

# **The Intersectional Impact: How Race Shapes Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction**

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*This study builds on prior research examining gender and job satisfaction by exploring how race—White or non-White—affects gender differences in satisfaction. Using survey data from 566 U.S. workers, the findings reveal that the gender gap in job satisfaction varies notably by racial background. While earlier studies have been inconclusive about whether a gender-based advantage exists in perceived workplace satisfaction, this study identifies a significant gender gap, particularly pronounced among White workers. In contrast, the gap is smaller and less consistent among non-White workers. By integrating the intersection of gender and race, the research offers a more nuanced view of satisfaction disparities and highlights the limitations of analyzing these factors in isolation. The results suggest that overlooking intersectionality may obscure key diversity dynamics. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the importance for organizations to acknowledge and address the complex identities of employees when seeking to improve workplace well-being and overall performance.*

*Keywords: job satisfaction, gender, race, intersectionality, workplace well-being*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gender differences in job satisfaction have been widely researched, yet findings remain inconclusive about whether men or women report higher satisfaction levels. While some past studies found women to be more satisfied than men, others found no significant differences or even higher satisfaction among men. Explanations for these paradoxical results have focused on gender socialization and workplace experiences. However, an important limitation of prior work is the tendency to examine gender as a single attribute, overlooking how satisfaction may be influenced differently for men and women of various racial backgrounds.

This study aims to address this gap by considering the intersection of gender and race concerning job satisfaction. A growing body of research emphasizes the importance of examining multiple identity dimensions simultaneously rather than separately, as individual experiences cannot be reduced to single social categories. Incorporating the influence of race is especially relevant given continued disparities faced by racial minority groups in the workplace. Compared to their white counterparts, people of color often encounter more barriers to career advancement, unequal pay, and discrimination—factors that could differentially shape satisfaction levels among gender groups.

By examining a sample of U.S. workers across White and non-White racial identities, this study provides a more nuanced exploration of satisfaction disparities. The results have important implications for theoretical understandings of job satisfaction as well as practical applications. From an organizational perspective, measuring satisfaction while overlooking diversity dimensions risks missing dissatisfiers particularly salient for underrepresented demographic segments. A multidimensional view of employee identities and experiences can thus help create more inclusive and supportive work environments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction reflects the value employees place on aspects of their work when comparing features of their current jobs with features they consider ideal (Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction includes compensation, benefits, autonomy, challenge, growth, and meaningful work. These determinants can be categorized as *intrinsic rewards* (interesting work, autonomy, helping others, useful to society); *extrinsic rewards* (pay, security, promotion, physical effort, stress); *work relations* (management-employee relations, coworker relations, contact with others, discrimination, harassment); and *work-life balance* (work from home, work weekends, schedule flexibility, flexibility to deal with family matters, work-family interference) (Andrade et al., 2019, 2021a, 2021b, Andrade et al., 2023; Hall et al., 2023).

The current study examines these antecedents as well as the work activation determinants of engagement, meaning and purpose, encouragement and belonging, leadership efficacy, and meaning and commitment (Andrade & Westover, 2024). The study aims to better understand the possible influence of race on gender differences in job satisfaction. Understanding differences in demographic subsets within organizations and influences on the work behaviors of employees representing these subsets is critical to organizational effectiveness (Lee et al., 2020). Workforce diversification can result in better decision making due to the contribution of differing perspectives, leading to increased creativity and innovation (Jehn et al., 1999; McLeod et al., 1996), but skilled management is needed to address unproductive conflict that undermines cohesion and decreases job satisfaction (Choi, 2008; Choi & Rainey, 2014). Few studies have explored how ethnic and gender differences impact job satisfaction, examined a wide range of determinants, or investigated the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender on job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2020). The current study contributes to closing this gap.

### Gender Gaps in Job Satisfaction

A considerable amount of research has focused on the gender-job satisfaction paradox to understand why women have higher levels of job satisfaction than men despite lower pay, discrimination, fewer opportunities for advancement, and other barriers (Bender et al., 2005; Clark, 1997). Explanations for this phenomenon include a structural argument that women are socialized into lower career expectations, and thus have lower aspirations and are contented with less-than-ideal work (Clark, 1997; Gregory, 1990; Gutek, 1993; Konrad et al., 2000) as well as an ideological argument that work preferences are based on social norms that assign women to domestic roles and men to provider roles (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012; Gregory, 1990; Gutek, 1993; Konrad et al., 2000). Even with these explanations, findings are mixed with some studies identifying higher levels of job satisfaction for women (Clark, 1997; Grönlund & Öun, 2018; Zou, 2015;) and others showing lower (Akbari et al., 2020; Huang & Gamble, 2015; Nair et al., 2017) or similar levels to men (Andrade et al., 2019; Baeza et al., 2018). Societal expectations impact women's preferences and contribute to occupational segregation (Eagly et al., 2020; Hanek & Garcia, 2022). When women challenge society-prescribed roles and enter male-dominant professions, low job satisfaction and engagement may cause them to question their fit (Casad et al., 2018; Field et al., 2023; Peters et al., 2012; Saucerman & Vasquez, 2014), and lower their expectations of success (Meeussen et al., 2022).

A global study found no overall differences in gender job satisfaction (Andrade et al., 2019). Work aspects such as pay and job stability that are traditionally associated with men as primary breadwinners were important to both men and women, and intrinsic factors often associated with women were mostly similar across gender. An exception was helping others, which was more significant for women. Work relations and work-life balance, generally associated with women, were more predictive of job satisfaction

for men. These findings may reflect societal changes in male and female roles that make job satisfaction variables less aligned with traditional gender roles. However, differences in job satisfaction in global studies appear in some work sectors. A study of hospitality industry workers found job satisfaction lower for women with determinants not aligning with gender in expected ways (Andrade et al., 2021b). Intrinsic and extrinsic variables were significant to both male and female workers (e.g., pay, interesting work, work-family balance). In a post-COVID study, work flexibility, specifically the opportunity to work from home, increased job satisfaction as did flexibility to deal with family matters for both male and female workers (Andrade et al., 2023). These studies show that as gender roles change so do the determinants of job satisfaction.

