



Samvirkniáhrif vestræns vinnusiðferðis á samband atvinnuleysis og lífsánægju

Helgi Guðmundsson

**Lokaverkefni til MS-gráðu
Sálfræðideild
Heilbrigðisvísindasvið**



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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Leiðbeinendur: Ragna Benedikta Garðarsdóttir og Fanney Þórsdóttir

Sálfræðideild

Heilbrigðisvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands

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Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til MS gráðu í sálfræði og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa.

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ÞAKKARORÐ

Þetta verkefni tók ár í framkvæmd og það eru margir sem hjálpuðu mér að koma þessu í réttan farveg. Fyrst vil ég þakka Diljá Guðjónsdóttur sem var alltaf til taks með athugasemdir þegar þurfti. Hún á einnig hrós skilið fyrir að þola leiðinlegar verkefnatengdar “sam”ræður við mig í heilt ár. Sérstakar þakkir fá leiðbeinendur mínir, þær Ragna Benedikta Garðarsdóttir og Fanney Þórsdóttir. Eins frábærir og kennarar deildarinnar eru, þá er ég ekki í neinum vafa um að þeir bestu hafi leiðbeint mér í vetur. Einnig vil ég þakka Arndísi Vilhjálmsdóttur fyrir alla aðstoðina sem hún veitti mér. Ég hef ekkert nema gott um Arndísi að segja. Hún fundaði reglulega með mér um allt það kenningarlega sem við kom verkefninu og alltaf tilbúin til að svara spurningum. Óli Páll Geirsson á einnig inni kærar þakkir frá mér. Óli er í doktorsnámi í tölfræði við Háskóla Íslands og hefur fyrir hönd Tölfræðimiðstöðvarinnar tekið að sér að aðstoða nemendur við lokaverkefni sín. Það er frábært að hafa svona snillinga innan handar til að ráðfæra sig við. Að lokum langar mig að þakka móður og tengdamóður minni fyrir að létta undir eldamennskunni í vetur og föður mínum, Guðmundi Halldórssyni fyrir fleiri yfirlestra en ég get talið á fingrum mér. Ég krossa fingur um að þetta hafi verið síðasta skólaverkefni sem þú lest yfir.

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FORMÁLI

Eftirfarandi meistaraverkefni samanstendur af fræðilegu yfirliti (*literature review*) og handriti (*manuscript*) til birtingar í tímariti. Yfirlitið og handritið eru skrifuð á ensku. Hugmyndin að verkefninu kom frá Arndísi Vilhjálmsdóttur sem hafði velt fyrir sér hvort vinnugildi hefðu áhrif á samband atvinnuleysis við vellíðan. Mér fannst hugmyndin bakvið þetta samband spennandi því sumir virðast þrífast betur í atvinnuleysi en aðrir. Afhverju leggjast sumir í þunglyndi við atvinnumissi á meðan öðrum líður mun betur? Bók Ciulla (2000), *The working life: The promise and betrayal of modern work* var mér mikill innblástur við skrifin. Ciulla skoðar þróun vinnusiðferðis, hvaða merkingu vinnan hefur fyrir okkur í dag og hvers við getum vænst af vinnunni. Starfsfólk er leitt til að trúa að vinnan gefi þér: meiningu í lífinu, sjálfstraust, þroska og lífsfyllingu. Það eru margir sem leggja mikið á sig til að öðlast þessa þætti frá vinnunni. Eflaust eru það þeir sem telja vinnuna mikilvæga og hafa því hátt vinnusiðferði.

Unnið var með íslensk gögn úr gagnasafni frá Evrópsku lífsgildakönnuninni (EVS, 2010). Notuð var einföld aðfallsgreining til að: (1) meta áhrif atvinnuleysis á lífsánægju og (2) að meta samvirkni vinnusiðferðis á þetta samband. Í næsta kafla má sjá handrit að grein sem skrifað var fyrir tímaritið *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* og niðurstöður þeirrar rannsóknar. Í þessum kafla verður hinsvegar fjallað um bakrunn hugtaksins vinnusiðferði, farið yfir helstu hugtök og kafað dýpra í fyrri rannsóknir heldur en gert er í handritinu. Að auki er tölfræðileg úrvinnsla gagna betur rökstudd, t.d. réttlæting fyrir því að taka út þá sem eru atvinnulausir og vinna sjálfboðavinnu.

1. KAFLI: YFIRLITSGREIN

Productivity has long been seen as a contributor of life quality. Because of its effect, many people recognize the dissatisfaction that follows an unproductive day. People feel guilty even though no one has witnessed their loafing. However, some academics claim there are people who are quite comfortable being idle. Some do not feel obliged to do productive work and are found lacking in work ethic (Ali, Falcone, & Azim, 1995; Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002). It seems necessary that people remain committed and willing to work, for their own and society's sake. This study examines the moderating effect of the western work ethic (WWE) on the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction (LS). I predict people with high WWE are less satisfied with life than people with low WWE during unemployment.

The western work ethic (WWE) is a concept originating from Weber's (1905/2002) protestant work ethic, belonging to group of concepts called work values. This concept is an amalgamation of three ideas: (a) *fairness*: able-bodied people should provide for themselves, (b) *personal excellence*: a person should perform to the best of his or her abilities; and (c) *personal goodness*: work itself has a moral value (Ciulla, 2000). Note that throughout this discussion, the terms: work commitment, work norm, protestant work ethic, and the western work ethic will be used interchangeably. The reason for this is that there is little consensus within social- and organizational psychology on terminology. These and many other similar terms all originate from Weber's (1905/2002) concept, the protestant work ethic. Despite the small variations in meaning, they all entail the same general idea: Work is important and virtuous.

