

CHAPTER IV

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The American Work Culture Reflected on the Main Character in *Five Nights at Freddy's* Movie (2023)

4.1 Intrinsic Elements

4.1.1 Character and Characterization

4.1.1.1 Direct Characterization of Mike

4.1.1.1.1 Mike as Protective Brother

Mike's role as a protective brother is a clear example of direct characterization, shown through explicit dialogue and narrative cues. He is portrayed as a caring and responsible sibling who deeply values his sister, Abby. The central conflict arises when their aunt, Jane, attempts to take custody of Abby, claiming she can provide better care. Although Jane's intentions appear sincere, both Mike and Abby resist her interference, revealing Mike's unwavering commitment to keeping his sister safe under his guardianship. The scene is described with pictures and dialogues below:

Mike	: You're right, it's not. It's just, uh... I don't know, it's nice that we can finally agree about something.
Abby	: (softly) Are you gonna give me away?
Mike	: Abs, no, I...

(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:48:15 – 00:48:43)

Based on the dialogue, Mike is happy. Therefore, Abby can have an agreement on a matter. Both Mike and Abby agree that Abby cannot be taken away from Mike's care if Abby were to be given to Aunt Jane. The dialogue shows that Mike knows that giving away Abby to Aunt Jane only causes more trouble for Abby.

Another scene that highlights Mike's protective nature occurs when he saves Abby from the animatronics robots possessed by the spirits of murdered children under the control of William Afton, the man behind the 1985 killings. When the animatronics attempt to harm Abby, Mike bravely intervenes, using a stun gun given by Vanessa to stop them and ensure his sister's safety, demonstrating his unwavering role as her guardian. The scene and dialogue are described below:



Picture 4.1



Picture 4.2

Picture 4.1-4.2 Mike Protects Abby from Chica
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 01:30:43)

Mike : Leave her alone!

The picture, taken from a medium shot, illustrates Mike confidently wielding a stun gun at the animatronic to protect Abby, and the increase in vocal intensity and tense background sound enhances the emotional weight of these scenes. Moreover, based on the dialogue, it is presented that Mike is confident about saving Abby from

the animatronic. Conclusively, Mike knows he is showing moral rectitude by protecting and saving Abby.

4.1.1.2 Indirect Characterization of Mike

4.1.1.2.1 Mike as Traumatic Individual

Mike's trauma is portrayed through indirect characterization, shown through his recurring dreams, emotional instability, and obsession with his brother's abduction. Throughout the film, Mike is haunted by memories of the camping trip where his brother disappeared, believing that dreams can help him recover forgotten details about the incident. In the first scene, this trauma becomes visible when Mike witnesses what he believes to be a kidnapping at the mall where he works. Convinced that history is repeating itself, he violently attacks the man, only to realize later that the supposed abductor is the boy's father. This moment reflects how deeply his past continues to control his present actions, revealing a man trapped between guilt, fear, and an unhealed wound from his brother's loss. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.3 Mike Punches the Man He Believes Abducted the Boy
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:07:31 – 00:07:54)

In Picture 4.3, taken with an extreme long shot, it is revealed that Mike is striking the man whom Mike believed has kidnapped the child. The picture details Mike's

fury at the man who attempts to kidnap the child. Picture 4.2 also reveals Mike's trauma on kidnapping, which later in the movie, will be revealed that Mike has experienced trauma from his brother's abduction.

4.1.1.2.2 Mike as Gullible Individual

Mike's characterization as a gullible individual is shown through indirect characterization, revealed by his actions and decisions rather than explicit dialogue. His naivety becomes clear when, on his first night as a security guard at the Freddy's Fazbear Pizzeria, he falls asleep and dreams of his abducted brother, Garrett. In the dream, he encounters the five missing children controlled by the film's antagonist, William Afton. Desperate for answers, Mike blindly trusts these children and questions them about Garrett's disappearance, demonstrating how his vulnerability and emotional desperation make him easily manipulated by false hope. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.4



Picture 4.5

Picture 4.4-4.5 Mike Dreams of Meeting the Five Missing Children
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:26:23 – 00:26:39)

Picture 4.5, taken from a long shot, reveals Mike questioning the five missing children on whether they know who have abducted his brother. The five missing

children reveal in the pictures are the five animatronics that Mike will face later in the movie. Mike meets the five missing children because he sleeps in the pizzeria, which is related to his brother's abduction. Later in the movie, it is revealed that the five missing children are possessed by William Afton, to harm and kill everyone daring to enter the restaurant, whether they are security guards, children, or trespassers. Picture 4.5 reveals the suspense and frustration of Mike meeting the five missing children, for he sees an anomaly in his dreams.

