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# Man's Search for Meaning: The Case of Legos Revisited

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Recipient of Undergraduate Research Scholar Award

## Introduction

- Affinity for labor considers the extent to which one's labor is successful (Norton et. al., 2012)
- Increased effort and the desire to seek out challenges is associated with the development of self-efficacy and resilience (Dweck, 2002)
- Repetitive tasks have been associated with: decreased alertness, impairment of muscular coordination, and daydreaming. Job rotation will keep the person from suffering the negative consequences of low activation (Hackman, 1980)

## Research Question & Hypothesis

- What are the effects of perceived meaning, levels of resilience, and job-rotation on productivity and labor supply?
- I hypothesize that greater perceived meaning, levels of resilience, and job-rotation will have a positive effect on productivity and labor supply.

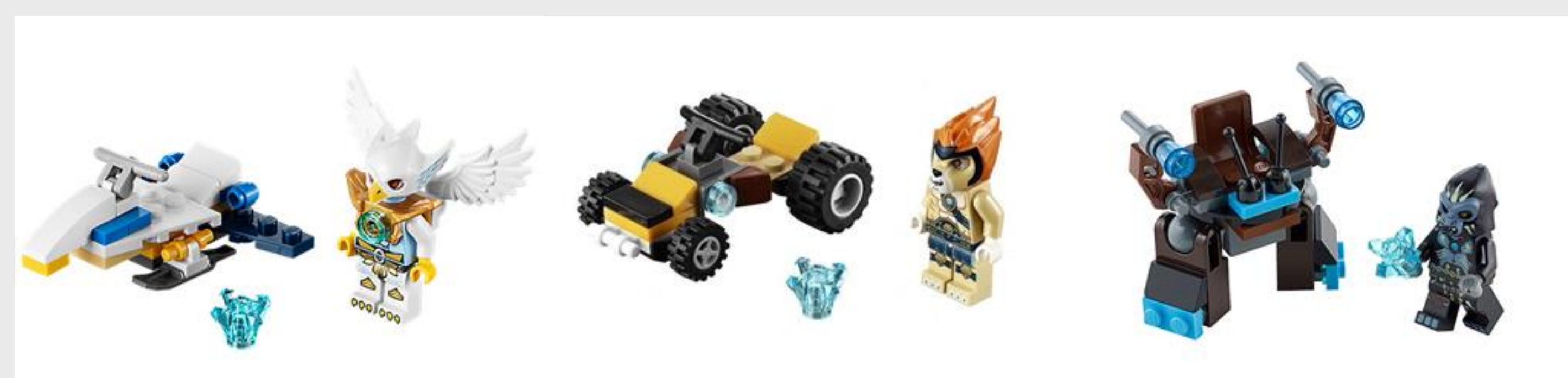
## Methodology

### Participants

- 40 male Andrews University students
- 18 years of age or older
- Convenience sample of volunteers from the behavioral sciences research subject pool

### Measures and Materials

- Demographic questionnaire
- 14-Item Resilience Scale (Wagnild, 2010)
- Ewar, Leonidas, and Gorzan Chima Lego models



## Procedure

- Replication and extension upon *Man's search for meaning: The case of Legos* (Ariely et. al., 2008)
- Subjects randomly assigned to one of four conditions
- 20 minutes to build as many Legos as they can or want to, receiving \$2 for the first one they build, and \$0.11 less for each one thereafter

## Procedure contd.

- Following the original study, subjects in the first two conditions will build the same Chima Lego model – Ewar
- Sisyphus condition – each Lego broken apart after built
- Meaningful condition – each Lego left alone after built
- In the extended study (X), subjects will build three different Chima models in rotation
- Sisyphus X – each Lego broken apart after built
- Meaningful X – each Lego left alone after built

## Results

Condition	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sisyphus	10	2	17	8.5	3.808
Meaningful	10	3	13	7.7	3.561
Sisyphus X	10	2	9	4.7	2.669
Meaningful X	10	4	10	6.8	2.530

Table 1. Descriptive of Labor Supply

Productivity and Meaning	
Mann-Whitney U	181.500
Z	-.501
Sig.	.617
*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).	

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U analysis of Productivity and Job-rotation

Labor Supply and Meaning	
Mann-Whitney U	172.000
Z	-.763
Sig.	.445
*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).	

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U analysis of Labor Supply and Meaning

Productivity and Rotation	
Mann-Whitney U	117.500
Z	-2.232
Sig.	.026*
*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).	

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U analysis of Labor Supply and Meaning

Labor Supply and Rotation	
Mann-Whitney U	122.000
Z	-.2.127
Sig.	.033*
*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).	

Table 5. Mann-Whitney U analysis of Labor Supply and Meaning

## Results contd.

Condition	Spearman's rho	Significance
Sisyphus	.461	.180
Meaningful	-.152	.676
Sisyphus X	.289	.418
Meaningful X	.539	.108
Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

Table 6. Spearman's rho correlation between Labor Supply and Resilience

Condition	Labor Supply	Productivity
Rotation	5.5	3.420
No Rotation	7	2.740
Meaningful	7	2.850
Sisyphus	7	2.815

Table 7. Median scores of Labor Supply and Productivity in each condition

## Discussion

- Perceived meaning has no significant effect on productivity or labor supply
  - Time-limit – functional stress and Parkinson's Law (Latham & Locke, 1975)
- Job-rotation has a positive effect on productivity, and a negative effect on labor supply
  - Specialized assignment strategy (Staats & Gino, 2012)
- No relationship between resilience and productivity or labor supply
- Future research possibilities with female subjects, autonomy, and contingent rewards

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