### **Racial Differences in Job Satisfaction**

As with gender job satisfaction studies, those on racial differences are complex with varied findings depending on industry sector and other variables. Lee et al. (2020) examined job satisfaction determinants associated with existence (basic needs), relatedness (interpersonal relationships), growth (development and fulfilling potential), and equity (fair treatment), finding few gender or ethnic differences for U.S. federal employees. Participation and intrinsic motivation were top factors for all groups with diversity management, coworker relations, and management relations at the bottom. Findings also indicated that males valued development more than females, possibly because the latter expect and receive less support, and that White employees prioritized recognition more than minorities. The latter may be due to concerns with biases in performance evaluations leading to skepticism of their value. Satisfaction with pay and diversity programs were more important to minority women and least important to White men. Participation in the workplace was valued more by White men and least by minority women. These findings indicate the importance of focusing on motivation and participation to improve job satisfaction across subgroups, addressing equity issues, and examining the effectiveness of diversity programs.

In another study, intersectional job satisfaction differences were found for law school graduates that were not evident when examining gender and race/ethnicity separately (Hersch, 2023). Job satisfaction for Black men and Asian men was similar to that of White men, but low among Black and Asian women. Job satisfaction for White women was similar to that of White men while Latinx women had higher job satisfaction across multiple job characteristics compared to White men even though Latinx and Black women had the lowest salary averages. Black women had the lowest job satisfaction in the sample. Black and Asian women were particularly dissatisfied with salary, advancement opportunities, and challenge. Job dissatisfaction in the legal profession among these gender and ethnic groups may contribute to its lack of diversity (American Bar Association, 2016).

Differences in job satisfaction between Black and White workers has been attributed to differing workplace experiences (Kashefi, 2011) and differing beliefs and values that impact career choices and work outcomes (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1973). Black workers have fewer opportunities due to educational and occupational practices limiting their advancement (Caputo & Deprez, 2012; O'Connell, 2012). Some studies report higher levels of job satisfaction for Black employees compared to their White counterparts (Niemann & Dovidio, 1998; Weaver, 1974) while others show lower levels (DeFour & Brown, 2006; Lopez & Greenhaus, 1978, Smith, 1975), or no difference (Brush et al., 1987). Black employees in complex jobs requiring problem solving and discretion over their work report lower autonomy and satisfaction than White employees (Slocum & Strawser, 1972; Watson & Shealey, 2010) and also less responsibility (Tomaskovic-Devey & Stainback, 2007). Research in this area has focused on social structural conditions (e.g., rankings, position in society) that impact work attitudes and behaviors and create inequalities (DiTomaso et al, 2007; Pfeffer, 1991) as well as situational contexts within organizations such as diversity management, organizational culture, and team processes (Choi, 2009; Choi & Rainey, 2010; Pitts, 2009; Pitts & Jarry, 2009).

A meta-analysis of the job satisfaction literature for White and Black workers found that White workers were slightly more satisfied than their Black counterparts (Koh et al., 2016). Geographic location, data collection year, job sector, and measurement type did not moderate differences, but job complexity and demographic composition in the workplace did. Black workers were less satisfied in highly complex jobs

than White workers, possibly due to lack of autonomy, role models, and limited advancement opportunities. Job satisfaction was higher for White workers as the proportion of Black workers decreased. Other research also shows that demographic composition impacts job satisfaction for racial/ethnic minorities and White employees with both reporting lower satisfaction levels in contexts in which they are in the minority and more satisfaction in jobs where they are the majority (Choi et al., 2017). Further studies support that high demographic diversity negatively impacts work attitudes (Choi, 2009; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Data comparing White employees to other racial/ethnic minority groups is limited as most studies group minorities together (Koh et al., 2016). Similarly, available data does not allow for gaining an understanding of specific attributes of job satisfaction such as intrinsic and extrinsic reward (Koh et al., 2016).

## **HYPOTHESES**

The current literature provides mixed evidence regarding differences in job satisfaction based on gender and race. Additional research is needed to better understand how these factors may interact to differentially impact satisfaction levels. Based on past research and the focus of this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

***Hypothesis 1:** Gender differences in job satisfaction will vary based on racial background, such that the magnitude of differences between men and women will be larger for White versus non-White workers.*

***Hypothesis 2:** Both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards will positively predict job satisfaction across all gender and racial groups.*

***Hypothesis 3:** Extrinsic rewards will have a stronger influence on satisfaction levels among White male workers compared to other groups.*

***Hypothesis 4:** Intrinsic rewards and work relations will be more salient predictors of satisfaction for female and non-White workers compared to extrinsic factors.*

***Hypothesis 5:** Work-life balance determinants will better predict satisfaction levels among non-White female workers relative to other demographic segments.*

***Hypothesis 6:** Worker activation determinants centered around purpose, belonging, and empowerment will be more influential for the job satisfaction of minority gender groups, including non-White individuals and women.*

These hypotheses consider potential differences in both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction drivers based on the intersecting attributes of gender and race/ethnicity.

