosocial behavior (for a thorough review of that literature, see Piff et al., 2018). Thus, one key good practice may lie in how tasks are assigned or directed. Philosopher and worker activist Simone Weil (2012) argued that it is extremely easy, via a request for some action, for the stronger to reduce the less strong to the status of a mechanism or tool. Thus, in such cases, Weil says, it is important for those with more power to conduct themselves "as if there were exact equality— 'exactly' in every way, including the slightest details" (Weil, 2012, p. 51). Some who become managers may naturally act with this "exact equality," others less so. Although inculcating such consciousness in managers seems a high bar for training, setting difficult, specific goals does get one closer to a desired state than if they are not set at all (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Adjust Performance Measurement

The development and deployment of valid and reliable measurements of employee performance has historically been another of I-O's signal contributions to organizations. Performance assessment has in fact been contentious, as it is a means of control, whether via the slow arc of semi-annual or annual performance reviews, or acting over a shorter time frame, such as daily quotas. Now, however, technology has turbocharged the ability of organizations to assess performance—even on a moment-by-moment basis—and hence regulate employees, in some cases excessively. The negative effects of this are well known, as in the stresses experienced by delivery drivers (Hamilton, 2023). Or, consider the surprising and clearly debatable use of AI to assess and control the degree and timing of empathy shown by call center personnel toward clients (Dzieza, 2020).

What we know about how job characteristics provide employees meaning in their work (most centrally, autonomy) seems to suggest that such measurement approaches are wrong. Some have even recommended a total cessation in the measurement of job performance altogether (Bal, 2020). Although this stance might be too extreme even for the more radical in our field, it is no doubt possible to make measurement more supportive. Perhaps it can be used during training but slowly withdrawn as workers show proficiency, or an option that employees can choose or not. Alternatively, perhaps performance management could be democratized. There already exist many instances of individual employees working with their managers to set their own performance standards (e.g., Groen et al., 2012), but this still requires the approval of supervisors. Collectivizing strategic decision making to the entirety of an organization's workforce reduces coercion, and collective setting of performance standards would necessarily be a part of such a process.

Conclusion

Psychology for a while has been studying the "dark side" of various work-related constructs such as personality (Furnham & Sherman, 2021), technology (Salanova et al., 2013), and even creativity (Cropley et al., 2010) and gratitude (Wood et al., 2016). The question virtually poses itself: Why not the

dark side of work *qua* work? Luckily, rather than making us less objective in our research and practice, examining our current assumptions in the light of this dark side can act to free us from unquestioning assent to those assumptions and, in effect, allow us to be *more* objective rather than less.

Antiwork perspectives hint at a kind of multidimensionality in the well-known phrase "garbage in, garbage out." This can be transposed to any set of values and goals underlying the work I-O psychologists and that of other applied social scientists: Neoliberalism in, neoliberalism out; managerialism in, managerialism out; coercive authoritarianism in, coercive authoritarianism out. We in no way view these potentially problematic value systems as essential or necessarily common to I-O theory and practice. Yet, the antiwork perspective suggests (though it does not prove) that they are functionally the values of those whom the field in its current form most often serves. Though such a state of affairs is debatable, a failure to acknowledge and act on its possibility is, at the very least, myopic, and possibly even harmful. However, we hope to have shown in this article that action can be taken more easily than readers may have initially thought.

To the extent that I-O psychologists work only with management's explicit allowance, research and practice agendas are curtailed; if they are actually employed by an organization, they are subject to the same coercive control mechanisms as any other worker. Our interest in worker welfare on the one hand and indebtedness to management is a professional tension, existing since the beginnings of the field (Alliger, 2021). The nature of this tension, and how it ought to be handled, should be stressed more in graduate I-O training. And those of us who are currently employed I-O psychologists ought to be able to do some job crafting of our own and employ our expertise with a kind of independence from the concerns that most drive management and ownership. In effect, this may be a negotiation, each with our own self, about the extent to which we wish to try to act as worker advocates. Obviously, this would be particularly relevant in those cases where an organizational service, program, or initiative might have negative effects on employees. This means, in turn, that we develop and maintain a kind of

independence from (or perhaps, based on our "expert" power, a guiding and correcting role toward) the human resource department, which will by its nature tend to be firmly aligned with declared organizational goals. Or, if we are actually members of HR, then we need to strive for a critical and constructive distance that does not abrogate our membership in the department but allows us to question direction when questioning is needed.