The peak of Mike's gullibility is shown when he is manipulated by the five missing children into agreeing to give them Abby. Through a distorted version of his recurring dream about Garrett's abduction, they deceive him into believing he can change the past. The details of the original memory, such as Garrett playing with his toy airplane and the spilled Coke, are replaced with a false, idealized version that confuses Mike. Blinded by hope and grief, he accepts the illusion and unknowingly endangers Abby, showing how his longing to fix the past makes him vulnerable to manipulation. The picture and dialogue are described below:



Picture 4.6



Picture 4.7

Picture 4.6-4.7 Mike is Persuaded to Give Abby
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 01:16:13 – 01:16:28)

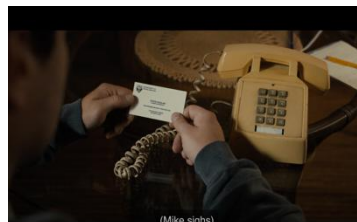
Missing Children One	: We want Abby.
Mike	: Abby?
Garrett	: They love her, Mike. And she loves them.
Mike	: Okay (sniffles).

Pictures 4.46 and 4.7 is taken from a close-up perspective with distorted or soft sound which creates a misleading sense of safety, influencing Mike's perception and judgment. The dialogue reveals Mike finally hearing Garrett's voice after years of his abduction, shown through his hesitant yet trusting expressions, suggesting emotional vulnerability. The scenes reveal Mike's misstep from his role as a protective brother, which he advances his ego of trying to change Garrett's situation but it endangers Abby's situation. The scene shows how Mike's trauma is one of the reasons of Abby's dangers.

4.1.2 Settings

4.1.2.1 Setting of Time

The setting of time of the movie is set in the 2000s era, marked by the extensive use of landline communication, as shown in Picture 4.5 taken by using the close-up method.



Picture 4.8 Mike is Using a Landline Phone to Communicate with His Career Counsellor

(Five Nights at Freddy's, 2023, 00:18:07 – 00:18:09)

Picture 4.8 reveals Mike in using a landline phone to communicate with his career counsellor, Steve Raglan, that he accepts the job offering being a night shift security guard at Freddy's Fazbear Pizzeria.

Another portrayal of the year 2000 is CRT Televisions, as Mike's house uses CRT televisions for entertainment purposes. His house also has a satellite dish, and video cassettes, as described below:



Picture 4.9 Mike's House Uses a CRT TV, a Satellite Dish, and Video Cassettes
(Five Nights at Freddy's, 2023, 00:47:04 – 00:47:09)

Picture 4.9, taken from a medium shot perspective, reveals a powered-on television displaying a cartoon show of a giraffe eating its meal. The picture also reveals that Mike has a satellite dish and video cassettes, implying that watching television is one of the ways Mike can spend time together with Abby.

4.1.2.2 Setting of Place

This movie generally sets its story in Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria. The pizzeria opens in the '80s and is marketed as an amusement centre for families, featuring innovative life-like animatronics capable of responding to real-time social cues such as questions, compliments, and nonverbal communication. However, the

pizzeria soon closes after opening due to five missing children who remains missing in the movie's present day, as described in the following picture:



Picture 4.10 Facade of the Freddy Fazbear's Pizza Restaurant
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:21:21 – 00:21:28)

Picture 4.10 is shot by using extreme long shot to reveal the facade of the restaurant's building. The Freddy Fazbear's Pizza restaurant is the setting of place where the conflicts of the movie emerge.

4.1.2.3 Setting of Social Environment

The social environment of the movie is shown through the pressures in Mike's family and work life. The social environment highlights how personal relationships and external institutions create challenges for the main character. One example appears when Mike talks to a career counsellor about job opportunities. Meanwhile, the issue of custody is handled by the relevant social services, who inform him that maintaining custody of Abby depends on having a stable job and steady income, as the scene is described below:



Picture 4.11



Picture 4.12

Picture 4.11-4.12 Mike Calls the Career Counsellor Regarding Employment
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:18:25 – 00:18:3)

- Mike** : Uh. Yeah, I was just calling to see if that job that you offered was, uh. Was still available.
- Counsellor** : Oh, it absolutely is. Why? Have you had a change of heart?
- Mike** : How soon could I start?

In these scenes, the conversation emphasizes the social pressures placed on Mike. The counsellor offers him a low-wage night guard job, which becomes critical because social services have linked a stable employment to his ability to keep custody of Abby. Mike's quick acceptance of the job shows his desperation and sense of responsibility. This demonstrates how the social environment pushes him into undervalued and precarious labor. The scene also highlights how Mike's personal choices are shaped not only by economic needs, but also by institutional pressures and societal expectations surrounding family responsibilities.

4.1.3 Conflicts

4.1.3.1 Internal Conflict

4.1.3.1.1 Mike's Internal Conflict

The conflict within Mike arises from his struggle to protect Abby while pursuing the truth about his brother's abduction. His obsession with the past keeps

him from focusing on Abby's safety. This conflict intensifies when he works at the pizzeria, where the five missing children manipulate his trauma. Desperate for answers, Mike even asks Abby to communicate with the ghostly children to uncover Garrett's abductor. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.13 Mike Asks Abby to Help Him about Garrett
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 01:04:06 – 01:04:42)

Mike : W-Was it a-a boy with blonde hair?
Abby : (nods).
Mike : Did that boy ever tell you anything about the man driving that car? Anything at all? Okay, just think, think really hard, okay?

