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Learning Among Lower Wage and At-Risk Workers:
The Roles of Personal, Organizational and Social Resources

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Learning is critical to an individual's career progression and job security. However, not all individuals are given the same opportunities to participate in learning activities. When organizations provide opportunities for learning, those who take advantage of those opportunities are typically higher wage employees with higher occupational status and higher education, who typically reside in high-skilled jobs (Tharenou, 1997). In addition, the employees who already have the highest skills tend to be the ones who receive and benefit the most from training (e.g. Altonji & Spletzer, 1991; Veum, 1993). This is of concern because, as Bowers and Swaim (1994) suggest, less-educated and less-skilled workers' skill development needs are not being met. Likewise, Greenhalgh and Movrotas (1994) suggest that lower wage workers are less likely to have experienced any recent training. The implication is that organizations tend to discard lower wage workers, and allocate their learning resources to higher skilled employees. With their access to learning resources limited, and their unlikelihood to participate, the level of learning among lower wage workers is hindered.

The amount of learning, both formal and informal, that an individual partakes in depends upon many factors. Learning theory explains some of those factors, including an individual's self-efficacy and outcome expectancies. Equally important are the resources available to the individual. An individual's access to learning, self-efficacy and outcome expectancies are dependent on the demographics and characteristics of the organization, the job, and the individual. This paper proposes that the effect of these demographics on self-efficacy, outcome expectancies, access to resources, and subsequently on learning, is moderated by the individual's level of social capital. Lower wage workers are proposed to possess certain demographics, outcome expectancies and a level of self-efficacy which impacts their access to resources and

learning. This paper will discuss lower wage workers, types of learning (formal vs. informal), learning theory, factors that affect the access to resources and social capital as a moderating variable, as well as explain why learning is important to an individual's career progression. It will fill a gap in the literature surrounding the antecedents of participation in training for lower wage workers. Figure 1 outlines the theory that is proposed in this paper:

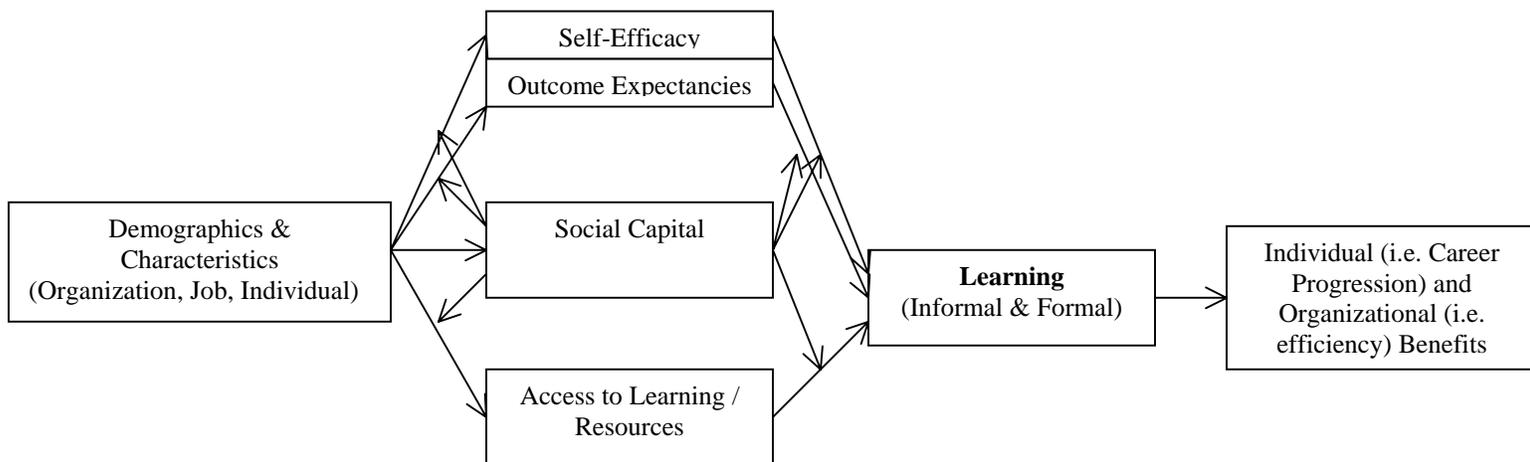


Figure 1. The antecedents and consequences of learning.

Lower Wage Workers

Lower wage workers possess unique characteristics and demographics which set them apart from other members of the workforce. Their individual demographics, the characteristics of the positions they hold and the organizations within which they are employed, impacts several aspects of their career and development. One of those aspects is the amount of learning they receive and participate in. However, prior to examining the effect of being a lower wage worker on one's career development and learning, the context within which these employees function should be depicted.

While the literature surrounding the study of lower wage workers has expanded over the past decade, we still do not know much about these workers (Lambert, 1999). We do know that

there has been a massive shift from manufacturing to service which has led to a decline in lower wage workers from 1979 to 1998 (Carnevale & Rose, 2001). However, in Canada, there were still 1.7 million people in lower-paying jobs in 1996, an astounding 31% of the workforce (Janz, 2004). In the United States, this figure was approximately 27.5 million Americans in 2001, 23.9% of the labour force (Appelbaum, Bernhardt & Murnane, 2003). There has been almost no growth in real wages for lower wage workers, (Carnevale & Rose, 2001), meanwhile, the earnings gap between the top and bottom quartiles of workers has been growing over the past 20 years. In the future, lower wage workers will face serious challenges in obtaining economic and social security (Kazis, 2001). While skills have been shown to define earnings and mobility in the new economy, little is known about the learning among lower wage workers (Lambert, 1999).

Lower wage workers have faced significant changes over the past few decades. Traditional career ladders are now less common. Lower-skilled workers cannot easily advance simply by staying on the job and advancing up through seniority (Kazis, 2001). Thus, gone are the days of beginning a career in the mailroom and climbing the ladder to a senior position (Kossek et al., 1997). Lower wage workers now face serious challenges including outsourcing, globalization and advances in technology. Globalization has meant a loss of lower-skilled jobs to foreign countries, and advances in technology have meant workers need increased skills (e.g. Holzer, 1996; Kazis, 2001). In addition, globalization has meant an increased economic pressure on organizations to reduce costs. Organizations have used two strategies to handle these economic pressures with respect to lower wage workers. Appelbaum et al. (2003) suggest that organizations have either 1) focused on continuing to use the same workers, but freezing their wages, cutting their benefits and increasing their workloads, or 2) focused on reducing labour

costs at the front line by using temporary workers, by subcontracting or outsourcing, or by relocating jobs to lower-wage areas. Either of these strategies are detrimental to the advancement or mobility of lower wage workers. More and more often, organizations are outsourcing their lower-wage jobs and hiring externally for mid-level jobs that they once filled from within (Kazis, 2001). Lower wage workers are facing frozen wages, and fewer jobs due to outsourcing and the use of temporary workers.