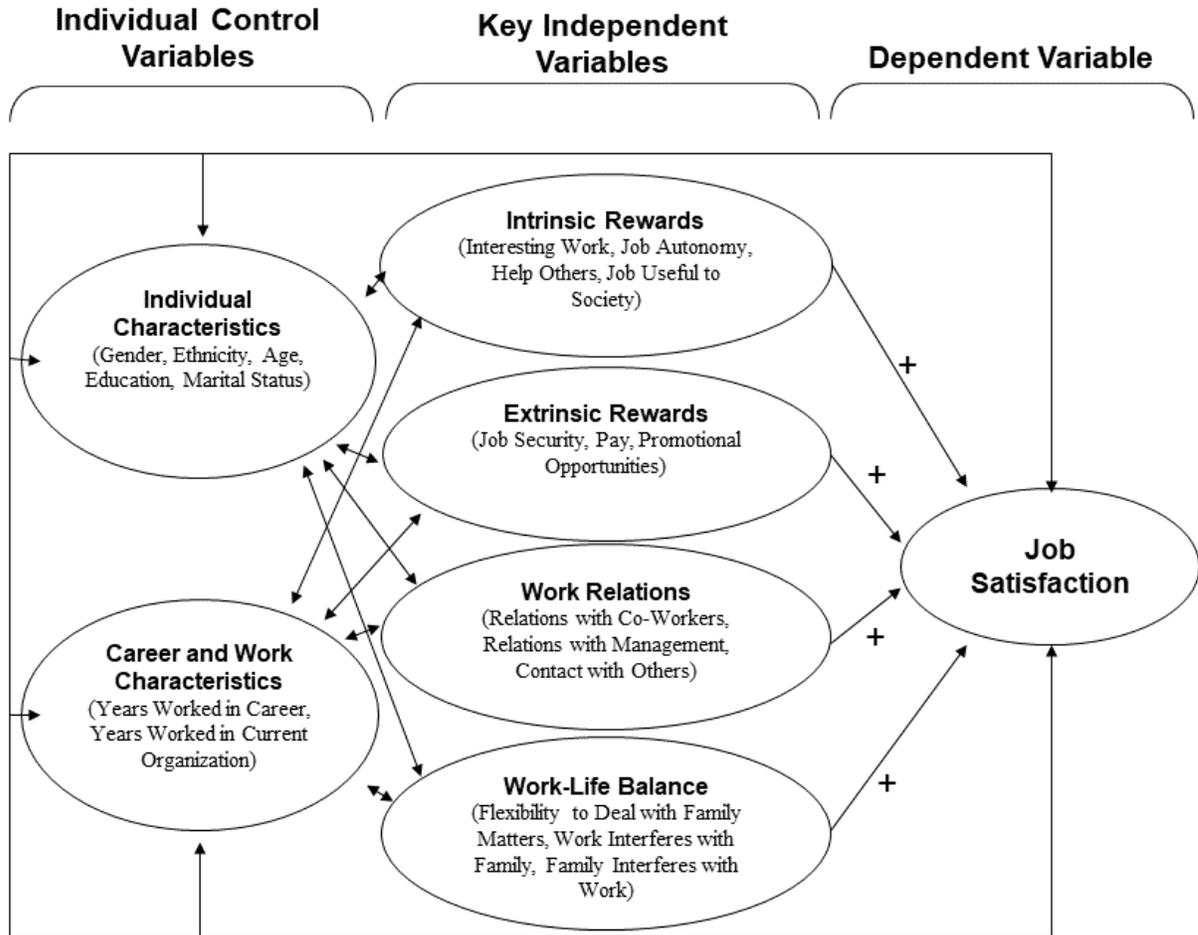
## **RESEARCH MODEL AND DESIGN**

To examine potential differences in job satisfaction based on gender and race, a web-based survey was developed building upon prior research instruments. Modeled after measures from the International Social Survey Work Orientations Module as well as the work of Andrade et al. (2023), the survey included established scales to assess intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards, workplace relations, work-life balance determinants, and factors related to employee activation or discretionary effort.

To collect a sample incorporating gender and racial diversity, the survey was administered during Winter 2024 using stratified random sampling across the United States. The sampling process ensured representation of males and females and White and non-White racial groups. A total of 566 surveys were completed, responding to diverse gender and ethnic identities. This allowed for comparisons of how

intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction variables potentially differ based on the intersection of gender and racial background.

**FIGURE 1  
RESEARCH MODEL**



**Operationalization of Variables**

The key job satisfaction variables were operationalized based on validated scales from prior research (Andrade et al., 2023). Specifically for intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards, workplace relations, and work-life balance, established items from the survey developed by Andrade et al. (2023) were incorporated.

Additionally, new survey questions were included building on the existing variables, which allowed for consideration of other relevant factors not previously examined concerning gender and race. Specifically, items measuring discretion at work and feelings of belongingness and purpose were added based on recent research linking these "employee activation" constructs to motivation and performance (Andrade et al., 2023).

These modifications to the prior survey instrument enabled the exploration of potential differences in traditional and emerging job satisfaction determinants across gender and racial identity groups. Table 1 summarizes how the key study variables were operationalized using a combination of established scales and new items added for this research.

**TABLE 1**  
**STUDY VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENTS**

Variable	Item
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	
Job satisfaction	“How satisfied are you in your main job?” (0) extremely dissatisfied to (10) extremely satisfied
<i>Intrinsic Rewards</i>	
Interesting Job	“My job is interesting.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job autonomy	“I can work independently.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Help others	“In my job I can help other people.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job useful to society	“My job is useful to society.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Extrinsic Rewards</i>	
Pay	“My income is high.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job security	“My job is secure.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Promotional opportunities	“My opportunities for advancement are high.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Work Relations</i>	
Relations with management	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between management and employees?” (1) very bad to (5) very good
Relations with coworkers	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between workmates/colleagues?” (1) very bad to (5) very good
Contact with others	“In my job, I have personal contact with others.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	
Flexibility to deal with family matters	“How difficult would it be for you to take an hour or two off during work hours, to take care of personal or family matters? (1) not difficult at all to (5) very difficult
Work interference with family	“How often do you feel that the demands of your job interfere with your family?” (1) never to (3) always
Family interference with work	“How often do you feel that the demands of your family interfere with your job?” (1) never to (3) always
<i>Worker Engagement</i>	
Job engagement	“Overall, how engaged are you in your (main) job?” (1) not at all engaged to (10) extremely engaged
Do what you do best	“I Have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Understanding of Meaning and Purpose</i>	
Meaningful work	“I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Purposeful work	“I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree

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<i>Sense of Encouragement and Belonging</i>	
Supervisor encouragement	“My supervisor shows me encouragement for my work efforts.” (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree
Where I am meant to be	“I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be.” (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree
<i>Leadership Efficacy</i>	
	“I see myself as a leader.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Career Meaning and Commitment</i>	
Meaningful career	“I have found a meaningful career.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Organizational Commitment	“I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Controls</i>	
	Dummy variables for race, ethnicity, education level, marital status, and state of residence; Continuous variables for birth year, full-time years worked in career, and years worked in current organization.