The scene uses a medium close-up shot to emphasize Mike's assertive speech act. His dialogue with Abby shows his curiosity about whether she has also seen the five missing children. This moment marks the rising action, where Mike unknowingly leads Abby into danger as the children demand her in exchange for Garrett. Later, Mike admits to Vanessa that working at the pizzeria makes him feel closer to Garrett and that he used Abby to gather information about the abductor. She warns him that involving Abby is dangerous, as being in the pizzeria makes her vulnerable to the animatronics. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.14 Mike Focuses on Finding the Person who Abducted Garrett instead of Protecting Abby

(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 01:10:06 – 01:10:12)

Vanessa : You're not listening.

Mike : Please. Finding this guy that did this is the only thing that matters to me.

Picture 4.14 uses a medium close-up shot highlighting Mike's pleading to Vanessa. It reveals Mike's persistence in knowing who has abducted his brother in the past. The dialogue shows his assertive speech act against Vanessa. The scene shows that Mike is no longer in the dilemma of being a protective brother and combating his traumas, but he also chooses to betray Abby by putting her in danger.

Another step in revealing Mike's lost sense of responsibility for his sister is that Mike ends up buying sleeping pills again. Previously, Vanessa warns Mike not to sleep on the job. He ignores her advice and decides to sleep on the job, just like his first day being a security guard. He is unaware that sleeping in the pizzeria means the risk of being abducted by the animatronics, and being killed in the restraint machine heightens. He buys the sleeping pills to dream about his brother's abduction again, without knowing the risks. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.15 Mike Bought Sleeping Pills to Help Him Meet the Missing Children
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 01:14:10)

Picture 4.15 uses a close-up shot to highlight the suspense of the sleeping pills. The sleeping pills are in front of the computers detailing the interior of the pizzeria, meaning that Mike is sleeping inside the security guard room on his chair.

After Mike eats the sleeping pills, he meets the five missing children accompanied by his family. In his dream he sees a Garrett eating grill burgers with his family. Mike is confused as to why the sequence of the dreams change. He asks them and they tell him that Mike only wants to save Garrett and not to find the man who has abducted him. Their statement gives the twist to the story concerning Mike's intentions. They persuade Mike to give Abby, as in return he can dream about Garrett out of harm's way every time he sleeps. The scene below is described using dialogues:

Mike	: No. I just, I just want to find the man that...
Missing Children One	: You're lying. You want to save Garrett. That's why you're really here. To change what happened. To go back.
Mike	: But I can't. He's gone. They're all gone.
Missing Children One	: Really? You can have this dream every night. You can be together with him again. Like before.

(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 01:15:30 – 01:17:40)

The dialogue reveals that they are telling Mike's real intention of only to save Garrett from the abduction rather than finding the man who has abducted Garrett. The five missing children have also persuaded Mike to dream about Garrett by offering Abby as a human sacrifice. However, later in the movie, it is revealed that they have illicit intentions as they end up attempting to kill Mike and Abby.

4.1.3.2 External Conflict

4.1.3.2.1 Mike's Conflict with Work Environment

The conflict between Mike and his work environment appears because Mike wants to maintain his responsibility as Abby's guardian while struggling to keep a stable job to satisfy social service requirements. His desire to protect Abby and to secure custody of her, pressures him to accept any form of employment, even one that does not align with his emotional state or abilities. While Mike aims to prove that he is a capable and a responsible brother, his emotional instability and recurring trauma interfere with his performance, causing repeated job dismissals and tension with his career counsellor. This contradiction becomes the core of Mike's external conflict throughout the movie.

The external conflict in the movie works around Mike breaking the rules at work. Mike has worked in multiple companies, yet his length of service is far from enough to fill his work portfolio. In the earlier scenes Mike is also dismissed from work due to using violence against a perceived kidnapping man. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.16



Picture 4.17

Picture 4.16-4.17 Mike is Consulting his Career Counsellor Following his Dismissal for Insubordination

(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:08:55 – 00:09:16)

Career Counsellor : Just look at your employment record. Tire Zone, sales associate, two months, terminated. Insubordination. Media World, custodial staff, one week. It's like you're not even trying here, yet you sit before me asking for help. I am just trying to figure out who you are, Mr. Michael Sh...

The pictures use a long shot to reveal Mike who is sitting across his career counsellor to ask help regarding his career. The career counsellor's dialogue reveals Mike's tendency to have short-lived positions. Moreover, the career counsellor not knowing Mike's name reveals that this is Mike's first time of meeting a career counsellor, meaning that Mike is desperate to have a job, and he needs a job quickly.

4.1.1 Theme

The central theme reflected through the intrinsic elements of the movie survival through sacrifice. This theme is constructed through Mike's characterization, conflicts, and settings, which consistently portray work and responsibility as burdens rather than sources of fulfillment. Mike's willingness to accept dangerous and emotionally draining employment reflects how survival within American work

culture often requires individuals to sacrifice personal well-being, emotional stability, and family boundaries.