Lower wage workers possess certain demographics, typically reside in positions with certain characteristics and are employed within most types of organizations. Firstly, the demographics and characteristics of lower wage workers will be discussed. Osterman (1999) recently discovered that between one-quarter and one-third of all jobs are lower-wage or lower-skill. However, while the wages are far lower, the work effort is not (Kazis, 2001). Kazis suggests that lower wage workers spend as much time working, but receive less in wages, fewer benefits and have less predictable hours. Lower wage workers typically have significantly less education, are more likely to have young children, and are less likely to be married (e.g. Kazis, 2001; Acs, Phillips & Mackenzie, 2001). These findings were confirmed in Canada by Janz (2004), who found that lower-paid workers tend to be young and female, with an education of high school or less. They often work part-time in service occupations, and their workplaces tend to be small and not unionized. The majority of American lower-wage workers have no academic credentials beyond a high school diploma (Appelbaum et al., 2003).

With respect to mobility, a recent longitudinal study by Carnevale & Rose (2001), which followed the earnings of lower wage workers over a five year period, found that one-quarter moved down or left the workforce, one-quarter remained at the same level and one-half had an increase in earnings. Educational attainment was found to be an important indicator of the ability

to escape lower earnings. In a more recent Canadian study (Janz, 2004), it was found that less than one-half of Canadian workers who had a lower-paying job in 1996 had managed to climb out of it by 2001. Those individuals who did move up were more likely to be young, university-educated men, in professional occupations and industries. Janz (2004) also found other factors which contributed to upward mobility: moving from a non-unionized firm to one with a union, and moving from a smaller firm with fewer than 20 employees to a larger firm with more than 500 employees. In addition, Janz found that men were twice as likely to move up as women.

The positions typically held by lower wage workers are also of interest. Lambert (1999) points out that the fact that lower wage workers tend to move in and out of the workforce frequently could be due to the poor design of their jobs, which is likely a response to their poor preparation and education. Lower wage workers tend to hold jobs that pay far less for equivalent effort, are less stable, offer fewer benefits and are in occupations with lower status (e.g. Kazis, 2001; Acs et al., 2001). However, lower wage positions are critical to the success of all organizations. These jobs often have high customer contact, as many of an organization's least paid employees are the front line people who deal with customers (Kossek et al., 1997). As a result, treating these workers negatively can result in dysfunctional employee behaviours and attitudes, which can subsequently impact the organization's bottom line (Kossek et al., 1997).

The organizations within which lower wage workers are typically employed also have an impact on their learning and development. Many organizations tend to have unspoken policies that lower wage employees should have only limited opportunities to increase earnings, improve skills, get promoted or receive medical benefits (Kossek et al., 1997). A vicious cycle can evolve within which the employer does not want to invest in lower wage employees because they have minimal skills and high turnover, and subsequently, the employees do not invest in their

jobs because their employer does not invest in them (Kossek et al., 1997). With respect to participation in training and development, research has found that worksite services achieve the best participation among lower wage workers (Strawn & Martinson, 2001). Therefore, most organizations are not offering training programs to lower wage workers, and they are unlikely to pursue it on their own. As a result, the access to learning for lower wage workers is limited.

Employers need to start to view lower wage workers as an employable resource, rather than disposable labour (Kossek et al., 1997). Kossek et al. suggests that organizations need to train managers to stop viewing lower wage workers as “throwaways” stuck in lower-level jobs with no upward mobility. The authors also propose that organizations need to start thinking of lower wage jobs as stepping stones to better positions. An organizational vision is suggested which links the employment and development of lower wage workers with the strategic objectives of the organization. What organizations do not realize is that employer programs that invest in employee skills, education, and knowledge are not merely socially responsible actions, but they also benefit the bottom line of the business (Kossek et al., 1997). Jacobs (1994) proposes that when workers have little reason to believe that they will be retained during rough times, or if they believe that they have few prospects for skill development or wage increases, the result is an unreliable, poorly disciplined workforce with inferior skills.

While the demographics of lower wage workers tend to place them in positions with poor job design, the organizations within which they are employed tend to offer these employees little opportunities for development and advancement. Whether their lack of learning is due solely to the organization’s lack of programs and training for lower wage workers, or whether lower wage workers are not motivated to participate in learning programs or initiate them on their own is the focus of this article. While learning new skills has been shown to define earnings and mobility in

the new economy, little is known about the learning among lower-wage workers (Lambert, 1999).

Types of Learning & Learning Theory

Prior to hypothesizing about the learning of lower wage workers, types of learning and learning theory will be discussed. Learning can come in two different forms: formal or informal. Livingstone (2003) recently differentiated between formal and informal learning. According to Livingstone, formal learning is when a teacher/trainer has the authority to determine that people designated as requiring knowledge effectively learn a curriculum taken from a pre-established body of knowledge. Livingstone differentiates informal learning as any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill, which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria. Informal learning is further conceptualized into intentional self-directed learning (undertaken on one's own initiative) and intentional informal training (presence of some form of institutionally-recognized instructor). Informal learning, including both intentional self-directed learning and intentional informal training, can be distinguished from everyday perceptions, general socialization and more tacit informal learning or training by people's own conscious identification of the activity as significant (Livingstone, 2003). Therefore, for learning to be considered intentionally informal (as opposed to other tacit forms of learning and other everyday activities we go through), there must be retrospective recognition of a new significant body of knowledge or skills, and must include the process of acquisition on your own initiative, as with self-directed informal learning, or with the aid of a mentor, as with informal training (Livingstone, 2003).

The theory behind the process of learning is applicable to both informal and formal learning. Perhaps the most well-known and widely accepted theory of learning is Bandura's

social learning theory (1977). This theory proposes that behaviour influences, and is influenced by both cognitive thought process and environmental contingencies. In other words, learning behaviour has a triadic reciprocal relationship with the individual and the environment. This reciprocal relationship proposes that behaviour is both determined by and affected by environmental consequences, which in turn affect the person's conscious intentions or goals. More specifically, Bandura's social learning theory suggests that learning behaviour is dependent on self-efficacy (the strength of belief in successfully executing the behaviours) and outcome expectancies (belief that the behaviour will produce favourable/unfavourable results).