This study examines the moderating effect of the western work ethic on the relationship between unemployment and general life satisfaction (LS). There is a consensus among scholars that unemployment leads to lowered well-being; this has been confirmed in

several meta-analyses (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; Paul & Moser, 2009). A few studies suggest that people with strong work values might feel worse during unemployment than others (Paul & Moser, 2006). This is possibly because unemployed people who find work to be unimportant feel less guilty, because their employment status and their work values are congruent. Whereas, the unemployed with strong work values feel more guilty, due to the discrepancy between their values and employment status. This moderation effect is interesting because of its effect on individuals. People with low WWE feel similar during unemployment as during employment, which is positive from a certain point of view. However, a person who feels satisfied during unemployment is less motivated to look for a job (Prussia, Fugate, & Kinicki, 2001). Society wants people to look for jobs when unemployed, but also wants everyone to feel good. Thus, people with high WWE are more motivated but feel worse; people with low WWE on the other hand, feel better during unemployment, but are less motivated to find a job.

Most studies studying the moderating effect of work values on the relationship between unemployment and well-being have focused on well-being measures, such as: depression, anxiety, and distress (e.g. Feather & Bond, 1983; Jackson, Stafford, Banks, & Warr, 1983; Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999; Stafford, Jackson, & Banks, 1980), which are all affective measures. These studies have neglected the possible cognitive effects of unemployment, such as life satisfaction or life domain satisfaction.

There are however, two studies that have examined the moderating effect of work commitment on the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. Neither study found a moderating effect, but both have serious limitations, which might explain the non-significant findings. First, Feather and O'Brien (1986) found that work commitment did not moderate the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. Their sample

consisted of 17-18 year old school leavers. However, it is my belief that the results of Feather and O'Brien (1986) cannot be generalized to adults since the sample consists only of adolescents with no prior experience in the workforce. Youth is a time of activity, and young people should have a lot to fill their day besides work. According to Jahoda (1981), unemployment is accompanied by less activity. Surely, this inactivity adds to unemployed people's apathy and boredom. Therefore, if an adolescent is active then he or she should be less apathetic. Lennings (1993) concludes that adolescent work values should be seen in their context and not generalized onto adults since adolescence is a developmental stage. He backs his claim up with a study which found young people were less job-involved than the older population (O'Brien & Kabanoff, 1979).

Adolescent school leavers are not as heavily affected by unemployment as adults (Cassidy, 1994), possibly because their self-esteem is not yet work-dependent (Patterson, 1997), and because of fewer financial obligations. Satisfaction with life has been found to correlate highly with self-esteem ($r = 0.55$) in individualistic countries like the United States (A. Campbell, 1981). For example Diener and Diener (1995) found an average correlation between life satisfaction and self-esteem of $r = 0.43$ and $r = 0.44$ for women and men. This relationship was moderated by how individualistic the country was (Diener & Diener, 1995). This suggests that self-esteem is a component in life satisfaction in individualistic countries. Hence, life satisfaction is affected by self-esteem, which work does not provide for the young adolescent. I argue that generalizing the results of Feather and O'Brien to adults is misleading.

In the second study which measured life satisfaction, Stavrova, Schlösser, and Fetchenhauer (2011) similarly found that a person's work norm (*personal injunctive norm to work*) did not moderate the relationship between life satisfaction and unemployment but a country's average work norm did (*societal injunctive norm to work*). Thus, a person's values

had no moderating effect but the country's tolerance toward unemployed people did. Using an immense cross-national sample, Stavrova et al. (2011) drew the conclusion that the suffering of the unemployed is partly because of the country's intolerance towards unemployment; society punishes an unemployed person with social pressure and disapproval. They concluded: People's life satisfaction is not affected by the discrepancy between a person's work values and employment status.

The main limitation of the Stavrova et al. study is how ill-defined the groups they used are. Stavrova et al. did not exclude the unemployed who engaged in volunteering work. Therefore, a portion of the unemployed in their sample did unpaid work and reaped the social benefits of that. Volunteers are a gray area – sometimes coined the third “employment” sector (Anheier, 2005) – between the employed and unemployed, hence it would have been logical for Stavrova et al. to exclude them from the analysis. According to Jahoda's (1981) deprivation model, people acquire five latent byproducts from work: time structure; social contacts; the experience of social purposes; status and identity; and regular activity. The suffering of the unemployed is due to the lack of these byproducts. Arguably, volunteering work can fulfill most of these byproducts, which Stavrova et al. (2011) cited when explaining why the unemployed have lower well-being. If it is as Stavrova et al. claimed, that society punishes the unemployed with social sanctions because they disapprove of those who do not lend a helping hand, surely the unemployed who volunteer at the homeless shelter or a rescue team (which many Icelanders do) receive less stigma, since they are doing something good for the community.

Excluding volunteers in research on the effects of unemployment leaves the researcher with two distinct groups to compare: One group is active and meets people regularly, has a time structure, etc.; the other group is less likely to be active, meets fewer

people throughout the day and has a significantly more irregular time structure (Feather & Bond, 1983).