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### Statistical Methodology

To analyze the relationships between job satisfaction and the key independent variables of gender and race, a multi-stage analytical approach was utilized (Andrade et al., 2023). First, descriptive statistics of work characteristics, attitudes, and demographic information were examined for the full sample as well as across gender and racial identity groups.

Second, differences in reported job satisfaction levels between gender groups within each racial category (White and non-White) were tested using t-tests, addressing Hypothesis 1 regarding variation based on intersectional identities.

Regression analyses were then conducted to evaluate the impact of work characteristics on satisfaction for each gender-race subgroup (Hypotheses 2-3). Both OLS and ordered probit models were estimated.

Finally, moderation analyses examined whether the influence of work-life and employee activation determinants on satisfaction differed significantly based on gender and racial background combinations (Hypotheses 4-6). This allowed for investigation of potential variation in intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction drivers across demographic segments.

These analytical steps provided insight into job satisfaction disparities, considering the intersection of gender and race as key identity attributes.

## RESULTS

### Participant Demographics

566 full- or part-time workers completed the survey, representing diverse racial and gender identities. The stratified random sample was drawn from areas across the United States, ensuring adequate representation of subgroups. At the time of the study, all respondents were currently employed, having worked before the COVID-19 pandemic.

As shown in Table 2, males comprised 46.11% (n=261) of the sample and females 53.89% (n=305). Tables 3 and 4 provide details on racial background, with 67.67% (n=383) identifying as White/Caucasian, 19.96% (n=113) as Black/African American, 9.72% (n=55) as Asian, and smaller percentages for other groups including Native American/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Regarding ethnicity, 88.34% (n=500) reported not being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

Table 5 shows educational attainment varied, with over 44% (n=249) having some college or less education and nearly 56% (n=314) holding a college degree or higher. As presented in Table 6, most respondents (62.7%, n=355) were married or cohabitating. Demographic characteristics including average age, years of work experience, and organization tenure are summarized in Table 7.

Overall, the sample incorporated diversity across gender, race/ethnicity, education, family status, and career profiles to enable comparisons between subgroups as the key independent variables of interest.

**TABLE 2  
GENDER OF RESPONDENT**

	Freq.	Percent
Female	305	53.89
Male	261	46.11
Total	566	100

**TABLE 3  
RACE OF RESPONDENT**

	Freq.	Percent
White	383	67.67
Black or African-American	113	19.96
Asian	55	9.72
Native American or Alaska Native	2	0.35
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4	0.71
Other	9	1.59
Total	566	100

**TABLE 4  
ETHNICITY OF RESPONDENT**

	Freq.	Percent
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	66	11.66
Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	500	88.34
Total	566	100

**TABLE 5  
EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENT**

	Freq.	Percent
Less than high school	6	1.07
High school diploma	96	17.05
Some college, but no degree	147	26.11
Bachelor's degree	192	34.1
Master's degree	97	17.23
Doctoral degree	25	4.44
Total	563	100

**TABLE 6  
MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENT**

	Freq.	Percent
Married or cohabitating	353	62.7
Single	206	36.59
Prefer not to say	4	0.71
Total	563	100

**TABLE 7  
OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENT**

	Mean	Std. Dev.
Birth year	1977.34	13.99
Full-time years worked in career	20.57	13.92
Years worked in current organization	13.94	86.29

**Descriptive Results**

Table 8 below shows the means of job satisfaction and other main study variables by race and gender, as well as significant differences. As shown, there is a statistically significant difference in reported job satisfaction between both White and non-White men and women, while the gap is more pronounced for White women. There are also significant differences in several other variables. Namely, male workers report significantly higher mean scores on many study variables. Female workers did not have statistically significant higher mean scores on any of the variables, and like job satisfaction, the gap is more pronounced for White women. These results are consistent with prior research examining gender differences in job satisfaction and job characteristics (Bokemeier & William, 1987; Hodson, 1989; Blau & Kahn, 2003; Lynch, 1992; Mobley et al., 1994; Roxburgh, 1999; Clark, 1997; Konrad et al., 2000; Donohue & Heywood, 2004).