Self-Efficacy & Outcome Expectancies

Bandura's social learning theory led to two individual-difference variables that mediate the person-environment-behaviour relationship, one of which is self-efficacy. Wood and Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands". Gist and Mitchell (1992) further that definition by conceptualizing self-efficacy as task specific and dynamic. The theory behind self-efficacy is that people who think they can perform well on a task do better than those who think they will fail (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In other words, when individuals believe they are capable of high performance, they are more likely to attempt the appropriate behaviour in order to achieve their goals (Latham & Crandall, 1991). In addition, individuals with low self-efficacy have difficulty coping with environmental demands. In fact, findings have indicated that high self-efficacy is associated with high levels of learning and achievement (e.g. Campbell & Hackett, 1986; Wood & Locke, 1987).

Bandura has suggested four categories of experience, which are determinants of self-efficacy: enactive mastery (personal achievements), vicarious experience (behaviour modeling),

verbal persuasion (from self and others) and physiological arousal (i.e. anxiety, understanding etc.). Gist and Mitchell propose that these factors are compounded by the individual's assessment of the availability of specific resources and constraints for performing the task. This assessment involves consideration of personal and situational factors that affect future performance.

The internal (personal) self-efficacy cues refer to familiarity with a task through personal or vicarious experience, the adequacy of an individual's ability, and whether the individual feels that these abilities are either fixed or can be acquired or improved through additional training and experience (Bandura, 1988; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). On the other hand, the external self-efficacy cues pertain to the task itself, and they indirectly influence self-efficacy through their evaluation by the individual (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). These external cues include considerations of the degree of interdependence and the amount of resources required to complete the task successfully (Bandura, 1988). Another external cue pertaining to any task is its complexity (Campbell, 1988; Wood, 1986). Equally important is the task's environment that includes the amount of risk or danger in the setting, physical conditions, and the geographic setting (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Other environmental factors that influence learning are social in nature in that they are derived from interactions with trainers, peers and supervisors (Latham & Crandall, 1991). These social factors, in turn, can have a positive or an adverse effect on self-efficacy.

Another critical external cue is derived from external verbal persuasion, which includes feedback or instruction about abilities (Bandura & Cervone, 1986). Of the utmost importance are the credibility, expertise, trustworthiness and prestige of the person doing the persuasion (Bandura, 1977). Other persuasive discussions may lack specific information about the individual's ability and focus primarily on convincing an individual, through emotional or

cognitive appeals that he or she can perform a task at a certain level (Schunk, 1983, 1984; Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

The effect of self-efficacy on enhancing the transfer of learning is one of the most consistent findings in training research (Mathieu, Tannenbaum & Salas, 1993; Saks, 1997; Haccoun & Saks, 1997). Not only has self-efficacy been shown to predict learning outcomes, but it has also been shown that self-efficacy can be learned (Frayne & Latham, 1987; Gist, 1989; Gist, Stevens, & Bavetta, 1991). In other words, beliefs about initial ability levels are both critical and malleable (Haccoun & Saks, 1997). Therefore, the findings on self-efficacy that are pertinent to this paper are that 1) self-efficacy affects the learning process; 2) self-efficacy is malleable and can be learned; and 3) levels of self-efficacy are affected by both internal (i.e. skills and abilities, personality) and external (i.e. work environment, persuasion from others) factors. As mentioned previously, high self-efficacy is associated with high levels of learning and achievement. Due to their lack of resources, personal achievements, vicarious experience and verbal persuasion from oneself and others, lower wage workers are proposed to have low self efficacy. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

H1: Lower- wage workers have relatively lower self-efficacy which negatively impacts their propensity to engage participation in learning activities.

The other individual-difference variable that mediates the person-environment-behaviour relationship is outcome expectancies (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986). Outcome expectancies are individual beliefs about whether particular behaviours will lead to desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1986). In other words, it is the belief that behaviour will produce favourable/unfavourable results. Individuals may believe that they are capable of performing a specific behaviour (have high self-efficacy), but may choose not to do so because they believe it will produce little or no

results, possibly in the areas of pay or promotion (Latham & Crandall, 1991). High outcome expectancies should therefore be created, possibly through pay and promotion, so that individuals are motivated to learn and demonstrate the acquired behaviour. Heyes & Stuart (1996) found that training was most likely to have a favourable impact on employees' motivation at work where it was linked to promotion prospects, job security and future employment prospects. It should also be noted that environmental constraints can obviously have an adverse effect on an individual's outcome expectancies. These environmental constraints include a lack of job related information, tools and equipment, materials and supplies, required services and help from others, time availability, physical aspects of the work environment, job-relevant authority, and budgetary support (Peters, O'Connor & Eulberg, 1985; Latham & Crandall, 1991).

As mentioned previously, outcome expectancy is the belief that behaviour will produce favourable/unfavourable results. Since it has been proven that lower wage workers rarely make a significant upward movement in their career, their outcome expectancy of learning is likely low. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

H2: Lower- wage workers have a relatively lower outcome expectancy which negatively impacts their propensity to engage participation in learning activities.

As widely accepted as Bandura's social learning theory are the individual-difference factors that affect an individual's motivation to learn and transfer of learning. However, even with high levels of self-efficacy and high outcome expectancies, an individual must first have access to learning opportunities and resources.

Access to Learning

Access to learning opportunities and resources is as important in the learning process as self-efficacy and outcome expectancies. Demographic, organizational, job and individual factors all contribute to the number of learning opportunities available to an individual. Whether or not all groups have similar access, or whether some groups receive more access to learning is of interest.

Demographic changes in the workforce composition are forcing organizations to reassess their attitudes towards training (Latham & Crandall, 1991). The nature of the job market an organization faces has an impact on the amount of training it provides (Greenhalgh & Mavrotas, 1994). Five demographic changes are likely affecting the amount of and type of training in organizations: 1) the shortage of skilled entry-level workers; 2) an increase in the number of minority workers; 3) an increase in the number of women in the workforce; 4) an increase in the number of workers over 40 years of age (Latham & Crandall, 1991); and 5) the growth in contingent workers.

Offermann and Gowing (1990) propose that the 'baby bust' generation will be unable to fill all of the entry-level vacancies produced by the vacating 'baby boom' generation. As a result of the labour shortage, an increasing number of organizations are likely to place an emphasis on basic training programs. In addition, the shrinking labour pool has made the selection of skilled workers more difficult and has compelled organizations to invest in training and re-education programs (Offermann & Gowing, 1990). Demographic trends also suggest an increase in the number of minority workers (Offermann & Gowing, 1990). This has implications for organizations who will be required to, again, offer more basic training. In addition, the increase in the number of women in the workforce also has implications for organizations in the way they train their employees because differences in the background of males and females may affect the

type of training required (Latham & Crandall, 1991). Fourthly, the increase in the number of workers over 40 years of age means that organizations may have to readjust their training and retraining programs to suit an older workforce, while keeping in mind that the self-efficacy of older workers may be lower (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Lastly, the growth in contingent workers may also contribute to reduced training opportunities as part-time workers are less likely to receive training (Frazis, Gittleman & Joyce, 2000). The reluctance to train contingent or part time workers may be partly due to the fact that employers may select trainees based upon their likelihood of staying with the firm long enough to repay investments in formal job training (Berg, 1970; Spence, 1974). These five demographic trends have implications for the training that organizations are providing, and thus are affecting individuals' access to learning opportunities. Specific implications for each of these groups are discussed below.