It is my belief that those who have a strong work value do indeed feel more dissatisfied for not working, than those who have a weak work ethic. People with strong work ethic can get relief from that self-blame through volunteering work. Furthermore, Stavrova et al. (2011) and most others who do research on this concept define work commitment as an ethic towards paid work: “The societal injunctive norm and the personal injunctive norm to work are conceptualized as society’s vs. personal attitudes towards working for a living versus living off public funds, respectively.” They define their concept as working for a living, instead of just “working”. Shamir (1986) criticized this definition most scholars use. Work commitment has been found to be a stable individual difference (Jackson et al., 1983; Jin & Rounds, 2011), therefore it should not be defined as something that is affected by a temporary condition, such as financial strain. I stress this point; financial strain can vary throughout one’s life considerably for many people. If work commitment means working for money, then work commitment would be lower when one is not desperate for money and higher when one is. Therefore, having a strong work commitment must mean having an ethic to work, whether or not one gets paid.

Those who are unemployed but find work to be fulfilling, on average feel worse than those who don’t share their work commitment (Paul & Moser, 2006). Unemployed people with high work ethic are more prone to non-psychiatric disorders like anxiety and they report lower well-being in general (Paul & Moser, 2006). This evidence leads me to think that the discrepancy between work values and employment status affects all measures of well-being.

General life satisfaction

General life satisfaction has been used as one component in an area of scientific interest (defined by Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999) called *subjective well-being* (SWB). SWB is a broad category including three dimensions: pleasant affect (e.g. joy, elation, and happiness), negative affect (e.g. guilt, sadness, anxiety, and depression), and one cognitive dimension: life satisfaction or domain satisfactions (e.g. work, family, and finances).

The rationale for studying life satisfaction is that academics have neglected the cognitive dimension of SWB when studying the moderating effect of work values on the relationship between unemployment and well-being. SWB is a measure of quality of life, which includes a person's emotional reactions and cognitive judgment of his or her life. To fully understand the scope of this moderation effect, it is necessary to see if the effect also applies to a person's cognitive evaluation (life satisfaction) of his or her life.

Measuring life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is measured subjectively as a cognitive evaluation that entails: "a global evaluation by the person of his or her life". Life satisfaction has been found to form a separate factor, distinct from positive and negative affect (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996). Diener et al. (1999) named five examples of components affecting a person's evaluation of life: Desire to change life, satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with the past, satisfaction with the future, and significant others' view of one's life. An unemployed person with a passion to work most likely desires to change his or her life and is unsatisfied with his or her current life. Whereas an unemployed person with low work commitment might view the current life more positively and have less desire to change.

Life satisfaction is measured either as a one-dimensional construct or as a multidimensional construct. The one-dimensional assessment is designed to evaluate the individual's general life satisfaction. The multidimensional method on the other hand

measures specific domains in the individual's life. For example, a person can be satisfied with family and friends but unsatisfied with school. Huebner (1994) proposed a model of global appraisal of life satisfaction with five subdomains: family, friends, school, living environment, and self. Multidimensional measures such as the *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale*; the *Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale* (Cummings, 1992) agree with this argument.

Although there may be a consensus on important components of a "good life": successful relationship, health, etc., individuals may assign different weights to the components when evaluating their life. The *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) uses a one-dimensional approach. SWLS measures LS with general questions. This is because the authors argue that it is up to the individual to weight various domains in his or her life, rather than letting the authors of the scale decide. For example, one student might be miserable because he or she is failing algebra. Another might not put this fact into the equation and let it affect his or her life satisfaction. The European Value Study (EVS, 2010) uses a global evaluation (one-dimensional) of life instead of a multidimensional one. Therefore, a participant can choose how he or she weights various components in his or her life, and draw a general conclusion about his or her satisfaction with it. On a 10-point scale a respondent is asked: "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days".

Correlates of life satisfaction. Most people view their lives relatively positively (Diener & Diener, 1996). However, many variables have been found to affect people's view on life (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973). Daily life events can greatly influence a person's assessment of his or her life. McCullough, Huebner, and Laughlin (2000) reported a relationship between adolescent positive global LS and positive daily experiences ($r = 0.40$). They also

found that cumulative effects of daily experiences (e.g. hobbies, hanging out with friends) had a greater effect on life satisfaction than major life events.

It is desirable to be satisfied with life. It has been argued that from an evolutionary perspective, a positive SWB baseline is necessary (Diener & Diener, 1996). It allows for opportunities for personal and social advancement, exploratory behavior, and reliable coping resources. It appears that positive SWB is necessary (although not sufficient) for positive mental health (Diener et al., 1999). For example, Lewinsohn, Redner, and Seeley (1991) found that reports of low life satisfaction in adults predicted the onset of depression. Life satisfaction has been found to correlate with effective interpersonal relationships (Furr & Funder, 1998), school dropout (Frisch et al., 2002), occupational functioning (Marks & Flemming, 1999), and health status (Frisch, 1999; Veenhoven, 1988). Some even consider life satisfaction to be a key indicator for SWB (Veenhoven, 1988). Furthermore, low LS has been shown to relate to risk behaviors like nicotine, marijuana, cocaine, and alcohol abuse among adolescents (Raphael, Rukholm, Brown, Hill-Bailey, & Donato, 1996; Zullig, Valois, Huebner, Oeltmann, & Drane, 2001). Various mood-related disorders have been found to correlate with life satisfaction; both depression and anxiety have been found to correlate negatively with LS (Gilman, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2000; Greenspoon & Saklofske, 1997; Neto, 1993).