Another prominent theme is endurance over empowerment. Throughout the film, Mike's perseverance is repeatedly framed as moral strength; however, his endurance does not lead to improved working conditions or emotional healing. Instead, the narrative reveals how American work culture normalizes suffering as part of employment. Thus, the film criticizes a labor system that values persistence while neglecting worker protection and emotional care.

4.2 Extrinsic Elements

4.2.1 Characteristics of American Work Culture in *Five Nights at Freddy's*

4.2.1.1 Mike's Low Wage Security Work

The depiction of Mike's employment at Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria reflects the broader issue of precarious work in American society. In the era of soft capitalism, workers are frequently promised flexibility and autonomy as compensation for economic insecurity and lack of benefits. After World War II, the ideal version of hard work, which was strength, skill, and physical work, was changing to soft work. Soft work emphasizes emotional reward rather than material reward, like how corporations tell their workers that working with their company could bring meaning and fulfillment. The emotional promise replaced material rewards, allowing corporations to pay less while demanding more from their workers. Thus, workers are persuaded to believe that their reward lies in personal meaning, not in

material gain. Mike's acceptance of a low-wage job underlines how individuals in precarious positions are often driven by necessity rather than choice, accepting poor conditions in exchange for survival and familial responsibility.

The characteristic of American work culture reflected in the main character, Mike, in the form of low wage security work. Mike is promised a symbolic reward in his job as a security guard at Freddy's Fazbear Pizzeria. He is promised that the job will give him a flexible office and that he will get to be his own boss. While being told that he can have a sense of belonging to his office, he is still underpaid.

The scene where Mike receives a low-wage security job is when he is offered by his counsellor, Steve Raglan, to be a security guard at Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria for a low wage. The counsellor offers Mike the job due to Mike's record of having short-lived positions. The scene is described in the dialogue below:

Career Counsellor : It's a security gig. Full disclosure: it's not great. Right? High turnover. That's what we call it in the business, but you get to be your own boss. Sort of. And you only have to worry about one thing. Keeping people out. And-and, you know, and keep the place tidy.

(Five Nights at Freddy's, 2023, 00:10:16 – 00:10:33)

Based on the dialogue above, the career counsellor is persuading Mike to accept the low-wage job of being a security guard. To mitigate the fact that Mike is being paid poorly, the career counsellor promises Mike a sense of belonging to his job, that he can be his own boss, and the job does not require strenuous tasks. However,

this is clearly a trick; the reality of the job requires risking one's life. The promised benefits are completely out of sync with both the pay and the workers' safety.

Ultimately, this dynamic mirrors the illusion of empowerment often found in modern service work. The promise of independence conceals structural inequality, as workers like Mike remain trapped in low-paying positions with minimal protection or progression. His acceptance of the job symbolizes the moral compromise of labor under late capitalism, where dignity is bartered for economic stability.

4.2.1.2 Mike's Emotional Labor in the Workplace

Emotional labor refers to the management of feelings to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job. Emotional labor describes how workers are expected not only to perform tasks but to manage their emotions while at work. Workers are demanded to smile, empathize, and project positivity even when they feel tired or unseen. Emotions have become a form of currency in the modern workplace. The more the worker invests emotions in their job, the easier it becomes for management to demand more without offering higher pay or security. Workers learn to discipline their emotions until they feel authenticity itself feels like part of the performance.

The problem with emotional labor is that the labor is invisible yet constant. It drains the worker because it asks people to give what cannot be quantified: their mood, patience, and care. The modern worker is expected to be both efficient and

kind, productive yet endlessly accommodating. In the movie, Mike's struggle to maintain composure while dealing with trauma and night-shift exhaustion exemplifies this form of labor. The American work culture often blurs the boundaries between professional obligations and emotional suppression, demanding workers to present calmness, discipline, and rationality even in distressing conditions. Mike's inability to meet these expectations highlights the human cost of emotional regulation under exploitative work conditions.

The characteristic of American work culture is also reflected in the form of emotional labor in the workplace. In the movie, Mike often sleeps through the shift because Mike is not accustomed to the night shift schedule. Vanessa, a local police officer overseeing the abandoned pizzeria's activity, busts Mike for violating work rules. She busts Mike's bad habits when she examines the restaurant after a vigilante action, and she finds Mike's sleeping pills. After busting Mike's sleeping habits, Vanessa goes to Mike's house and tells him about the trespassing situation and his sleeping habits during his shift. Mike proceeds to tell Vanessa about his abducted brother and how he uses the sleeping pills to meet his brother in his dreams. Mike believes that dreams allow a person to be an active participant rather than a spectator. So, Mike, intentionally, dreams about his brother to search for the details on who abducts his brother. While Mike's action can be considered noble, he has violated work policy as he is supposed to guard the restaurant during his

shift and does not sleep through the night shifts, as Vanessa explains. The scene is described through the dialogue below:

Vanessa : And these?
Mike : I mean, going back to the same dream, the same place as much night after night, it's not easy, so the pills help. Some other things, like familiar sights, familiar sounds.