Markovits (2019) distinguishes between "glossy" and "gloomy" jobs. Glossy, or elite, jobs are those which already have many of the desirable characteristics of enriched jobs as well as good pay and benefits. In this kind of work—which certainly includes that of many I-O psychologists—hard-earned skills can be leveraged to advantage. Gloomy jobs, of course, are those that not only require fewer or less socioeconomically valued skills but are often uninteresting, lower paid, and even precarious. Although we can't eliminate the gloom in this latter kind of work, we can perhaps alleviate it. This would start with considering ever more deeply how our research and practice might be informed with an understanding of the existential challenges of work and employment. Moreover, it is not that employees in glossy, elite, and cognitive jobs do not suffer, it may just be a more subtle and exquisite suffering than that of workers in jobs with obvious negative situational and reward characteristics. This means that, just as always, our interests encompass all of work and all workers. This might mean tuning into the news and responding (e.g., with research or policy) to problematic developments in the areas of occupational health and safety, paid sick and family leave, and, more recently and worryingly, the rollback of child labor laws in several US states accompanied by an increase in violations of existing child labor laws (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2022; Maurer, 2013; Sherer & Mast, 2023).

In this brief article, we have drawn, from the negative view of employment that we term antiwork, only a few ideas for I-O research and practice. Some of these are perhaps indeed already being pursued in exactly the directions we discuss. But we expect that there are a great many more ideas that

readers will quickly produce based on their own areas of interest and expertise. We look forward to the conversation generated by reader commentaries.

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Table 1: The "Tenets" of Antiwork

Antiwork tenets	Example illustrative statements
1. Work demands submission and is damaging to the human body and psyche.	"No one should ever work. Work is the source of nearly all the misery in the world. Almost any evil you'd care to name comes from working or from living in a world designed for work. In order to stop suffering, we have to stop working." (Black, 1986, p. 17) "Physically degraded, mentally drained and socially exhausted, most workers find themselves under immense amounts of stress in their jobs. For the vast majority of people, work offers no meaning, fulfilment or redemption." (Srnicek & Williams, 2015, p. 74).
2. Work as a "good" is a modern and deleterious development.	"For a long time, the very idea of a 'good' 'job' was a contradiction. Until the twentieth century, it was self-evident that there was nothing good about a job." (Hyman 2018, p. 314)
3. The tedious, boring, and grinding aspects of work characterize most of the time spent in many and probably even all jobs.	"Most 'work' in this age is stupid, monotonous, brain-rotting, irritating, usually pointless and basically consists of the agonizing process of being slowly bored to death over a period of about 40 to 45 years of drudgery." (Wilson, 2014, p. 14)
4. Work is subjectively "alienating" and meaningless due to workers' lack of honest connection to the organization and its goals and outcomes.	The modern laborer "does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself." (Marx, 1961, p. 37)
5. Work is objectively meaningless due to the intentional generation of inconsequential "needs" in the consuming public and hence ultimately absurd products and services; this leads to too many and meaningless jobs.	"Huge swathes of people, in Europe and North America in particular, spend their entire working lives performing tasks they secretly believe do not really need to be performed. The moral and spiritual damage that comes from this situation is profound." (Graeber, 2018, p. 2) "There is far too much work done in the world… immense harm is caused by the belief that work is virtuous, and that what needs to be preached in modern industrial countries is quite different from what always has been preached." (Russell, 1917, p. 9)
6. Work is exploitative; workers are necessarily taken advantage of, whether they claim or appear to enjoy their work or not. Fundamentally, organizations/owners extract "surplus value," paying the workers less than the value of their work.	"Surplus value is nothing but the excess amount of labor the worker gives over, above the amount of materialized labor that he receives in his own wages as the value of his labor power." (Marx, quoted in Vygodsky, 2014)