**TABLE 8  
VARIABLE MEANS AND TEST OF DIFFERENCES, BY GENDER**

Dependent Variable	Caucasian				Person of Color				All				All			
	Females		Male		Females		Male		Females		Male		T	Statistic	p-value for sig. diff	df
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.				
Job Satisfaction	5.16	1.90	5.58	1.64	5.19	1.69	5.46	1.35	5.06	1.70	5.39	1.50	-2.39**	0.009	562	
<b>Intrinsic Rewards</b>																
Interesting Job	3.77	1.09	3.95	0.95	3.75	1.06	3.81	0.92	3.76	1.08	3.90	0.94	-1.645*	0.050	563	
Job autonomy	4.06	1.05	4.12	0.96	4.01	0.99	3.99	0.91	4.04	1.03	4.07	0.94	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
Help others	4.15	0.91	4.12	0.85	4.24	0.82	4.10	0.83	4.18	0.88	4.11	0.84	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
Job useful to society	4.09	0.98	3.96	1.03	3.97	0.95	3.95	0.94	4.06	0.97	3.95	1.00	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
<b>Extrinsic Rewards</b>																
Pay	2.77	1.19	3.21	1.15	2.99	1.22	3.20	1.12	2.84	1.20	3.21	1.13	-3.767***	0.000	563	
Job security	3.89	1.02	4.12	0.94	4.07	0.93	3.93	0.85	3.94	1.00	4.06	0.91	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
Promotional opportunities	3.04	1.22	3.26	1.13	3.24	1.18	3.43	1.16	3.10	1.21	3.32	1.14	-2.250*	0.012	563	
<b>Work Relations</b>																
Relations with management	3.67	1.01	3.83	1.01	3.66	1.01	3.89	0.82	3.67	1.01	3.85	0.95	-2.207*	0.014	563	
Relations with coworkers	4.00	0.88	4.14	0.79	3.93	0.90	4.11	0.85	3.98	0.89	4.13	0.81	-2.041*	0.021	563	
Contact with others	4.29	0.86	4.15	0.85	4.13	0.97	3.99	0.92	4.24	0.90	4.09	0.88	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>																
Flexibility to deal with family matters	2.16	0.97	2.02	1.00	2.11	0.96	2.12	0.95	2.14	0.96	2.05	0.98	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
Work interference with family	1.73	0.65	1.82	0.69	1.69	0.73	1.80	0.65	1.72	0.67	1.81	0.67	-1.618*	0.050	563	
Family interference with work	1.59	0.61	1.59	0.67	1.60	0.73	1.69	0.71	1.59	0.64	1.63	0.69	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
<b>Worker Activation</b>																
Job engagement	7.77	2.19	8.17	1.74	7.54	2.24	8.22	1.76	7.70	2.21	8.19	1.74	-2.861**	0.002	563	
I see myself as a leader	3.71	1.64	4.02	1.47	4.18	1.55	4.20	1.40	3.85	1.62	4.08	1.44	-1.781*	0.038	563	
I have found a meaningful career	3.82	1.24	4.11	1.09	3.96	0.98	3.95	1.09	3.86	1.17	4.05	1.09	-2.000*	0.023	563	
Work that has a satisfying purpose	3.89	1.21	4.04	1.02	3.81	1.19	4.03	0.95	3.87	1.20	4.04	0.99	-1.850*	0.032	563	
Supervisor Encouragement	4.88	1.86	5.34	1.57	5.00	1.67	5.29	1.50	5.03	1.73	5.30	1.51	-1.927*	0.027	563	
Where I am meant to be	5.00	1.75	5.28	1.57	5.10	1.68	5.34	1.42	4.91	1.80	5.32	1.54	-2.860**	0.002	562	
My work contributes to my life's meaning	3.82	1.20	3.97	1.03	3.89	0.96	3.93	0.96	3.84	1.14	3.96	1.00	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	
Organizational commitment	4.99	1.89	5.41	1.79	4.80	1.88	5.10	1.61	4.93	1.88	5.30	1.73	-2.404**	0.008	562	

## Regression Results

Following the approach of Andrade et. al (2024), we examined the association between job satisfaction and the independent variables across multiple regression analyses. The first model (Table 9) examined the influence of intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, work relations, work-life balance variables, and control variables on job satisfaction, by race and gender. In the second model (Table 10), we examined series of “worker activation” variables along with the same control variables for each race and gender and for the total sample.

Table 9 shows variation in standardized beta coefficient statistical significance for each variable. For both White women and men, “interesting job,” “pay”, and “relations with management” are each statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction. For non-White women, “interesting job,” “work interferes with family,” and “family interferes with work” are each statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction. For non-White men, “interesting job” and “job security” are each statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction.

Additionally, there are variations in adjusted r-squared values for the female (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.554) and male (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.664) OLS regression models, meaning the model accounted for over 55% of the variation in job satisfaction for women and over 66% of the variation in job satisfaction for men. The model fit (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.685) is stronger for White men than it is for White women (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.573), but model fit is better for both White men and women than it is for non-White men (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.553) and non-White women (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.510), meaning the model accounted for nearly 69% of the variation in job satisfaction for White men, but just 57% for White women, 55% for non-White men, and 51% for non-White women.

Table 10 shows variation in standardized beta coefficient statistical significance for each variable. For White women, all variables except “worker engagement” are statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction. For White men, all variables are statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction except “work with a purpose” and “I see myself as a leader.” For non-White women, “worker engagement,” “supervisor encouragement,” “where I am meant to be,” and “organizational commitment” are statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction. For non-White men, “worker engagement,” “work with purpose,” “supervisor encouragement,” and organizational commitment” are statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction.

Additionally, there are variations in adjusted r-squared values for the female (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.811) and male (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.830) OLS regression models, meaning the model accounted for over 81% of the variation in job satisfaction for women and over 83% of the variation in job satisfaction for men. The model fit (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.852) is stronger for White men than it is for White women (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.826), but model fit is better for both White men and women than it is for non-White men (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.797) and non-White women (*adjusted r-squared* = 0.784), meaning the model accounted for 85% of the variation in job satisfaction for White men, nearly 83% for White women, nearly 80% for non-White men, and 78% for non-White women.