(Five Nights at Freddy's, 2023, 00:51:26 – 00:51:38)

The dialogue above shows Mike's perseverance in identifying the person abducting his brother. He even goes to the trouble of buying sleeping pills to simplify his efforts to dream about his brother's abduction. While Mike's mission and actions seem virtuous, he is still disobeying the rules of his job, which is, to stay alert and guard the Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria from intruders.

This portrayal of Mike's emotional exhaustion and ethical conflict reflects the burnout crisis prevalent in American labor systems. By forcing employees to internalize professional discipline despite personal suffering, emotional labor becomes a form of self-exploitation. The movie therefore criticizes the normalization of psychological endurance as a measure of work ethic within capitalist frameworks. Furthermore, workers are often denied proper mental health support, highlighting how many companies neglect workers' psychological well-being even when the issues are caused by the work conditions itself.

4.2.2 Challenges of American Work Culture in *Five Nights at Freddy's*

4.2.2.1 Mike's Monotonous Work

Monotonous work is a contradiction of the modern corporation culture. While the corporate culture economy promises creativity, flexibility, and emotional fulfillment, yet the culture produces the opposite. The modern corporation culture only produces repetition, routine, and emptiness. Human workers are only mere extensions of technology, they are performing tasks without a clear purpose, completing motions designed not for meaning but for efficiency. The monotony exposes the hollowness of the corporate promise of workers being told to love their job, but the structure of their job gives workers little to love. The workplace replaces physical repetition with emotional repetition, like emotional labor (constant positivity, endless communication, and enthusiasm). Monotony has not disappeared, but is replaced with a new form. Monotony in the workplace symbolizes a recurring criticism of the American post-industrial labor model, in which repetitive and low-stimulus tasks erode workers' sense of meaning. Mike's night shift embodies this alienation, as he performs duties that are both under-stimulating and devoid of recognition.

Mike's job description of being a security guard is only to keep people from entering the restaurant and to keep the restaurant tidy. The job becomes monotonous as the pizzeria has been closed for decades, and the restaurant is already tidy on Mike's first day. Therefore, there are no physical and emotional

challenges for Mike to grow as an individual, as promised by the soft work culture.

Therefore, Mike often sleeps through the job. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.18 Mike Sleeps Through His Shift
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:55:47)

The scene is shot by using a close-up technique to highlight Mike sleeping through his night shift. The scene also highlights the computers in front of Mike, which displays the interior of the Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria. The context of Mike's sleeping in Picture 4.13 is that Mike is sleeping through the shift after Vanessa warns Mike to stay alert on the job. Because the job is monotonous, which Mike only needs to oversee the pizzeria through surveillance, he sleeps throughout the job. Sleeping on the job is also often viewed as a sign that an employee is not fully dedicated to their work. In this case, Mike believes that falling asleep will not affect the quality of his output. However, he cannot be entirely blamed, as he is trapped in a repetitive job that does not even align with his interests.

This monotonous work metaphorically reflects the broader crisis of labor satisfaction in contemporary America, where automation and surveillance replace creativity and human interaction. Mike's disengagement becomes symbolic of a

generation alienated from meaningful work, trapped in jobs that sustain survival, but it is not a purpose.

4.2.2.2 Mike's Family Dynamics and Support System

In the industrial culture, the family institution is deemed a refuge, a private space where workers could recover from the demands of labor. However, moving into the corporate culture, it is not only demanded the workers' time, but also their emotions and loyalty, making the differentiation between work and home dissolves.

In most case, companies present themselves as corporate families, offering belonging, care, and emotional support. However, the presentation is only a means of securing deeper devotion from their workers. Corporate families are one of the many deceptive features of modern corporate life. Workers are taught to feel at home at work by companies, while at the same time, their real homes grow strained and hollow. This culture results in workers being unable to rely on family as a true support system. The emotional energy once reserved for loved ones is redirected toward employers, projects, and teams. Families in this system often appear fractured or distant, sites of tension rather than refuge. The erosion of work-life boundaries is a central criticism in modern capitalist society, where personal relationships are increasingly strained by economic pressures. Mike's emotional detachment from Abby mirrors the struggles of working-class parents balancing caregiving with precarious employment. The movie situates this within the cultural expectation that emotional stability must persist despite financial collapse.

In the movie, the family dynamics can be analyzed in the scene where Abby refuses to eat dinner while Mike has been already stressed from his job termination and the delinquency note he has received at the door. In Mike's point of view, Mike wants his sister to meet her basic needs even though he has a difficult day. However, Abby thinks that Mike is controlling her life, as she tells Mike that she is not hungry. The scene is described in the dialogue below:

Mike : Come and... Abs, with the day that I'm having, can you just eat some food?
Abby : You're sitting on my friend.
Mike : You know what? I don't care. Do whatever you want.