Antiwork tenets	Example illustrative statements
7. In the final analysis, it can be said that workers exploit themselves.	Today's worker "is an entrepreneur of the self practising self-exploitation—and, by the same token, self-surveillance. The auto-exploiting subject carries around its own labour camp; here, it is perpetrator and victim at one and the same time." (Han, 2017, p. 61)
8. Workers act within a punitive authoritarian nexus, whatever and wherever work may be being done, whether blue or white collar, whether private or public, whether full or part time, employee or contractor.	"Organizations enact a 'hierarchical structure of servitude,' in which the local dominators [i.e., managers, supervisors] are also dominated and brought to despair through their own dependence" (Lordon, 2014, p. 21) "Power contains a sort of fatality which weighs as pitilessly on those who command as on those who obey." (Weil, 2001, p. 62)
9. Organizations act as "private governments," requiring a relinquishment of rights and freedoms that should be proffered only to actual government.	"Public discourse and much of political theory pretends… that the constitution of workplace government is somehow the object of voluntary negotiation between workers and employers. This is true only for a tiny proportion of privileged workers. The vast majority are subject to private, authoritarian government, not through their own choice, but through laws that have handed nearly all authority to their employers." (Anderson, 2017, p. 70-71)
10. Work is conducted in an environment of low trust and suspicion among workers and bosses.	"But the workers, who are essential to the production process, are hostile to it. This means that in order for production to be kept up, employees have to be constantly coerced, monitored, and played off against one another." (Prole.info, 2006, p. 30)
11. Work "colonizes" worker lives to include off-the-job life.	"What is referred to as a 'liberation from work,' namely the modern increase in leisure time, is neither a liberation within work itself nor a liberation from the world shaped by this kind of work. None of the activity stolen through work can be regained by submitting to what that work has produced." (Debord, 1967/2014, p. 10) "The problem with work cannot be reduced to the extraction of surplus value or the degradation of skill, but extends to the ways that work dominates our lives. The struggle against work is a matter of securing not only better work, but also the time and money necessary to have a life outside work." (Weeks, 2020, p. 10)
12. Workers struggle and resist, sometimes spontaneously, in order to minimize the malevolent effects of work on their persons and lives in a wide variety of ways and with varying levels of success.	It is important to examine "the individual and collective agency of workers as they seek to both to resist managerial control efforts and construct spaces (both physical and metaphorical) within which they can construct zones of autonomy, free from managerial intervention." (Mumby, 2019, p. 435)

Antiwork tenets	Example illustrative statements
13. Where work is experienced as interesting and engaging, this can be explained by "managerialism," which is the intentional psychological manipulation of workers' feelings and attitudes through orientation, perks and accommodations.	"Contemporary fictions, built on 'work enrichment', 'participative management', 'employee empowerment' and other programmes of 'self-realisation' are successfully erasing the memory of that original truth about the employment relation: that it is a relation of dependence." (Lordon, 2014, p. 7)
14. The belief that individuals can be selected or promoted on the basis of "merit" is misguided, and job aptitude testing and performance measurement are not valid or fair and simply propagate inequities.	"What is conventionally called merit is actually an ideological conceit, constructed to launder a fundamentally unjust allocation of advantage. Meritocracy is merely the most recent instance of the iron law of oligarchy. It is aristocracy's commercial and republican analog, renovated for a world in which prestige, wealth, and power derive not from land but from skills – the human capital of free workers." (Markovits, 2019, pp. 268-269) "The meritocratic conviction that people deserve whatever riches the market bestows on their talents makes solidarity an almost impossible project." (Sandel, 2020, p. 227)
15. Society, through its economy, education and entertainment systems, norms, and general tenor, primes its members to accept work as the only way to live.	"Work, work, work, all day long. Right? What a horror it is! To be told [what to do], to be under somebody, to be directed, to be insulted, to be beaten down. That is the culture in which we have grown, in which you have been moulded. And to conform to that mould, we are educated." (Krishnamurti, 1992, p. 90) "It is not the police or the threat of violence that force us to work, but rather a social system that ensures that working is the only way that most of us can meet our basic needs… The social role of waged work has been so naturalized as to seem necessary and inevitable, something that might be tinkered with but never escaped." (Weeks, 2020, p. 7)
16. The economic system termed "capitalism" has historically been able to adapt to any and all change in policies, technologies, or public and private preferences so that the employer/dominator–employee/dominated relationship continues or intensifies; at the same time modern capitalism makes solidarity difficult by "atomizing" society.	"No desire, no vitality seems to exist anymore outside of the economic enterprise, outside productive labor and business. Capital[ism] was able to renew its psychic, ideological and economic energy, specifically thanks to the absorption of creativity, desire, and individualistic, libertarian drives for self-realization." (Berardi, 2009, p. 96) "In many ways, the left has never recovered from being wrong-footed by Capital's mobilization and metabolization of the desire for emancipation from Fordist routine." (Fisher, 2009, p. 38)