One can distinguish between objective and subjective indicators associated with life quality (D. Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976). Objective conditions, such as income, crime rate, etc. have a surprisingly small correlation with life quality (Diener et al., 1999; Diener & Suh, 1997). Family income for example has been reported to have a correlation between 0.10 to 0.20 (D. Campbell et al., 1976; Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, & Diener, 1993). On the other hand, subjective variables have been found to have a greater impact on life

quality. For example, the correlation between depression and life satisfaction has been found to be 0.50-0.60 (Gilman et al., 2000; Greenspoon & Saklofske, 1997; Neto, 1993).

The relationship between life satisfaction and unemployment

Today there is little doubt among scholars that there is a relationship between unemployment and various psychological well-being symptoms. Some even go as far to imply a causal relationship (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). The authors of several meta-analyses on the topic have concluded that unemployment has a negative effect on mental health (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; Paul & Moser, 2009). Even though one cannot prove the causal relationship, evidence is stacked in its favor. There are also many longitudinal studies supporting this claim (e.g. Hammer, 1993; Schaufeli & van Yperen, 1993; Shamir, 1986; Wanberg, 1995) as well as cross-sectional studies (for a review see Paul & Moser, 2009). Furthermore, well-being has been found to improve when a person moves from unemployment to reemployment (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009).

The effects of unemployment have been studied since the Great depression (Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Shi, 2001). Even so, the first meta-analysis was not conducted until roughly 70 years later. Murphy and Athanasou (1999) examined 16 longitudinal studies from nine countries measuring unemployment's effect on mental health. Unemployed people who gained a job during the study showed a medium improvement to their mental health ($d = 0.54$; Cohen, 1977); their mental health increased by more than half a standard deviation. Those who lost their job reported lower mental health ($d = 0.36$), a medium effect size. The meta-analysis Murphy and Athanasou (1999) conducted was very informative and gave the academic community a clue to the effect size unemployment has on wellbeing. A meta-analysis published six years later went into more detail concerning various representations of well-being and variables moderating this relationship. McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) reviewed

studies using cross-sectional and longitudinal methods; these studies examined the impact of unemployment on well-being. They observed a negative effect of unemployment on mental health, life satisfaction, marital/family satisfaction, subjective physical health and objective physical health in the cross-sectional studies. The effect size ranged from small to large ($d_c = -0.21$ to -0.89 ; Cohen, 1977), approximately half a standard deviation difference between means. Seven cross-sectional studies observed a medium mean effect size of $d_c = -0.48$ for life satisfaction. Two longitudinal studies on the effect of reemployment on psychological well-being observed a mean effect size of $d_c = -3.04$ for life satisfaction; which is very large (Cohen, 1977), well-being improved by 3 standard deviations. Furthermore, ten longitudinal studies reported a mean effect size of $d_c = -0.38$ – a small-medium effect – for mental health (no studies for life satisfaction were in the last analysis).

There is further evidence for higher prevalence of psychological symptoms among the unemployed. Paul and Moser (2009) reviewed 237 cross-sectional studies and 87 longitudinal studies that observed less mental health for the unemployed. Mixed symptoms of distress, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, subjective well-being and self-esteem were lower for the unemployed. The overall effect size was medium ($d = 0.51$). Therefore, overall the mental health of the unemployed was half a standard deviation below that of the employed. In the Paul and Moser (2009) meta-analysis, an average of 34% unemployed had psychological problems, compared to 16% among the employed. Paul and Moser (2009) also drew the conclusion from 237 cross-sectional and 87 longitudinal studies that unemployment causes distress.

Of course, one can only confirm a causal relationship with experiments. Due to the unethical nature of dismissing personnel at random for scientific purposes, one can only look at and interpret cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. However, the evidence for this causal relationship is very convincing.

What is it that the unemployed are lacking in their life, apart from salary? Clearly, they have more time for leisure than people who show up to work every morning, or students who have to attend lectures and hand in papers. Many would see this as a positive thing. Most wish from time to time that they could stay in bed a little longer or take the day off to attend hobbies. Is the free time unemployed people have too much of a good thing? A few attempt to explain why unemployment is so detrimental to well-being.

Freud wrote that "...work was a person's strongest tie to reality" (cited in Jahoda, 1981). Jahoda said most people get five ties to reality from working as latent by-products: time structure; social contacts; the experience of social purposes; status and identity; and regular activity. Jahoda theorized that employed people are better off because of these by-products. Those who are unemployed lack these positive by-products from their everyday life.

Warr's (1987) *vitamin model* proposes that work has nine benefits (opportunity for control, opportunity for skill use, externally generated goals, variety, environmental clarity, availability of money, physical security, opportunity for interpersonal contact, and valued social position). Unemployed people lack these benefits. They have less money, less social contact since most people they know are at work, etc. These propositions from Jahoda and Warr have been partially supported by research (Kinicki, Prussia, & McKee-Ryan, 2000; Wanberg, 1995). Despite having more free time and opportunities for activities, unemployed people do not seem to enjoy their leisure.

Wanberg et al. (2001) and McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) discussed various factors that seem to buffer the effect unemployment has on well-being. Time structure for example, has been shown to influence a person's well-being (DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1986). People adapt to a certain routine. When this routine is disrupted it can have negative effects on people. Instead of waking up 7 am every morning and going to bed before midnight, an unemployed

person can wake up at noon and stay up late. The inability to structure the day and keep busy has been found negatively to relate to physical and psychological health (Feather & Bond, 1983; Wanberg, Griffiths, & Gavin, 1997).