(Five Nights at Freddy's, 2023, 00:12:28 – 00:13:22)

The dialogue above is an example of work being extended to the private sphere. Mike is expected to be enthusiastic, but he just had a bad day at work. Workers, especially men, become absorbed by the demands of work, emotionally and mentally, so that men have little energy left for spouses, children, or community after a day at work. The consequence of workers having little energy after work is that workers are left isolated; they give themselves to their jobs, yet the jobs do not give them the care that a family is supposed to provide.

This dynamic emphasizes the psychological toll of neoliberal labor structures, which commodify time and emotional capacity. The movie's portrayal of Mike's domestic frustration criticizes the illusion of balance promoted in American work culture revealing how economic precarity undermines genuine familial connection

and personal fulfillment. Even today, many jobs continue to exploit workers to the point of disrupting the dynamic relationships within their families.

4.2.3 Strengths of American Work Culture in *Five Nights at Freddy's*

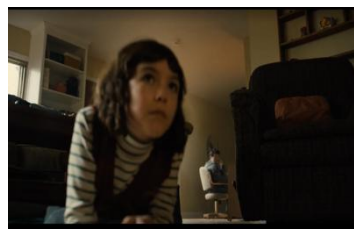
4.2.3.1 Mike's Perseverance in the Face of Danger

In the context of American work culture, perseverance has long been celebrated as a cornerstone of individual success and moral virtue. Rooted in the Protestant work ethic and reinforced by the capitalist ideology of meritocracy, this value emphasizes that hard work and persistence will eventually lead to achievement, regardless of social or structural barriers. The modern workplace presents emotional and psychological pressure instead of physical risks. Workers must remain calm, adaptable, and positive even as their self-concept (like income and value) is under threat. For example, jobs in the service and information economy are often temporary, underpaid, or easily replaced. Being perseverant means enduring uncertainty, insecurity, and constant self-performance in a system demanding devotion while offering little stability. However, in *Five Nights at Freddy's* movie, perseverance takes on a more tragic dimension portrayed not as empowerment, but as endurance within a system that exploits vulnerability.

Mike's determination to continue working, despite repeated job dismissals and emotional trauma, illustrates the harsh reality faced by low-income workers who have internalized perseverance as their only means of survival. His persistence is less about ambition and more about desperation, revealing how the American

Dream's moral foundation has evolved into a cycle of struggle that romanticizes suffering as strength. Through this depiction, the movie criticizes how capitalist structures manipulate virtue into a mechanism of control, where enduring exploitation becomes a badge of dignity rather than a sign of systemic failure.

Mike faces many job terminations as he is deemed insubordinate in his previous roles. While having a few short-lived positions, which worsens his work portfolio, Mike is persistent as he goes to a career counsellor and asks for a job. The career counsellor admits that Mike's work portfolio (previous job terminations) aggravates Mike's situation of finding a new job. Mike is offered to be a security guard at the Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria. At first, Mike refuses the offer due to the work being a night shift job; however, after receiving a payment notice for not being able to pay the mortgage and provide for Abby, Mike accepts the job. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.19 Mike Looks at Abby while on the Phone with Mr. Raglan
(*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:18:17 – 00:18:36)

Mike : Uh, Hi. Mr. Raglan, this is Mike.

Career Counsellor : Mr. "I can't work nights."

Mike : Right. Uh, yeah. I was just calling to see if that job that you offered was, uh, was still available.

Career Counsellor : Oh, it absolutely is. Why? Have you had a change

of heart?
Mike : How soon could I start?

Picture 4.19 uses a worm-eye view shot to emphasize the importance of Abby from Mike's point of view. Mike looks at Abby to reassure himself that taking the night shift job as a security guard at the Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria is a rightful decision, even though the job description makes Mike reject the first offer by his career counsellor. The dialogue highlights Mike's perseverance amidst the dangers. He receives a delinquency note for not paying his mortgage and he is also plagued by the threats of Abby being taken away from him. So, he has a change of heart and accepts the low-wage job as a security guard to provide for his family. This sense of desperation forces many workers to go to any lengths just to secure an income for survival.

4.2.3.2 Mike's Unwavering Focus and Motivation

Within the framework of American work culture, the ideals of focus and motivation have become integral to the "culture of the new capitalism," in which flexibility, emotional discipline, and self-drive are celebrated as the hallmarks of a successful worker. Having an unwavering focus and motivation is to present an idealized performance in the workplace that corporates culture demands. While being perseverant focuses on enduring job instability and job insecurity, being focused and motivated means staying productive, optimistic, and self-driven whatever the circumstances. Being focused and motivated deals with self-management. Another step of it is that workers can internalize corporate goals as

personal goals, believing total dedication is proof of inner strength and moral success. This cultural narrative encourages individuals to internalize professional goals as personal missions, fostering a sense of devotion that blurs the boundaries between work and identity.