Antiwork tenets	Example illustrative statements
17. Just because people want work does not mean work is good, because work is still servitude	Employment is a "form of servitude that is obviously special, since, in fact, the enslaved *consent* to it" (Lordon, 2014, p. 53, italics in the original).
18. There exist some alternative ways to structure the world in which work is either not so central and is devoid of its current bad features or those bad features are greatly ameliorated.	"On the one hand… we have to cut down massively on the amount of work being done. At present most work is useless or worse and we should simply get rid of it. On the other hand—and I think this the crux of the matter and the revolutionary new departure—we have to take what useful work remains and transform it into a pleasing variety of game-like and craft-like pastimes, indistinguishable from other pleasurable pastimes except that they happen to yield useful end-products." Black (1986, p. 28) We should aim for a broad unified group of antiwork advocates with explicit values… The goal of these collectives would be to increase the number of collectives globally… A collective doesn't need to be a geographic entity, only a shared set of beliefs, practices, politics, experiences, or relationships which establish belonging. A common cause can sustain people toward collective action despite irreducible differences. Collectives can also protect us from targeted attacks from the state and other oppressive institutions. (Browne & Green, 2022, p. 4)

Note: Adapted and expanded from Alliger (2022a).

Table 2: Antiwork Inspired Research Topics and Sample Research Questions

Research topic	Sample research questions
Managerialism and leadership	To what extent does "managerialism" (the use of various persuasive messages and perks to align an employee's goals with those of the organization) exist? How can it be measured? What exactly are its mechanisms, antecedents, and consequents? In what situations might a leader's primary role be simply to preserve power differentials as opposed to more practically useful functions, and what might be important outcomes of this configuration? Given antiwork's stress on the negative effects of power differentials throughout all levels and positions in an organization, can "inclusive leadership" and workplace democracy represent ameliorating forces?
The psychology of organized labor and worker solidarity	To what extent do unions allow a recapturing of autonomy and self-identify among member employees? How might the construct of worker solidarity be best operationalized in psychological terms? What aspects of work and workplaces might aid or hinder the development of solidarity? What are the biggest drivers for management toward union avoidance? Specifically, are there psychological motives that are generally not recognized?
Additional research directions	
Will and work	Under what conditions, at both the micro and macrolevel, can the consent to work be understood to be full and free? What is the prevalence of full and free consent? Do those who generally endorse a meritocratic viewpoint understand or react to managerialism differently than others?
Individual differences	What enduring characteristics (e.g., tough mindedness, cynicism) tend to protect employees from the putative bad effects of work? What individual psychological dynamics take place in undervalued work?
Work orientations/ideologies	Do the ideologies of an organization's most influential members have an outsized effect on that organization's social environment? For example, is the "return to office" movement characterized by particular beliefs of management? How can we best measure work-related ideologies?
Surveillance at work	As surveillance at work increases, do workers understand their own motivation as less intrinsic and more extrinsic? Might employees even learn to distrust themselves in a more or less permanent way? What might change if current surveillance tools are put in employees' hands rather than management's?
New employee orientation	Is it possible to foster a new hire's sense of independence from an organization during onboarding into that organization? Should organizations actively encourage employees to draw identity and meaning less from work and more from a wider variety of nonwork sources?

Research topic	Sample research questions
Counterproductive work behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors	What are the positive (as well as negative) sides of CWBs for an organization? To what extent do CWBs, which provide some benefit to the employee via the exercise of psychological agency, also have negative psychological effects for that employee (e.g., reduced likelihood of job satisfaction or other psychological returns)? When do OCBs have a negative effect on the employees carrying them out?
Workplace democracy/ worker ownership	How does organizational climate differ in a worker-owned organization versus a traditional organization? Is leadership organically more inclusive? What are the dynamics of such arrangements in creating/maintaining worker attitudes?
Work teams	Do work teams ever foster identification with an organization at the cost of a healthier identification with employees and with other aspects of one's life? If so, when? How might worker advocacy collectives and democratic organizations be studied from a multiteam systems perspective? What contributions might this perspective make to the success of these organizations?
"Mischievous methods"	Can research on unions, ideologies, and other interesting but politically contentious topics be conducted without researchers having previously gained access to organizational samples via alliances with management and executives? How? How can I-O psychologists build lasting, cooperative relationships with workers, especially those who are politically marginalized? What effects might arise from greater worker involvement in the I-O knowledge generation process?
The benefits of not working	What benefits accrue to workers from not working? To what extent might the benefits of recent advances in the reduction of time spent working (e.g., 4-day work week) scale to even less time? If most people are working more than is necessary, how can a broader disengagement from work be facilitated humanely?