While demographic trends are affecting the amount of and types of training organizations are offering, specific organizational characteristics are also having an effect. For example, large employers are more likely to provide training than smaller firms (for example, Albaramirez, 1994; Elias & Healey, 1994; Greenhalgh & Stewart, 1987; Storey & Westhead, 1997). Westhead (1998) found that, specifically, organizations with over 100 employees are significantly more likely to provide on-the-job and off-the-job training for their employees. This could be due to the fact that a considerable proportion of owners/managers of small firms, particularly those with minimal formal educational qualifications may be ignorant or unaware of the variety of training schemes available (Greenhalgh & Stewart, 1987; Fuller, Murphy & Vickerstaff, 1991; Birley & Westhead, 1992; Westhead, 1998). An alternative explanation is the market forces which could affect the lower provision of job-related formal training in small firms (Westhead, 1998). This could be because large firms have access to cheaper capital to finance

investment in training (Hashimoto, 1979) or that large firms have a greater pay-off from training because of their size (Doeringer & Piore, 1971). Because small firms usually require customized training courses which meet their specific needs, the cost of providing a training course to a small number of employers is much higher than providing a standard training package to a large number of employees in a large firm (Gunderson, 1974; Fuller et al., 1991; Lynch, 1994; Westhead, 1998). Given the growth in small firms, there are future implications for reduced training opportunities (Kapsalis, 1996). However, organizations of all sizes are also reacting to changing requirements and market challenges. In fact,

“Major investments in human capital, both in the form of education and workforce training and in the form of research and development activities, appear to be an increasingly indispensable condition for enabling firms to move towards new markets...” (Buechtemann & Soloff, 1994; p.243).

In addition to the size of the organization, there are other organizational factors that impact the provision of training. For example, subsidiary organizations have more training than independent companies because their parent companies provide resources, information and technical assistance (O’Farrell, Hitchens & Moffat, 1993; Osterman, 1995; Westhead, 1998).

Similarly, the age of the organization could also have an effect. Recently established organizations usually utilize newer technologies and have higher skill requirements (Baldwin et al., 1995; Westhead, 1998). Likewise, a growing business may train new recruits as they join the business (Westhead, 1998). However, older organizations tend to have more established and dense networks, and may have better knowledge about where training would be most useful (Baldwin, Gray & Johnson, 1995; Westhead, 1998). Westhead (1998) found that organizations less than ten years old were more likely to provide some type of training. Westhead also found

that more established organizations, between 21 and 50 years old, are more likely to allow their employees to attend on-the-job training courses. In addition, organizations that expect future recruitment difficulties are more likely to train their existing employees (Fuller et al., 1991; Elias & Healey, 1994; Westhead, 1998).

The job or current type of work also has implications for the access to learning opportunities (Altonji & Spletzer, 1991). In many countries, there has been a gradual reduction in the number of mass-production jobs with increasing job complexity and skill requirements now being typical of all employees (Westhead, 1998). The type of jobs that organizations now possess impacts the access to learning that employees receive. Altonji and Spletzer (1991) found that the incidence of training varies positively with the verbal, math and clerical skill requirements of an occupation but negatively with manual skill requirements. They also found that occupations with large amounts of specific vocational preparation have a higher probability of off-premises training and financial assistance for after-hours education, and a lower probability of on-the-job training and informal training. Their results also indicated that the quantity of training received is positively influenced by math skill requirements and specific vocational preparation but negatively influenced by skill requirement.

In addition to demographic, organizational and job characteristics, individual characteristics also play a role in the access to learning opportunities. Participation in training may be influenced by group membership. For example, in Australia, those with disabilities or born in non-English speaking countries gain less training and development than others (Tharenou, 1997). In addition, blacks are far less likely to receive training than whites (Duncan & Hoffman, 1979; Weiss, 1988). These studies report that there are large differences in the amounts of training received on the current job by white men compared to other workers.

Similarly, studies of the determinants of job training generally find that men are more likely to receive training than women (Altonji & Spletzer, 1991; Royalty, 1996). Altonji and Spletzer (1991) also found that women receive less training than men. Royalty suggests two explanations for this pattern. It could be differential access to training opportunities due to discrimination against women. Another possible explanation is that gender differences in job or labour market attachment create different incentives for human capital investment on the part of men and women or for investment in men and women by their employers.

Another finding of the impact of individual characteristics on access to learning is consistent with human capital theory. Human capital theory predicts that workers' expected investment horizons are important determinants of the probability of receiving training (Royalty, 1996). Jennings (1996) found that firms are more likely to select trainees who display good job performance, have an interest in training, have a need for training, possess greater job experience and higher seniority. Employers may be more inclined to invest in training workers who have higher education as this educational attainment may serve as an indicator of aptitude or ability to benefit from further training (Berg, 1970; Spence, 1974). Altonji and Spletzer (1991) found that post-secondary education has a strong relationship with training, and conclude that there is now strong evidence that workers with more education receive more training in the workplace. In addition to the demographic changes occurring, the demographics of lower wage workers, the positions they hold and the organizations within which they work all have an impact on their access to learning resources. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

H3: Due to their individual demographics, the characteristics of their positions and the organizations within which they work, the access to resources for lower wage

workers is relatively limited, which in turn reduces their propensity to participate in learning activities.

The differential training of some employee groups over others is a significant issue in terms of access and equity in society (Tharenou, 1997). Whether it is due to demographic, employer, job or individual characteristics, there are many factors that play a role in the opportunities for learning that an individual receives. However, despite the fact that access to learning is key to an individual's career development and progression, lower-wage workers' access to learning is limited.

Social Capital as a Moderator

While an individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectancies and access to learning have been shown to affect the level of learning an individual receives, there is potentially a moderating variable in this relationship. This potential moderating variable is social capital. While social capital has been studied for decades, it has recently become one of the most popular concepts in sociological theory (Portes, 1998). From its original definition of "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248), several other definitions and constructs have evolved. Coleman (1988) defined social capital in terms of its role in the creation of human capital. Baker (1990) further defined the concept as a resource derived from social structures which individuals use to pursue their interests. Despite these different definitions, consensus is growing in the literature that social capital stands for "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes, 1998, p. 6).