In *Five Nights at Freddy's* movie, Mike's unwavering focus symbolizes this internalized capitalist logic: he continues to perform tasks that no longer serve his emotional or material well-being, yet he does so out of a deeply ingrained sense of duty. His actions reflect the transformation of work from a means of survival into a moral obligation, where one's worth is measured not by tangible achievements, but by visible commitment. This portrayal resonates with the contemporary phenomenon of "self-exploitation," where workers voluntarily endure hardship in pursuit of meaning and validation within a system that offers neither stability nor reciprocity. Mike's commitment to his job even when the work is meaningless and unsafe embodies how modern labor has been redefined to demand not just physical presence, but emotional surrender.

In the movie, Mike demonstrates focus and motivation as he meticulously cleans up debris after learning that Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria has been forcibly entered by Aunt Jane's contracted workers. Mike cleans the restaurant without help and with the potential to get injured as the debris involve glass shards. The scene is described in the pictures below:



Picture 4.20



Picture 4.21

Picture 4.20-4.21 Mike Cleans Debris from the Vigilant Action
 (*Five Nights at Freddy's*, 2023, 00:55:09 – 00:55:17)

Picture 4.20 is shot by using a close-up technique to emphasize the danger of the glass shard debris, as the shards can potentially harm Mike. By using this technique, the scene emphasizes the space Mike needs to clean. Mike's situation resembles the soft work era's expectation of workers displaying focus, faithfulness, and eagerness. Workers are demanded to show their motivation as it is framed as being devoted is also good for the worker. If one is focused, loyal, and emotionally invested, then one is not just doing their duty, but on the road to self-fulfillment. If one is not devoted, then one is deemed a failing person.

This depiction also exposes the paradoxical nature of motivation under capitalist ideology. What appears as self-discipline and responsibility is, in fact, a product of systemic coercion. Mike's effort to repair the restaurant is not rewarded, nor does it improve his working conditions, it merely sustains an illusion of control over his circumstances. In doing so, the movie illustrates how emotional investment is commodified, turning authenticity into performance and dedication into submission.

Mike's motivation, thus, becomes symbolic of the emotional captivity that defines modern labor relations, where passion is exploited to mask inequality. His quiet persistence and willingness to "go the extra mile" are not signs of empowerment, but symptoms of internalized labor ideology that values productivity over humanity. Through Mike, *Five Nights at Freddy's* criticizes how the rhetoric of focus and motivation once markers of ambition have been distorted into tools that perpetuate fatigue, isolation, and self-denial within the modern workforce.

4.2.4 Weakness of American Work Culture in *Five Nights at Freddy's*

4.2.4.1 Mike's Disconnection with Results at Work

The notion of disconnection in labor, through the concept of alienated labor, refers to the separation between workers and the meaning or outcomes of their work. In contemporary American culture, this alienation manifests through emotional fatigue, mental detachment, and the normalization of burnout as an inevitable part of professionalism. While the workplace promises unity, belonging, teamwork, and family-like workplaces, workers still feel cut off from purpose, authenticity, and community. When emotional investment and positivity become part of the job, sincerity loses its grounding. Workers are asked to perform the connection, not to experience it. They smile through exhaustion, cooperate through competition, and express enthusiasm even when they feel detached. The more the workplace demands emotional openness, the less genuine that emotion becomes.

What appears as a connection is often an emotional simulation, masking a deeper alienation. They no longer see the tangible results of their efforts; they manage data, relationships, or feelings rather than build physical things. This separation from the outcome of one's work is intensified by corporate culture's insistence that workers should still find their jobs meaningful. The gap between that promise and lived reality creates a profound sense of inner disconnection.

Mike's disengagement at work encapsulates this modern form of estrangement. His repeated failure to perform effectively is not simply a reflection of laziness or irresponsibility, but of a deeper existential dissonance his personal grief and moral exhaustion render his labor meaningless. The movie presents this disconnection not as individual weakness, but as a symptom of a larger socio-economic condition in which workers are reduced to functioning bodies rather than autonomous beings. By showing Mike's psychological distance from his tasks, *Five Nights at Freddy's* movie criticizes the hollow promise of purpose in low-wage labor by exposing how emotional depletion becomes a hidden cost of survival within capitalist work structures.

In the movie, Mike is caught using sleeping pills at work by Vanessa. Mike uses the sleeping pills to help him dream about his lost brother. He should have been determined and perform at work, staying fully awake and guard the Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria, instead of focusing on sleeping and finding details about his brother's abduction in his dream. The scene is described below:



Picture 4.16 Mike is Caught Using Sleeping Pills at Work
(Five Nights at Freddy's, 2023, 00:49:26. – 00:49:31)

Vanessa : Recognize these?
Mike : Look, it's not what you think, okay? Th-Those are—They're sleeping pills. They help me sleep
Vanessa : I know what they are, Mike. It's written on the bottle.