Social support during unemployment has been found to buffer the negative effects of unemployment. A cross-sectional study from Turner, Kessler, and House (1991) supports this claim. Several studies have shown that economic hardship is positively related to distress during unemployment (see Wanberg et al., 2001). Unemployment might not be as detrimental if your spouse is in a well-paid job or if you were able to make a savings account when you had a job.

Although, people on average experience negative effects from unemployment, not everyone shares this negative experience (Fineman, 1983). People differ in their passion for work. A few studies have shown that people with high employment commitment display more distress while unemployed (Jackson et al., 1983; Rowley, 2011; Ullah, Banks, & Warr, 1985). For example Jahoda's (1981) renowned model tries to explain the suffering of the unemployed with solely subjective factors. Furthermore, eight out of nine factors in Warr's (1987) vitamin model are subjective. It seems that the things we take for granted, go missing from people's lives when facing unemployment.

According to Jahoda (1981) and Warr (1987) it is this lacking of fundamentals (time structure, social contact, etc.) that separates the unemployed from the employed but it may also separate them from students, volunteers, and stay-at-home parents. Everyone except the unemployed gets fulfillment of most of these fundamentals (latent byproducts or vitamins) in their everyday life. A student wakes up for class, a worker gets status from his job, a stay-at-home parent gets purpose from taking care of his or her children. In fact, individuals that are out of the labor force (not seeking employment according to the International Labor Office;

cited in Paul, Geithner, & Moser, 2009) like students, work-home parents, etc. have been found to be significantly less affected by unemployment regarding distress (Paul et al., 2009).

Despite unemployment's general effect on life satisfaction and well-being, it is puzzling how some people thrive better than others in unemployment. Some people report decreased well-being when unemployed while others find that situation indifferent (Paul & Moser, 2006).

The evolution of the work ethic

Work plays a major role in most people's lives nowadays. In Iceland, people work on average 39.2 hours a week (Sigurðsson & Blöndal, 2012). Work is without doubt central in the culture of most modern countries today. Being hard-working is generally considered a virtue. Being employed not only ensures that a person can pay his or her bills, but also – as detailed above – gives the person time-structure, social purpose, and meaning. However, being hard working has not always been considered so virtuous.

The early Greeks saw work as a waste of time (Nord, Brief, Atieh, & Doherty, 1988), “In those states that are best governed [...] should no one dare to do physical labor or business whereas that could damage their virtues. ... no one who does physical labor should be granted civil rights” (Aristotle, n.d./2001). In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus meets Sisyphus in the netherworld. The gods had condemned Sisyphus to repeatedly push a great boulder to the top of a hill. Once the boulder reached the top it rolled back down so Sisyphus could start anew (Camus, 1955). A punishment of endless work is an example of the perspective towards work in ancient Greece. A negative view towards work can also be found in the Bible. In the *Old Testament*, God curses Adam and condemns him to everlasting toil for tending the Garden of Eden: “Cursed be the ground because of you. In toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life” (2 Genesis 3:17 New International Version). One of the things

people disliked about work in the old days was that people sometimes used it to gather riches. Greed being one of the seven deadly sins, this was frowned upon. Of course, Aristotle and other philosophers who wrote about these virtues were upper class. To them, physical labor was unworthy, whereas it was all right for slaves to engage in physical labor; they could never gain citizenship (Balme, 1984).

In the first centuries A.D. people believed that their mortal life was only temporary, the goal was to get into Heaven. It was more sensible to invest in eternity through prayers and contemplation than to work hard for a comfortable earthly life. In fact, as Lucian Febre wrote: certain languages have words for work that denote pain (cited in Ciulla, 2000).

Trabajar (Spanish), *travailler* (French) and *Trabalhar* (Portuguese) all originate from the Latin word *tripalium*. A tripalium was a thing used to tie a horse to so that it could be shod. The word then started to denote torture and evolved into meaning work (Ciulla, 2000).

Arbeiten (work in German) originally meant pain and trouble. Tilgher wrote that in ancient Greek: work (*ponos*) and trouble or punishment are synonymous (cited in Ciulla, 2000). This attitude to work is a lot different to our contemporary attitude. Nowadays work is supposed to be fun and maturing, a route to self-actualization according to some people (Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010).

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (1905/2002) tried to explain why the extreme transformation of the economic history of the world occurred in NW-Europe but not elsewhere. Other countries like the Indians and the Chinese were more technically and scientifically advanced than Europeans, and the Americans and the Russians were richer in natural resources. For example, Needham wrote about China's lead over the Western world in most of the major areas of science and technology, except in the last 2-3 centuries (cited in Lin, 2013). Beforehand, one could assume the industrial revolution would start in these countries. Nevertheless, it started on an island in Europe. England led the

industrial revolution from the late seventeenth century and until the end of the eighteenth century. Weber believed psychological factors, namely their work ethic, could explain why Europe conquered the world.

The way of thinking in Europe reached a watershed with the Reformation in Christianity in the fifteenth century. An evolution of attitude towards work may have started as early as in the New Testament. St. Paul said “Do not burden others by eating their bread, if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 New International Version). However, the Church distinguished between earning ones living and collecting riches through work. *Covetousness* (greed), inordinate desire for wealth or possessions, one of the seven deadly sins reflects this well. Europeans’ disposition towards work slowly changed, and it affected their way of living. Calvin and Luther’s revolution, the Reformation, formed a new understanding of what was in God’s graces. Attitude towards work, business, and capital gains became more positive than before in the Catholic religion. This attitude change helped spread democracy and capitalism throughout the western world (Ciulla, 2000; Ólafsson, 1996; Weber, 1905/2002).