Three attempts have been made to conceptualize social capital theory, all of which are pertinent to this paper (Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 1999). Research began in 1973 with Granovetter's attempt to conceptualize social capital. The result of Granovetter's work was "weak tie" theory that focuses on the strength of the social tie used by a person. It was proposed that the information possessed by any one member of a network is likely to be either shared quickly or already redundant with the information possessed by the other members. Burt's (1992) approach to social capital theory involved a "structural holes" approach whereby social capital focuses not on the characteristics of the individual's direct ties, but on the relations among the alters in the individual's social network. The third approach in the conceptualization of social capital theory is social resources theory (Lin, Ensel & Vaughn, 1981a, 1981b). Lin, Ensel & Vaughn focused on the social resources in the individual's social network, defined by the wealth, status, power and social ties of those persons who are directly or indirectly linked to the individual. They propose that the concept of social resources encompasses two components: "social relations and the resources embedded in positions reached through such relations" (p. 395). Seibert et al. suggest that the two latter theories each claim to supersede the earlier theory. These theories are not mutually exclusive and function together because they focus on different points in the process of accumulating social capital (Seibert et al., 1999).

Research on the consequences of social capital theory has included academic performance, intellectual development, sources of employment, occupational attainment and career success (Portes, 1998). Learning is a critical aspect of all of these variables, and hence, our hypothesis is that learning is also a consequence of social capital. While we are not proposing that learning is a direct consequence of social capital theory, we are proposing that it

moderates the known antecedents of learning, namely self-efficacy, outcome expectancies and access to learning. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

H4: Social Capital is a moderating variable in the relationship between self-efficacy, outcome expectancies and the propensity to participate in learning activities.

Based on the concept of social capital as defined as the “wealth, status, power and social ties of those persons who are directly or indirectly linked to the individual”, it is proposed that lower wage workers have low levels of social capital. Lower level jobs have constrained skill levels and isolation between workers (Boggis, 2003), thus reducing opportunities for social capital development. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

H5: Lower- wage workers have a relatively lower level of social capital, which negatively impacts their propensity to participate in learning activities.

Why Learning is Important

Subsequent to learning theory, access to learning opportunities and the role of social capital being explained, why learning is important should be explained as well. Learning is important at two levels, to the performance of an organization and to the success of an individual’s career. Westhead (1998) discusses several reasons why learning is important: 1) it ensures stronger long-term national economic performance (Worswick, 1985); 2) it reduces labour mobility (Elias, 1994); 3) it improves employee motivation (Heyes & Stuart, 1996); 4) it improves the internal efficiency of small and medium sized organizations (Addison & Siebert, 1994); 5) it improves business factor productivity (Bishop, 1994; Steedman & Wagner, 1989); and 6) it improves business performance (Lynch, 1994).

Most of the variance in career mobility patterns is related to individual-level variables, which include skills and ability (Vardi, 1980). For example, Hall defined careers as “the

individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life" (Hall, 1976, p.4). A major determinant of career mobility for the individual is the match between the criteria for mobility and the characteristics of the individual (Anderson, Milkovich & Tsui., 1981). Upward mobility is contingent partly on ability (Vardi, 1980) and learning is critical to increased ability.

The impact that learning has on career mobility is impacted by other factors as well. Gunderson and Riddell (2001) assessed the impacts of training on wage and employment gains and determined that basic skills training had no impact while institutional classroom training had a small positive impact, especially for youths and females who were re-entering the workforce. Their research showed that industrial, work-related training combined with work experience had the largest positive impact. They found that the largest gains were found in training for skills that were short in supply yet high in demand. They established that gains were greater for individuals who already had higher skill levels and were advantaged in the labour market. The gains from training tend to be greatest in a more buoyant labour market. In addition, Levine (1998) found that employees who received high levels of training were relatively unlikely to quit. This phenomenon has been explained both in terms of increased job satisfaction as a result of training and by an increased feeling of employee commitment to the employer due to the employer's investment in the employee. The impact of training on career mobility can also be affected by the type of work. Osberg, Apostle and Clairmont (1986) found that the training of peripheral workers increased their mobility while training of core employees reduced mobility.

Most research findings consistently find that level of education is important to the mobility of an individual (Dalton, 1951; McClennan, 1967; Moore, Miller & Fossum, 1974). Thus, learning is key to an individual's career success. Lack of adequate education and skills

can block further career movement (Vardi, 1980). Skilled workers are in a more powerful bargaining position regarding work rules and wages (Osterman, 1984). Therefore, learning acquisition contributes to career mobility, and provides a sense of job security to the employee.

Making the Connection: How Being a Lower Wage Worker Affects Learning in the Workplace

As mentioned previously, whether the lack of learning among lower wage workers is due solely to the organization's lack of programs and training for those employees, or whether lower wage workers are simply not motivated to participate in learning programs or initiate them on their own is the focus of this article. Maurer, Pierce and Shore's (2002) theory proposes that employee motivation to learn is contingent on perceived benefits and the relationship with their manager, and is moderated by perceived organizational support, factors which likely lower among lower wage workers. While we know that workplace education is critical to a worker's capacity to prosper in a rapidly changing economy (Ahlstrand, Armbruster, Bassi, McMurrer & Van Buren, 2001), participation among learning activities is low when left up to lower wage workers to pursue it on their own. Also hindering the learning of lower wage workers is the probability that workplace education is directly proportionate to wage and education levels (Ahlstrand et al., 2001). And, while learning new skills has been shown to define earnings and mobility in the new economy, little is known about the learning of lower-wage workers (Lambert, 1999).

How the demographics of lower wage workers affect their access to learning resources has been discussed thus far. However, the lack of learning among lower wage workers may also be explained using the other factors within the model proposed in this article. The demographics explained in this article also likely have an impact on the self-efficacy, outcome expectancies, and social capital of lower wage workers. Access to learning resources and low self-efficacy,

outcome expectancies and social capital, will negatively impact the level of learning an individual participates in. Thus, the following five hypotheses have been developed:

H1: Lower- wage workers have relatively lower self-efficacy which negatively impacts their propensity to engage participation in learning activities.

H2: Lower- wage workers have a relatively lower outcome expectancy which negatively impacts their propensity to engage participation in learning activities.

H3: Due to their individual demographics, the characteristics of their positions and the organizations within which they work, the access to resources for lower wage workers is relatively limited, which in turn reduces their propensity to participate in learning activities.

H4: Social Capital is a moderating variable in the relationship between self-efficacy, outcome expectancies and the propensity to participate in learning activities.

H5: Lower- wage workers have a relatively lower level of social capital, which negatively impacts their propensity to participate in learning activities.