**TABLE 9**  
**MODEL 1 - OLS TRADITIONAL JOB SATISFACTION REGRESSION RESULTS,**  
**BY RACE AND GENDER**

	Caucasian		Person of Color		All	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Intrinsic Rewards</b>						
Interesting Job	0.286***	0.355***	0.385***	0.282*	0.319***	0.315***
Job autonomy	0.079	0.052	-0.053	0.014	0.065	0.044
Help others	0.115	0.082	0.011	0.063	0.102	0.060
Job useful to society	0.048	-0.076	-0.042	-0.070	-0.010	-0.065
<b>Extrinsic Rewards</b>						
Pay	0.183**	0.272***	0.126	0.152	0.157**	.227***
Job security	-0.098	-0.004	0.149	0.353**	-0.038	.100*
Promotional opportunities	0.091	0.110	0.107	0.064	0.115	0.109
<b>Work Relations</b>						
Relations with management	0.308***	0.240***	-0.007	0.169	0.233***	0.238***
Relations with coworkers	0.036	0.021	0.147	-0.098	0.052	-0.011
Contact with others	-0.008	-0.041	0.004	0.055	0.026	-0.047
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>						
Flexibility to deal with family matters	-0.034	0.009	-0.147	0.010	-0.067	0.016
Work interference with family	-0.022	-0.090	-0.201*	-0.098	-0.063	-0.129*
Family interference with work	0.015	0.009	0.211*	-0.005	0.065	0.057
<b>Controls</b>						
State of Residence	0.025	-0.042	0.035	0.189*	-0.018	0.034
Ethnicity	-0.027	0.017	-0.020	-0.118	-0.010	0.024
Education Level	-0.022	-0.002	-0.037	0.081	-0.020	0.010
Birth Year	-0.003	-0.099	-0.216	-0.175		
Marital Status	-0.040	-0.069	-0.061	-0.040	-0.029	-0.063
Years Worked in Career	0.067	0.044	-0.255	-0.138	0.025	0.011
Years Worked in Current Organization	-0.081	-0.009	0.149	0.060	-0.057	-0.001
N	210	170	90	91	300	261
Adjusted R-Squared	0.573	0.685	0.510	0.553	0.554	0.644
F	15.02***	19.38***	5.63***	6.56***	18.68***	23.40***

Note: Beta values; Significance levels: \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

**TABLE 10**  
**MODEL 2 - REVISED JOB SATISFACTION REGRESSION RESULTS WITH WORKER**  
**ACTIVATION VARIABLES, BY RACE AND GENDER**

	Caucasian		Person of Color		All	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Worker Engagement</b>						
Overall, how engaged are you in your (main) job	0.053	0.085*	0.318***	0.144*	0.126***	0.081*
I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	0.074*	0.110**	0.005	0.112	0.046	0.120***
<b>Understanding of Meaning and Purpose</b>						
I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful	0.100*	0.098*	-0.047	0.117	0.064	0.120**
I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose	0.106*	0.068	-0.014	0.185*	0.061	0.103*
<b>Sense of Encouragement and Belonging</b>						
My supervisor shows me encouragement for my work efforts	0.169***	0.074*	0.259***	0.181*	0.198***	0.114**
I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be	0.209***	0.150**	0.225**	0.159	0.219***	0.146**
<b>Leadership Efficacy</b>						
I see myself as a leader	-0.092**	-0.019	-0.032	-0.060	-0.082**	-0.022
<b>Career Meaning and Commitment</b>						
I have found a meaningful career	0.111*	0.156**	0.069	0.081	0.115*	0.106*
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	0.308***	0.392***	0.355***	0.155*	0.316***	0.343***
<b>Controls</b>						
Ethnicity	-0.035	0.050	0.008	-0.1425*	0.024	0.032
State of Residence	-0.018	-0.009	-0.030	0.161*	-0.029	0.013
Education Level	-0.013	-0.016	0.037	-0.043	-0.008	-0.026
Marital Status	0.008	-0.009	0.053	-0.036	0.036	-0.026
Years Worked in Career	-0.031	-0.055	-0.012	-0.012	-0.046	-0.091
N	210	170	90	91	300	261
Adjusted R-Squared	0.826	0.852	0.784	0.797	0.811	0.83
F	71.94***	70.68***	24.05***	26.23***	80.98***	80.53***

Note: Beta values; Significance levels: \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

## REVISITING THE HYPOTHESES

The study findings allow for reexamining the original hypotheses proposed:

- Hypothesis 1 stated that gender differences in job satisfaction would vary based on racial background, The results partially supported this, as significant satisfaction gaps were found between genders within both White and non-White groups, but the divide was more pronounced for White employees.
- Hypothesis 2 predicted intrinsic and extrinsic rewards would positively impact satisfaction across all subgroups. This received some confirmation, as traditional determinants predicted satisfaction as expected initially.
- Hypothesis 3 specified extrinsic rewards would matter most for White men, but analysis revealed satisfaction priorities differed once controls were applied.
- Hypothesis 4 anticipated intrinsic rewards and relations with management would be most important for women and non-White workers. However, variation existed in significant predictors between models.
- Hypothesis 5 proposed work-life balance would impact non-White women most, yet moderation analyses showed nuanced influences across identity segments.
- Finally, Hypothesis 6 stated activation factors would resonate strongest for minority gender groups. While activation variables emerged as core drivers overall, the models demonstrated variability in predictors between subgroups.

In summary, only partial validation existed for most hypotheses. Further examination of satisfaction through an intersectional lens revealed that experiences cannot be reduced to expectations for single social categories. Nuanced relationships underscore continuous discovery as dynamics adapt to progress.