In modern times, one would have to search hard for a contemporary western country that openly encourages its citizens not to work. However, there still are societies that do not work more than they have to. Karl Marx once cited a news article on free men in Jamaica (cited in Ciulla, 2000). The Quashees only worked so much that they had food and shelter, being idle was their luxury. Marshall Sahlins similarly wrote about the Yamana, Native Americans in South-America, they were as well incapable of continuous daily labor (cited in Ciulla, 2000).

Weber's work ethic

At the turn of the 19th century, there were two prevailing perspectives regarding the development of the protestant ethic in the literature. Karl Marx believed the belief system (protestant ethic) developed from changes in economic structure, and the values that supported the behavior that accompanied it (Anthony, 1977). Max Weber on the other hand believed economic structure was the result of changes in religious beliefs (Anthony, 1977). Weber believed that capitalism emerged because of attitude and value change that accompanied the protestant religion.

Weber's understanding of capitalism was that of a system of social order with the explicit goal to satisfy material needs and to collect possessions. There have always been people who seek riches, but Weber said they usually sought those riches by profiteering, force, or adventures (Ólafsson, 1996). What was new about capitalism was that the whole society became organized with this goal in mind. It was not enough to work for a living; work became central to life.

Weber speculated that the protestant's view of life was the equivalence to the materialistic and economic attitude that Capitalism is based upon. According to Weber, there are five points in Calvin's writings that are important in this matter. Firstly, Calvin taught that God was almighty and the ruler of the world, and his ways were impossible to investigate. Secondly, Calvin taught that men were born either in God's eternal grace or doomed for eternity in hell. A man could not change his fate, but neither could he or she ever find out for certain if he or she was blessed or damned. Calvin said a person could search for signs or clues to know if he or she was blessed or not. The way was to work hard and be disciplined. Success in the material life could be interpreted that a person had been blessed with eternal grace. Thirdly, Calvin taught that God had created the world for his glory. Fourthly, it was man's duty to work for the glory of God. And finally he demanded

asceticism, so the wealth would not be spent on leisure but invested instead (Bouma, 1973; Furnham, 1984; Ólafsson, 1996). Being told to work hard and invest wisely by God was the perfect premise for Capitalism.

In the Reformation, work became defined as a calling (*beruf*; Weber, 1905/2002). Work being a calling gave it a spiritual dimension. The protestant work ethic gained footing in North-Europe, but obviously not Catholic countries like France, Italy, and Spain.

Weber's theory of work ethic had four elements based on the writings of Calvin and Luther: According to *The Doctrine of Calling*, work itself was virtuous and should be done honestly. The emphasis on honesty assisted in providing trust among businessmen. In *The Doctrine of Predestination*, he claims that a person could see signs of God's grace in the material life here on Earth. Hence, financially successful people could consider themselves among of the elect. *Strong asceticism* stressed saving, one should not spend money on luxury but rather invest it. Lastly, in *The Doctrine of Sanctification* he stressed that people should be rational. Everyone should make their moral decisions and consider their ethical consequences (Weber, 1905/2002).

Cherrington (1980) listed eight attributes of the protestant work ethic: (1) People have a religious and normal obligation to work hard and work should be valued for its own sake. Enjoyment should be shunned. (2) People should spend long hours at work. (3) Workers should have low absenteeism. (4) A worker should be very productive. (5) A worker should take pride in his or her work and do it well. (6) An employee should be committed and loyal to his or her profession and their company. (7) A worker should be achievement-oriented. (8) A person should desire frugality and avoid waste. Wealth should be acquired through honest labor and investments. In short, the protestant work ethic is based on the idea that morality, asceticism, and hard work lead to economic success for the individual and the nation (Furnham, 1990).

Weber's theory, on why the West became so successful sounds plausible. Furnham (1984) claims that the protestant work ethic is a concept that straddles all the social sciences; it started a long and great debate among scholars. The concept continues to spur great research interest albeit under new headings such as work commitment (e.g. Jackson et al., 1983), work values (e.g. Isaksson, Johansson, Bellaagh, & Sjöberg, 2004), the centrality of work (e.g. Rowley, 2011), and other.

The western work ethic

As discussed briefly at the beginning of this review, the western work ethic and all other concepts originating from the protestant work ethic (Weber, 1905/2002) belong to group of concepts called work values. In Allport's pioneering study of values, he defined them as "a belief upon which a man acts by preferences" (Allport, 1961). Furthermore, in Schwartz' (1992) *circumplex model* he categorized different types of values, where values have a motivating function. It has been argued that work values are "salient, basic, and influential", since they play a fundamental role in providing opportunities to satisfy various needs (Ester, Braun, & Mohler, 2006, p. 92).

In her book *The Working Life: The Promise and Betrayal of Modern Work*, Ciulla (2000) wrote about the history of attitude towards work and the evolution of contemporary work values. She noted, "The work ethic that we have inherited is not a single concept but an amalgamation of three ideas" (Ciulla, 2000, chapter 4, para. 2). The first idea is *the principle of fairness and social obligation*. Able-bodied people should provide for themselves, it is their duty. This idea is not new, as St. Paul said you should not burden others by eating their bread (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 New International Version). Aesop (n.d./2011), an ancient storyteller wrote around 620 B.C. about the clever ants that saved up food for winter and the careless grasshopper that spent all summer in leisure and starved during winter. The second

element in this amalgamation is the idea that *one should perform one's work to the best of his or her abilities*. Like the first idea, neither is this one new. The monks of St. Benedict's monastery, built in 529 A.D., run their monasteries according to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, written in 528 A.D. Benedict encouraged his monks to perfect their works: "And of all, whatever work you begin to, beg of Him with most earnest prayer to perfect it" (cited in Clark, 1967). The third idea is that *work itself has moral and spiritual value* and a person is called by God to work. This idea on the other hand, is distinctive to Calvin and Luther.