Sample

The sample for this field study will consist of 10 light manufacturing plants and 6 nursing homes. The light manufacturing plants typically have 50 to 100 employees, while the nursing homes typically have 25-40 employees. All workplaces are unionized, while each location has its own collective agreement. (See a summary of the profiles in Table 1). The positions at these workplaces are typically lower wage jobs, defined as having less than \$451.69 in weekly earnings (Janz, 2004).

Methods

This study consists of four stages. The first stage includes interviews with the union representatives from each workplace. These interviews involved questions pertaining to the workplace surrounding workforce composition, union-management relations, turnover, pay rates, mobility and turnover. See Table 1 for a summary of those interviews, and Appendix A for more detailed descriptions of the workplaces involved in the study.

Table 1. Summary profiles of workplaces included in the study.

Manufacturing Sector										
	Product	# Ees	# of Females	# of Minorities	Avg. Age	Union-Mgmt Relations	Turnover	Pay Range	Mobility	Training
1	Windows, Blinds, Shutters; Standard Work	310	1/3	99%	25-30	Good	Low	Class 1- \$8.25/hr to Class 13 \$20+/hr	Yes (usually one class at a time)	No (only 10 days when starting a new job)
2	Research Firm	30	55%	25%	40+	Good	Low	\$11.47/hr to \$15.71/hr	None	Great deal of initial training
3	Mattresses	108	20%	99%	40	Very Good	Very Low	\$9.96/hr to \$30/hr (piece rate)	Yes (can move up to a piece rate job)	On-the-job training initially
4	Furniture	140	50%	75%	30-35	Very Poor	Low	\$11.15/hr to \$25-30/hr	Yes, for males (can move from general labourer to upholsterer, women remain as sewers)	None at all
5	Mattresses	150	50%	98%	30	Poor	Low	\$10.50/hr to \$21/hr (piece rate)	Can move up to piece work	No
6	Doors (Residential)	65	0%	90%	n/a	Good	Low	\$10/hr to \$14/hr	Yes (usually one class at a time)	Initial on-the-job training
7	Custom Furniture	60	60%	50%	All ages	Good	Low	\$9/hr to piece rate	Can move up to piece work	Yes – apprentice program
Healthcare Sector										
1	Nursing Home	45	90%	50%	30-50	Poor	Very Low	\$10.87/hr to \$14.31	No promotion at all	1-2 orientation days

The second stage of the study will involve focus groups. There will be four focus groups held, for the Manufacturing and Healthcare sectors, each with one randomly-chosen employee from each workplace. The same questions which were posed to the union representatives surrounding mobility and training will be posed to the focus groups. See Appendix B for a list of the questions. The responses from these focus groups will be analyzed, and subsequently used to aid in the development of the survey questionnaire. The focus groups will be followed by a pre-test, and finally the administration of the questionnaire to all employees in each of the workplaces. After the responses have been compiled and analyzed, two additional focus groups will be held. The intention of these focus groups is to aid in the explanation of the findings from the survey.

Conclusion

Learning, whether formal or informal, is critical to the career progression and job security of an individual, and also to the performance and success of an organization. Learning theory explains, in part, the amount of learning an individual participates in and acquires. An individual's self-efficacy, impacted by persuasion from oneself and significant others, and expectancy outcomes both play critical roles in learning. Equally important is the amount of learning opportunities and resources an individual has access to. In turn, access to learning, self-efficacy and outcome expectancies are directly affected by demographic, organizational, job and individual characteristics, and are moderated by an individual's level of social capital. An individual's social capital is in turn affected by their personal, job and organizational demographics. Learning, and more specifically knowledge and skill development, is key to an individual's career success. The impact of restricted access to learning opportunities, lower

levels of self-efficacy and social capital and low outcome expectancies, on the learning of lower wage workers will be the focus of this field study.

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APPENDIX A

Descriptions of Workplaces Included in the Study

I. Workplaces from the Manufacturing Sector

1. Workplace #1

Workplace #1 is a manufacturer of windows, blinds and shutters. They produce mostly standard products, and supply large retail chains such as Home Depot and Sears. Each product has its own department, and consists of mostly manual labour. There are 310 hourly employees. The company started with only 6 employees, 21 years ago. The workforce is comprised of one-third females, and almost all minorities. There is no evidence of age discrimination, although most employees are in the 20-40 age group. It is generally a younger workplace, with an average age of 25-30.

The employees are generally satisfied. There have been vast improvements made by management (in terms of wages, benefits and communications). Union-management relations are much better since the union began (7 years ago). The employees now work nine hour days (8-5:30). The turnover is low and not a concern, generally only 1-2 employees in a month. This is likely due to the location. There are many apartments nearby, which is ideal since people do not want to commute or relocate.

The jobs are in classes (Class 1 (\$8.25/hr) to Class 13 (\$20+/hr)). After every 6 months, the employees get 30 cents/hr raise. Greater than 125 employees are in class 1. There are also 8 Lead Hands at \$14/hr. The employees can move up from class 1-3 without the job being posted. If a job is posted, the employees can apply to train on the job for 10 days if they think they may not have the skills. Then, if they don't like it, then they can go back to their old job. After a job is posted, it is awarded based on seniority and experience/knowledge.

The company does not supply any training (except for the 10 days of on-the-job training when trying a job). Few employees go to night school, and some even go to second job after their day job. The employees do believe though, that if they had training, they would move up.

2. Workplace #2

Workplace #2 is a research firm and is hired by major clients in Canada (auto, retail, government) to conduct surveys. There are four call centres in Canada. The major call centre in Toronto recently closed and reopened in Thunder Bay, which is not unionized. There are 350 interviewers nationwide (but this location is the only one which is unionized). The union was formed in 1997 when call center was here. Most employees are part time/casual. In 1997, there were 230 employees (including the call center), but now there are only 30 employees. The employees are comprised of 55% female, 25% minority, and an average age of 40+ (many are retirees).

There are two operations. The first group interviews in malls, and are not unionized. The focus of this group is field interviews, and consists of 30 employees. The union representative we spoke with is the Assistant Supervisor of this group, which would be equivalent to being a lead hand. They conduct scientific research – the client selects an area; the interviewer goes to that area; and from 300-400 homes in that area, 11 homes are chosen by a lottery. The interviewer then goes to those 11 homes and has to speak to a specific individual (eldest; 2 eldest etc.). The initial success rate is 6/11 homes. They generally get an additional 2 homes on the next visit and usually have to go back for a third visit to get the last 3 homes. They provide an incentive to the home of \$25 and the interview only takes 25-35 minutes.