## REVISITING THE JOB SATISFACTION MODEL

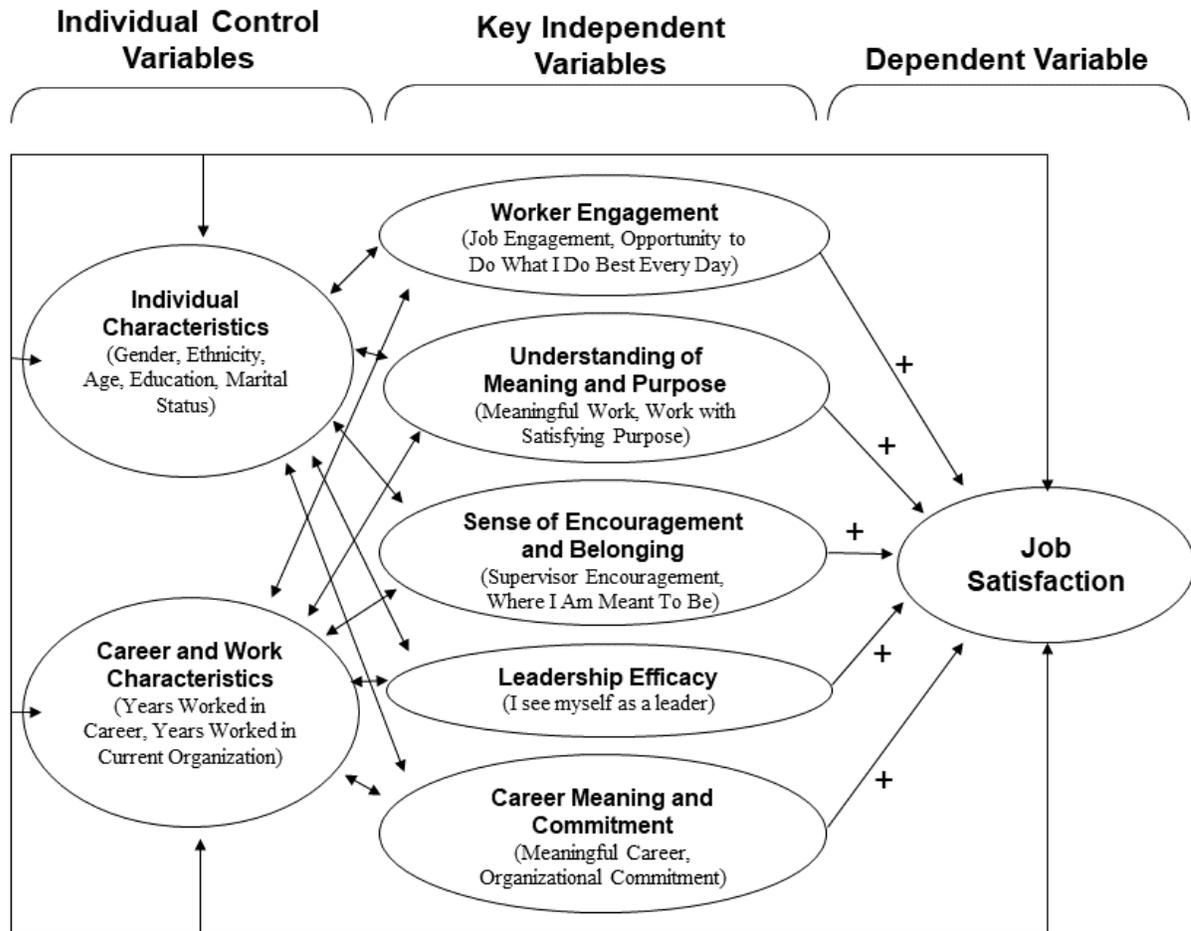
The initial theoretical model and hypotheses only partially captured the complex relationships revealed through this study regarding job satisfaction, gender, and race. While traditional work characteristics like rewards and work-life balance retained importance, findings demonstrated the prominent influence of employee activation constructs, necessitating an updated conceptual framework.

The revised research model presented in Figure 2 incorporates new insights gained from examining job satisfaction across gender and racial subgroups. Critically, the updated framework positions employee activation as a core driver of satisfaction rather than standalone predictors. This shows that activation factors comprising engagement, meaning, belongingness, efficacy and empowerment provide a more nuanced lens for understanding satisfaction differences among diverse identities.

By integrating activation at the center, the revised model accounts for findings demonstrating satisfaction is increasingly influenced by discretionary commitment cultivated through inclusive, empowering organizational cultures versus baseline expectations. Differences in activation's influence across gender and racial groups are also reflected.

Together, these changes to the theoretical perspective acknowledge the multidimensional nature of identity and experience in shaping motivation. The updated model supports organizational efforts to enhance well-being and performance by considering the intersectional experiences and needs present within diverse workforces.

**FIGURE 2**  
**REVISED RESEARCH MODEL**



Most significantly, the updated theoretical framework lays the groundwork for additional exploration of job satisfaction as a dynamic, contextual phenomenon influenced by individual identity facets and deliberately cultivated organizational experiences. By positioning employee activation at the core, the model highlights how satisfaction may be optimized through customized support strengthening engagement, empowerment and belonging across all employee segments.

Going forward, the revised perspective suggests value in deeper examination of how activation and satisfaction levels respond to evolving social trends and intentionally designed workplace interventions. Testing could focus on evaluating initiatives enhancing inclusion, career agility, management practices, and discretionary commitment among diverse groups.

Overall, the model presents a path towards refining the understanding of satisfaction as a multifaceted, interactional process dependent on employee identities and strategic development of an empowering culture. With further application, it holds promise for guiding organizational strategies to promote thriving among all staff in a way that is meaningfully adapted to shifting workforce composition and needs over time. The updated theoretical lens thus opens new avenues for researching and supporting equitable, high-performing work environments.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into understanding the complex relationship between gender, job satisfaction, and the role of employee activation factors in the context of race. While some key relationships between job satisfaction and traditional determinants like rewards and work-life balance were partially replicated across genders as expected from prior literature, the results also highlight important nuances when considering the intersection of gender and race.

Traditionally examined determinants predicted satisfaction as expected based on previous research. However, their influence decreased once employee activation variables centered on engagement, purpose, belongingness, and empowerment were included in the models. This indicates these non-tangible, socially situated aspects of work are increasingly important drivers of satisfaction, especially but not exclusively for women and non-White workers. As workplace diversity continues rising, cultivating discretionary commitment through activation may become even more critical for mutual well-being and performance outcomes over time.

Looking more closely, the findings reveal meaningful variations across subgroups. For example, while White men's satisfaction remained tied to some extrinsic rewards like pay and security, intrinsic factors surpassed these for predicting satisfaction among White women and non-White individuals once controls were applied. Additionally, high-quality relationships with management emerged as an equally salient priority across all groups, reinforcing equitable treatment as a foundation for satisfaction.

The results also point to areas where satisfaction differences may lessen further. Younger generations across identities increasingly value empowering, flexible cultures that optimize individual strengths and growth versus strictly defined roles. As non-traditional families and career pathways continue broadening life experiences, satisfaction drivers may adapt accordingly over the long run.