The three ideas of *fairness*, *personal excellence*, and *personal goodness* grew into the idea I choose to call the western work ethic. As stated at the beginning of this literature review, there already exist a few terms for work values. I find myself compelled to add to this concept confusion; WWE is suitable in our study and reflects the questions used by the European Value Study to measure work values. Whereas, protestant work ethic for example, did not reflect the questions used. This was because protestant work ethic has a financial success factor (The doctrine of predestination). The measurement of work values in EVS does not have a question that reflects this financial success factor. Furthermore, as argued before: Work ethic should not be defined as a value to work solely for money. This concept (western work ethic) has not been used before that I know of. It should be noted that Ciulla (2000) does not name this concept or amalgamation that is defined in her book. This concept is merely my conception of her amalgamation, which Ciulla bases on Weber's ideas.

The moderating effect of work values

This is not the first attempt to study work values' moderating effect on the relationship between unemployment and various well-being concepts. During the eighties, protestant work ethic was a popular topic. Probably the best known review on this concept was published by Furnham in 1984. A few papers were published then which supported the claim

that work centrality moderated the relationship between unemployment and wellbeing (e.g. Jackson et al., 1983; Rowley & Feather, 1987; Stafford et al., 1980; Ullah et al., 1985). Those studies conveyed mixed results. I believe however, as mentioned earlier, that they all have made an important oversight in not excluding unemployed people engaging in volunteering work. Since volunteers are always included in the analyses (to the best of my knowledge), one can jump to the conclusion that in the mind of the academics studying the effects of unemployment, work centrality is a value that solely motivates a person to work for pay; instead of a value to simply to work, whether or not one gets paid.

Perhaps the reason why academics define work values with paid employment in mind is that the original definition of the protestant work ethic entails a financial success, or ‘money’ component. In *The Doctrine of Predestination* God’s grace could be seen in the material life, a person’s financial success (Weber, 1905/2002). Furthermore, in McHoskey's (1994) factor analysis of Mirels and Garret (1971) protestant work ethic scale, the first factor was financial success. Thus, most academics define their term of work values with working for money in mind.

It is possible that originally protestant work ethic presumed a financial success factor. If so, perhaps Weber shouldn’t have used the word *ethic* when naming his concept. Ethic “is a discipline dealing with good and bad, and with moral duty” (Ethic, 2013). Working for the common good is noble, whereas working for money is a means to an end. There has been doubt about the precise definition and measurement of the protestant work ethic (Furnham, 1987). I believe the concept has evolved. Perhaps the original protestant work ethic is now more related to the *need for achievement* (Furnham, 1987). Need for achievement was seen by McClelland as a personality dimension motivating people “to do their best to obtain monetary and other rewards ... they set themselves high but realistic targets” (cited in Furnham, 1984, p. 91). In fact, McClelland (1961) who first introduced the theory into

psychology stated that protestant work ethic values in child rearing led children to acquire strong achievement motivation.

An ethic to work, whether one gets paid or not, is not the same as the value to work for money. As mentioned before, a stable individual difference such as work commitment cannot logically be affected by financial strain, which is unstable for so many people. Perhaps Weber's original idea is an amalgamation of two concepts: a work ethic (hard work, asceticism, and anti-leisure) and need for achievement. In fact the idea of work ethic, has been found to divide into two constructs: economic need for employment and psychosocial need for employment (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999).

Do unemployed people with high work commitment rationalize their conditions, and are therefore unaffected by their good morals?

In the study by Stavrova et al. (2011), they explained their surprising null finding: Personal work commitment did not moderate the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. They interpreted: An unemployed person with high work norms does not feel any worse than an unemployed person with low work norms, because the former rationalizes his or her unemployment by blaming the economy, state, or former employer for making him or her break their norm to work. Secondly, Stavrova et al explained:

“... unless their unemployment is voluntary, unemployed individuals look for a new job. This activity involves a lot of searching, writing applications, and sometimes improving one's qualification. Thus, even being without a paid job, the unemployed may consider themselves as ‘working’ and thus not deviating from their personal norm to work” (p. 169).

Although they did not cite any cognitive consistency theories, they used the word *discrepant* when discussing discrepancy between people's values and employment status; “personal

unemployment does not necessarily make one discrepant from the norm to work in one's own eyes" (Stavrova et al., 2011, p. 169). Furthermore, their explanation coheres with *cognitive dissonance theory* (Festinger, 1957). The explanation by Stavrova et al. for their findings sounds possible but implausible.

Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) states that a person with conflicting thoughts or a person acting against his or her values, feels various negative emotions due to disequilibrium. The theory states that a person tries with various methods to relieve this disequilibrium through rationalization. What I find strange about the explanation from Stavrova et al. is that all academics (to the best of my knowledge) studying this moderation effect find that work values *do* moderate the relationship between unemployment and various affective measures (Paul & Moser, 2006). Only the study by Stavrova et al. (2011), and Feather and O'Brien (1986) report a null finding. If unemployed people with high work ethic rationalize their condition with excuses, as Stavrova et al. state, one would assume other academics studying this effect would report a similar finding: no moderation effect. However, everyone (except Feather and O'Brien) reports a significant moderation effect. Therefore, I ask: why do the participants in the study by Stavrova et al. rationalize their dissonance but participants in other studies do not?