Since the union began, there is a difference in the relations with white collar management. They are now very respectful of the union. However, the rest of the company, nationwide, gets the same benefits as was negotiated for the Toronto local. In other words, the company gives the outcomes to all employees to keep everyone happy and in hopes that the other areas will not become unionized. The USWA cannot afford to try to unionize the non-unionized employees because they are so geographically scattered. Now that the new call centre is in Thunder Bay (as with the London call centre), the company hires young college students, and there is no incentive for a union. In addition, they don't have a lot of grievances in this union (and have never lost a grievance). The employees are not covered by workers compensation.

There is low turnover among these employees. Some have been there since 1983/84, and the average employee has been there for over 5 years. The schedule is very flexible, which may explain the low turnover. However, there is no opportunity for career mobility, unless they have degrees, in which case they could move up to research and methodology at the head office. Many employees enjoy the flexibility of the job, and make \$12,000 in mileage plus their hourly rate. Therefore, employees are not very likely to go to head office for a \$28,000/year job. At any time, 2-3 employees are using these jobs to upgrade their skills while they're looking for better jobs.

The skills which are required are personality, good verbal skills and approachability. The employees make \$11.47 to start. After 3 months, they can go up \$.50-\$1.20 (move up one or two steps), at discretion of supervisor, with an annual increase after that of 3% (to a max of \$15.71). 90% of the employees move up one step, 10% move up two steps (typically the high performers). Many employees work elsewhere fulltime and work here 2/3 days per week. Others work 44 hours, start mid-day and work until 9pm. The employees get paid from the time

they leave home to the time they come back home. They do all of their time reporting by phone (honour system), and also get paid for mileage. The employees can work a minimum of 2 days, a maximum of 7 days, and can choose which days they go out. They are generally satisfied and are in this job because it fits in with their lifestyle. Their interviews (generally 2/11) are audited by the company. Also, there is no pressure on the employees to complete successful interviews. However, if they are not successful after 6 months, they send someone else with them to monitor what they are doing wrong.

The employer provides a great deal of initial training, including a full 2 day training course when they start and one full day of classroom training (where they go through the entire study and are provided with manuals, questions etc.). Next, they are trained through Role Playing. The final training step involves the supervisor going with them to their first 11 homes. There is no further training after that, they just get better with time. The only skills they can acquire are to become better interviewers.

Essentially, there is no career ladder within this local, and yet there is low turnover. While this is counterintuitive, the employees are content because of their flexible schedule and benefits.

3. Workplace #3

Workplace #3 manufactures mattresses in an assembly line fashion. There is one day-time shift, and they make over 1300 mattresses per day. Sears is their major customer. There are 108 employees, all of which are unionized, plus an additional 30 non-unionized office staff. The workforce is comprised of 20% women, 99% minorities, and the average age is 40. The union representative we spoke with has been the union chair for 5 years. Initially, there was not a good relationship with management, but it was improved vastly, and now the company respects him

and the union. He is the equivalent of a Lead Hand, has been in industry for 44 years and used to work at Sealy. The company is very good at not discriminating. In fact, they were found to be number one in Toronto in the study by Carolyn Egan.

The minimum wage is \$9.96/hour, which is low for the hard physical work that they do. There is an annual increase every year. There are two classes of jobs: the minimum wage jobs and piece rate jobs. Piece rate jobs can pay up to \$30/hour. When the company is busy, which is usually the case, the minimum wage employees work 44 hours or more; and piece rate work 40 hours per week.

There is a major problem at the workplace right now. The minimum wage employees are not happy with their jobs. They feel that the jobs require a lot of skill, actually the same skills as piece work, except they are not getting paid the same. The union is hoping to change this in the next contract. Another problem is that the company is stuck. They cannot get people to come in and do these jobs for \$9.96/hour because they are so physically demanding, so they usually end up calling agency (temporary) employees to fill these jobs. There are no problems with the piece work employees, since they are just happy to get such a high wage. Sometimes the minimum wage employees can switch jobs, to get some variety. 25% of the employees are minimum wage and 75% are piece rate.

Essentially, the company treats all of its employees very well, and turnover is low (approximately 2%). Everyone starts at min wage and then if a piece rate job comes up, it is posted and given automatically to the person with the highest seniority who wants the job. If they don't have the necessary skills, the company will provide on the job training. Five to six piece rate jobs come open every year. Once an employee gets a piecework job, they don't leave very often, likely because of the \$30/hour rate. After an employee has moved up to piecework,

there is no higher job to go to. It is essentially a one-step career ladder. Some employees have a second part time job outside of Bedford. With respect to training, initially, employees get one week of on the job training for the minimum wage jobs. If they move up to a piece rate job, they get on the job training.

4. Workplace #4

Workplace #4 has 3 furniture plants, one which does leather (140 employees), one which does leather & vinyl (60 employees) and fabric (60 employees). The focus of this interview was the leather plant. There are three shifts, but only one shift does upholstery. When the union was new, the company didn't treat the employees well (it was like slavery). The union organized 7 years ago, with a 75% vote. The 140 employees are comprised of 50% male, 75% visible minorities (Sri Lankan, African, South American, Chinese) and the average age is 30-35 (ranges from 21-50). The women do the sorting, sewing and filling, while the men do the assembly and upholstery. They sell to big stores (e.g. Leons and Costco).

A father & son own the company. The son is in charge now, and has a partner who is the owner of Rubbermaid. Labour-management relations are not good at all. Management doesn't know how to approach the employees. The "F-word" is most common word heard by management in the plant. Hence, the employees don't care about the quality. They feel that all that management wants to see is product out the door. Favouritism occurs, and minorities are harassed (e.g. they get held back from advancement). However, there is low turnover (1-2%). Employees are thinking about leaving because of the way they are treated but with the economy, jobs are hard to find. They would be anxious to leave if they found something better.

Some employees are educated (bachelor and masters degrees), and some are going to school at night (e.g. nursing). However, they start as a general labourer (at \$11.15), and can

move up to upholsterer who starts at \$14.35. The general labourers pack the frame, load and unload. When a posting comes up for an upholsterer, they can apply if they have seniority. There is a 10 day trial period but the company will not train you. Before the union, they did train because they were filling the position with who they wanted. The company has to prove why if they don't want someone after the 10 days. Unfortunately, some employees may remain labourers for 3-4 years before being eligible to apply for a upholsterer. The upholsterer can make up to \$25-30/hr, however skill and ability are needed. Women don't apply because they don't think the company would choose them, since it is all manual labour. With respect to promotion, employees within the department have priority.