Picture 4.16 uses a medium shot to highlight Vanessa's authority over Mike. The picture also tells that Vanessa goes the trouble of visiting Mike's house instead of meeting him at Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria. Vanessa does not throw away Mike's sleeping pills, but shows them to Mike, highlighting Vanessa's authority in the situation. The dialogue presents that Mike could have use the sleeping pills for illicit activities. Both the picture and the dialogue show that Mike is disconnected from his work and could have use the sleeping pills for shady motives.

Beyond the surface of Mike's professional failure, lies a powerful metaphor for the human cost of capitalist detachment. His reliance on sleeping pills signifies an attempt to escape both his job and reality illustrating how overworked individuals often resort to mental withdrawal as a coping mechanism. This detachment reflects a silent rebellion against a system that demands constant productivity while neglecting emotional welfare. In many ways, Mike's state of disconnection mirrors the collective fatigue of a generation trapped in unfulfilling labor, where rest and

detachment are acts of self-preservation rather than defiance. Through this portrayal, the movie articulates a profound criticism of modern labor's dehumanizing effects, emphasizing that when work no longer aligns with meaning or dignity, disconnection becomes the only remaining form of autonomy.

4.2.4.2 Mike's Neglectful and Exploitative Workplace

Companies learn to disguise control through the language of empathy and belonging. Workers are told that their jobs are not just a means of survival, but they are a path to self-fulfillment. Companies also tell workers that passion, flexibility, and emotional dedication will lead to personal growth. Yet, beneath this rhetoric of care, lies a system quietly draining workers' time, energy, and identity. The modern workplace neglects the very people it claims to empower. It demands an emotional investment, but it offers little in return: low pay, insecurity, and the constant pressure to perform positively. A worker who feels overworked or underpaid is told not to question the system, but a worker has to work on themselves, to adjust, improve, or stay positive. Companies make people believe that giving more, more time, more passion, more of themselves, is a moral good and turns exploitation into devotion.

The workplace environment in *Five Nights at Freddy's* movie symbolizes the pervasive neglect and exploitation embedded within the fabric of American labor institutions. Under the guise of flexibility and self-management, corporations have redefined exploitation as empowerment a hallmark of neoliberal ideology. The

career counsellor promises that Mike can “be his own boss” which perfectly describes as the rhetoric of freedom masking an economic dependency. This illusion of autonomy is central to the service-type economy and precarious work systems, where workers shoulder immense responsibility without receiving fair compensation or security. The pizzeria’s conditions of low pay, unsafe hours, and isolation function as a microcosm of the broader capitalist machine that prioritizes efficiency over empathy. Through Mike’s acceptance of such terms, the film exposes the normalization of suffering as a prerequisite for employment and the moral hypocrisy of a society that equates exploitation with opportunity.

In the movie, Mike is presented with the opportunity to be a security guard at the Freddy Fazbear’s Pizzeria by his career counsellor. The opportunity is perfect for Mike, as he has just been terminated from his recent job being a mall security guard and has a portfolio of short-lived positions. Mike's career counsellor also promotes that Mike can be his own boss, and the job description is simple and direct. However, while Mike is promised a sense of belonging, Mike only receives low wages. Moreover, Mike also has to work night shifts, which can be detrimental to Mike's health. The scene is described below:

Career Counsellor : It’s a security gig. Full disclosure: it’s not great. Right? High turnover. That’s what we call it in the business, but you get to be your own boss. Sort of. And you only have to worry about one thing. Keeping people out. And-and, you know, and keep the place tidy.

Mike : How's the pay?
Career Counsellor : Not great. But the hours are worse.
Mike : (Quietly) I can't do nights.
(Five Nights at Freddy's, 2023, 00:10:31 – 00:10:51)

The dialogue above is an example of a neglectful and exploitative workplace in a corporate culture. While Mike is promised a sense of belonging in his job as an enticement, Mike is also underpaid and has to work unsociable hours. He should have been paid minimum wage, especially working at night shifts, which can detrimentally affect his health.

Furthermore, the company strategically hires employees who are financially desperate or lack alternative options as a means of predatory exploitation. Such individuals are often willing to endure any conditions simply to survive. This allows the corporation to minimize essential welfare aspects, such as fair wages, workplace safety, and reasonable working hours. However, once these workers are inevitably broken by the system, the company remains indifferent, knowing they can easily replace them with a new recruit who will likely face the same tragic fate.

On a symbolic level, Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria becomes a haunting metaphor for corporate America an institution that consumes labor, empathy, and time without reciprocating a value. The neglected environment mirrors the emotional decay of its employees, while the nocturnal schedule represents how capitalism demands productivity in isolation and silence. Mike's acceptance of such a toxic workplace reveals not only his desperation, but also his psychological conditioning

that binds workers to oppressive systems. The movie ultimately transforms the pizzeria into an allegory for late-capitalist exploitation, where neglect is disguised as independence, and compliance is rebranded as loyalty. In doing so, *Five Nights at Freddy's* movie underscores the dehumanizing impact of an economic inequality by urging viewers to question the morality of a culture that normalizes exhaustion as a virtue and a survival as success in an unequal system.