The study underscores how strategically cultivating affiliation, empowerment and purpose through an intersectional lens can strengthen discretionary efforts vital for organizational thriving. Continuous understanding of well-being factors informed by diversity will help navigate dynamic workforce changes to mutual benefit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND WORKERS

The findings from this study suggest several recommendations for organizations seeking to promote job satisfaction and effectiveness among diverse workforces:

- *Develop Inclusion Strategies that Span Identity Dimensions:* Rather than focusing on single attributes, diversity initiatives should recognize the intersectional nature of experience. Programs aimed at women or racial minorities, for example, will better resonate by also addressing the unique considerations relevant to subgroups.
- *Cultivate Employee Activation Through Culture Change:* Fostering employee engagement, purpose, belongingness and empowerment requires deliberate efforts to shape inclusive leadership behaviors and discretionary commitment across roles. Strategies might involve training, rewards, and transparent policies supporting strengths-based development.
- *Strategically Support Work-Life Integration:* While flexible arrangements benefit all, tailored programming could help address work-family challenges more profoundly experienced by some groups. Leaders should signal commitment to supporting varied life circumstances through equitable accommodation.
- *Evaluate Work Design and Reward Systems:* Periodic review can surface whether opportunities and outcomes truly motivate based on individual passions and efforts versus bias. Adjusting policies and distribution of developmental opportunities where discrepancies emerge could bolster discretionary motivation.
- *Provide Career Navigation Support:* Mentoring, sponsorship and skills resources should aim to strengthen underrepresented talent pipelines over the long term. Two-way exchanges

between leadership and diverse staff can also improve cultural understanding to mutual advantage.

- For workers, proactively engaging in strength-based self-advocacy and community may aid optimization of individual discretionary commitment. Volunteering insight to inform organizational navigation of intersectional diversity can further reciprocity of mutual thriving. Continuous learning also empowers flexible life management supporting fulfillment regardless of changing circumstances.

With open collaboration, organizations and their members can journey together towards equitable work environments activating human potential for shared success over time.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study provides an initial exploration of important gaps in understanding job satisfaction through an intersectional lens. Ongoing research has valuable potential to build on these insights in several key ways:

- *Expand Examination of Diverse Identities:* Future studies could explore the intersection of job satisfaction with identities beyond just gender and race. Examining factors like sexual orientation, immigrant status, disability status, or religion could provide deeper insight into how satisfaction is shaped. Researchers could also analyze how three or more identities interact simultaneously since experiences cannot be reduced to single attributes.
- *Test Satisfaction Dynamics Over Time:* Conducting longitudinal research tracking employee satisfaction levels over an extended period, such as 5-10 years, would offer a more nuanced perspective on how satisfaction changes as people progress through different life and career stages. Examining how satisfaction responds to economic, technological or social trends could also provide guidance for sustaining well-being.
- *Evaluate Activation and Satisfaction Across Industries:* Comparing satisfaction determinants and optimization efforts across industries with varying demographic compositions, such as healthcare, tech, or education, may illuminate both universal priorities and sector-specific consideration areas. This inter-industry analysis could improve customization of well-being initiatives.
- *Study Activation and Satisfaction Through Crises:* Periods of immense disruption, like the current pandemic, emphasize the need to explore how diverse groups navigate satisfying work under duress. Examining satisfaction navigation during such profound changes would better support workforce resilience in future crises.
- *Understand Cultural Influences on Satisfaction:* Attributing international data to cultural frameworks, analyzing dimensions like individualism-collectivism or power distance, could provide nuanced insight into socio-cultural underpinnings of experiences like work-life integration or job values satisfaction. This understanding could refine knowledge application across world regions.
- *Evaluate Initiatives Targeting Inclusion:* Future experiments quantitatively and qualitatively assessing innovative programming customized for activating multiple identity segments could guide continuous practice improvement. Assessing emerging strengths-based, co-created initiatives aimed at cultivating discretionary commitment through inclusion would progress equity.

Overall, ongoing scholarship at the intersection of satisfaction, identity and cultural context holds promise for iteratively strengthening understanding and application. With open-minded, community-oriented inquiry, the field can progress to serve dynamic workforce needs.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to address important gaps in prior job satisfaction research by exploring the intersection of gender, race, and activation factors. By developing and empirically testing hypotheses considering these intersecting attributes, valuable insights were gained into understanding satisfaction as a multidimensional, contextual phenomenon shaped jointly by individual identities and organizational cultures. This nuanced examination provided a more holistic perspective on satisfaction not afforded by prior research examining attributes in isolation.

While certain relationships between traditional determinants and satisfaction, such as the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, were partially replicated across genders consistent with earlier literature, notable variations also emerged when considering identity intersections. For example, satisfaction levels and priority factors differed meaningfully based on gender and race combinations. Additionally, employee activation centered on engagement, purpose, belongingness and empowerment emerged as increasingly pivotal satisfaction drivers for diverse groups beyond what prior work had indicated. This suggests the salient nature of work is evolving about discretionary commitment.

Looking more closely, the results also elucidated important nuances in understanding satisfaction. Not only did satisfaction priorities differ to some degree based on intersectional identity configurations, but satisfaction levels responded fluidly based on shifting opportunities and social norms over time. For instance, past studies observed gender satisfaction gaps narrow as equitable access expanded, underscoring fluid dynamics. These findings underscore the importance of treating staff holistically with customized approaches that adapt to changing needs through strengths-based diversity support.

Overall, strategically cultivating affiliation, empowerment and purpose across teams through collaborative navigation of inclusion holds promise for guiding thriving performance outcomes and well-being over the long term as societies progress. The results also emphasize how continuous scholarly examination of job experiences at the intersection of multiple identity and contextual facets can iteratively strengthen equitable satisfaction perspectives amenable to dynamically serving people throughout working lives.

Finally, ongoing scholarship exploring activation and satisfaction responses to events like crises through an intersectional lens remains crucially important. This trajectory can potentially refine theoretical understanding and practical optimization of work meaning for mutual benefit under profound change. By sustaining open-minded, community-oriented inquiry the field can serve evolving diversity in work and life.

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