After an employee gets the job as an upholsterer (maybe the company only posted it because they were busy), even if they don't need them as an upholsterer later, they still need to pay the employees that rate. Raises go to everyone (3% per year). In addition, the sewers start at \$11.00 base rate, and then after a trial period, they move to a piece rate (which was established by the company through some time studies). The sewers are allowed to make a maximum of 20-30% on top of their base rate, and they can't make lower than their base rate. Right now, they are in arbitration for the time study, because not many make the extra 20-30%. Another problem is that the supervisor gets jealous of the piece rate that the employees are making. There is absolutely no training at all.

5. Workplace #5

Workplace #5 makes mattresses, and is similar to Bedford Furniture. It involves group work, and all 140-150 employees are unionized. The employees are comprised of 50% male, 98% minorities, and the average age is 30. A majority of the employees do not speak English. Most employees have been there 15 years.

Relationship with management is not good. However, things have gotten a little better since management changed. There is low turnover, usually 5-6 per year. In December/January, it gets slow, some get laid off, and don't come back. The company is currently using 5-6 employees from a temporary agency. The different jobs include sewing, foundation (springs), mattress, bagging, shipping & receiving. Employees are generally not happy because the piece work is based on points and they are changing the products and the points (so they have to produce more to make the same money). There are two shifts, and although machines are involved, it is mostly using hands.

When employees join the company, they can start off in any department. They start at \$10.50 per hour with an annual increase. The employees are not happy there but don't want to leave because they would have to start all over at another company making \$10 per hour. Many employees move around the plant (lateral moves). The supervisors are hired from the outside. Therefore, the only opportunity for promotion is to lead hand. However, employees can move to piecework (typically \$21/hour). The job is posted and chosen on basis of seniority. However, if an employee doesn't carry their weight on piece work, then their co-workers get mad because they can only go as fast as the slowest worker (interdependence). This is a problem since some employees want to make lots of money and some employees don't care.

There is basically no training. The supervisors do not train their employees, they have to train on their own. Even when an employee starts a new job, they have to figure it out for themselves. Only 1-2 employees are taking courses outside of work, and several employees have a second job.

6. Workplace #6

Workplace #6 makes front doors for houses. It involves group work, not an assembly line. There used to be more than 120 employees, but now things are slow. Hence, they laid off 28 people one month ago and another 15 more recently. In fact, they have laid off all employees which started after 2001. Every year the company lays employees off, and then calls them back when they are busy again. Now there are 60-65 employees, which are comprised of all men, 5-6 of which are Caucasian. The average tenure is over 10 years. There are several different departments (single doors, side lights, double doors, patio doors).

Most employees are happy since the union started last May. The old plant manager has recently been fired, and the new manager meets with the union every week. The labour-management relationship is good, and the new manager is trying to build a good relationship.

Employees start off at low classification (E) at \$10/hour, and can move up to classification A is \$14/hour. The company posts vacancies and gives to employees based on seniority and skills. There are not a lot of opportunities for movement, since they have laid off so many employees. With respect to training, new employees get some on-the-job-training, otherwise there is no training at all.

7. Workplace #7

Workplace #7 makes custom furniture (some couches sell for \$10,000!). They only do custom work, and make the couches after they are ordered by the customer. There are different departments (framing, material cutting, sewing, upholstering). There are 60 employees, comprised of 40% male, over 50% minorities, and are of all ages. Most employees speak English.

The union has a good relationship with management, and there is mutual respect. The union has been there for a very long time. There is very low turnover. General labour may quit if they find something better, but generally after being there three months, employees tend to stay with the company. Employees stay because of tenure. They don't want to leave and work somewhere else for \$10/hour to start.

Some jobs, such as upholsterers, are piecework. Their wage varies so much: they make \$100 on a \$10,000 couch but if it takes them longer than they thought, they still only make \$100. The upholsterer has to make the couch exactly as the customer wants it, right down to within an inch of thickness. Most employees would rather not do piecework because they can just go home at the end of the day and their pay doesn't vary. There are no incentives for the employees, other than an annual raise.

Employees typically start as a general labourer at \$9-10/hour, and are essentially a gopher. The jobs vary with sex (males are upholsterers and females do sewing and cleaning). When a position comes open, anyone can apply, and they are given on the basis of seniority. If two people want the job, the company will try both and pick the best employee.

With respect to training, there are usually 1-2 employees that are put as apprentices on higher jobs to learn. A new employee also receives 2-3 weeks of on the job training at start. If a new job is posted but the employee doesn't have the skills, they can apply to be an apprentice.

II. Workplaces from the Healthcare Sector

1. Nursing Home #1

Nursing Home #1 is a privately run nursing home that opened in 1987. Some employees have been there since then, and the average tenure is 10-15 years. There are 45 employees in

total (25 full-time, 20 part-time). There are only 3 males, and the employees are comprised of 50% minorities. The average age is 30-50. Some employees started as students at age 14-16, and are still there and now in their low-20s. The part-time employees almost get full time hours and would want to get full time if they could. The part-time average age is 22, and the company accommodates students' schedules. The types of employees include mostly Floor Aides which include duties such as taking care of residents; bathing; dressing; dental hygiene; feeding, in addition to Maintenance; Dietary; and Housekeeping employees.

The management relationship depends on who is the administrator at the time. The administrator changes every 6 months because the company is not satisfied with them. Typically, management does not want to abide by the union contract. The union started in 1995/96, and has helped things a lot. When the union first started, the company really fought the union, and it went to arbitration.

Before the union, the wage rate was \$6 but there was a 10-43% wage increase across the board when the union came in, which ended up costing the company \$750,000. The Floor Aides start at \$10.87 per hour, and go up by about .20 per year. By their 2nd year, they are making \$11.89/hour. The highest paid position to start is maintenance at \$13.27 per hour, going up to \$14.31 after being there for 2 years.

There is no promotion at all, only lateral moves. Employees can start at any position. The only position to move up to is the Supervisor, which is also unionized. There are 8 Supervisory positions, and the positions are posted and awarded based on seniority and knowledge. As mentioned above, the average tenure is 10-15 years. Employees stay because of really good working conditions. Nobody is watching over them and they do their own thing. The administrator doesn't get in until 12 noon and the supervisors are unionized. So despite the

low wages, they stay since they have practically no supervision. Hence, the low turnover. However, a lot of employees have 2 jobs.

With respect to training, there are 1-2 orientation days when an employee first starts. Anytime an employee starts a new job, it usually involves just 1 day of on the job training, and nothing formal. If the supervisor's job comes open, the company will provide training. There will be a 3-6 month trial period. If the company feels that individual is unsatisfactory, the person goes back to original position. Outside of work, some employees go to school for health care aides (as opposed to Floor Care Aides). These positions would be at other nursing homes and pay much more money. It is essentially the same job, but at Meadowcroft they call them Floor Aides so they don't have to pay them as much money. Generally speaking, the employees would want more training, if the company would pay for it.