For a moment, let's ignore all value theories. Would it not be logical to assume that a person going against his or her values would feel bad and be less satisfied with life? Is it not safe to assume work commitment would have a similar effect on the relationship between life satisfaction and unemployment (studies from Stavrova et al. and Feather and O'Brien) as it does on the relationship between unemployment and affective components of well-being (all other studies on this effect; Paul & Moser, 2006)? I believe that the findings of Stavrova et al. (2011) were due to comparison between two poorly demarcated groups. When volunteers are excluded, two distinct groups can be examined. One is active and receives Jahoda's

(1981) latent byproducts from work or volunteering work, the other receives few of these. Including unemployed volunteers thus probably reduces the moderation effect size because some unemployed individuals are getting relief for their motivation to work. To clarify, studies that have found work commitment to moderate the relationship between unemployment and well-being (Paul & Moser, 2006), but did not exclude unemployed volunteers would probably have seen a bigger effect size if they would not have included the unemployed engaging in volunteering work. The study by Feather & O'Brien (1986) and Stavrova et al. (2011) did not see a moderating effect because the study was not sensitive enough because of the poorly demarcated groups.

Let us consider dissonance theory once again. Could it not be that a person who holds strong beliefs towards working and unluckily finds him or herself out of work gets stuck in a limbo, with no way of rationalizing his or her conditions? According to Festinger (1957) one can reduce dissonance by: (1) Reducing the importance of discordant factors, (2) change some dissonant factor. Research hints that work commitment is very similar among the unemployed and employed (Wiener, Oei, & Creed, 1999). Furthermore, academics believe, as mentioned before, that work commitment is stable. Hence, it seems unemployed people with high work ethic are not reducing the importance of discordant factors (their work ethic). (3) Festinger's third option for reducing dissonance is adding consonant elements. Stavrova et al. (2011) explained their surprising results with this option of dissonance theory in mind. They added consonant elements like: job searching is a job, and blame shifting. However, as was discussed above, this seems implausible.

If a person with high work ethic cannot rationalize his or her unemployment: what is left is a person acting against his or her beliefs. According to cognitive consistency theories, this kind of discrepancy between values and status prompts negative emotions (Higgins, 2006) that surely affects life satisfaction and other well-being indicators.

Summary and hypotheses

To summarize, the effect unemployment has on various well-being variables has been thoroughly tested since the Great Depression. After decades of studying, academics are in an agreement that unemployment does affect psychological well-being.

Various variables have been found to affect this relationship. One of these is work commitment (Paul & Moser, 2006). Interestingly, most academics studying the moderating effect of work commitment (or other very similar variables originating from the idea of Weber (1905/2002), the protestant work ethic), use affective measures as a dependent variable (e.g. Feather & Bond, 1983; Jackson et al., 1983; Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999; Stafford et al., 1980). Only two studies that I found used life satisfaction as a dependent variable.

Neither of these studies (Feather & O'Brien, 1986; Stavrova et al., 2011) found work commitment to moderate the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. Since the former one hardly generalizes to the public (and did not exclude volunteers) and the other had a methodological flaw, it is necessary to study this relationship again. In the following manuscript we report an analysis of unemployment's effect on life satisfaction, and the moderating effect of the western work ethic. The current analysis has a large sample that can be expected to be a cross section of the general Icelandic public; thus the results should generalize better than the results from the study by Feather and O'Brien (1986).

Furthermore, we excluded all the volunteers to get groups that are more distinct, to compare.

Firstly, I hypothesize that general life satisfaction is lower among the unemployed, as numerous studies have found.

Second, I hypothesize that the western work ethic moderates the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. Thus, because of the discrepancy between values and

employment status, we expect the life satisfaction of unemployed people with high WWE to be lower than those who have low WWE.

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2. KAFLI: HANDRIT AÐ GREIN TIL BIRTINGINGAR

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF THE WESTERN WORK ETHIC ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNEMPLOYMENT AND LIFE SATISFACTION

The moderating effect of the western work ethic on the relationship between
unemployment and life satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Does the western work ethic (WWE) affect life satisfaction of unemployed people?

The moderating effect of work values on the relationship between unemployment and the affective dimensions of subjective well-being is well known, whereas research on the cognitive dimension has been lacking and misleading (Feather & O'Brien, 1986; Stavrova et al., 2011). By excluding unemployed volunteers – a gray area between the unemployment and employment – we seek to unravel this entanglement.

Responses from 315 male and 294 female Icelandic participants in the European Values Study (2008) were examined. Results showed that unemployment predicted life satisfaction ($b = 1.21, p < 0.001$); and that WWE moderated the relationship ($b = 1.02, p = 0.02$). This corresponds with studies using affective measures, but inconsistent with studies predicting life satisfaction. It is suggested that WWE does moderate this relationship, because of a discrepancy between employment status and values.

Keywords: western work ethic, work commitment, life satisfaction, unemployment, European Values Study

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Productivity has long been seen as a contributor to life quality. Because of its effect, many people recognize the dissatisfaction that follows an unproductive day.

However, some academics claim there are people who do not feel obliged to productive work, and are found lacking in work ethic (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002). It seems necessary that people remain committed and willing to work, for their own, and society's sake. This study examines the moderating effect of the western work ethic (WWE) on the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction (LS). We predict people with high WWE are less satisfied with life than people with low WWE during unemployment.

The western work ethic

In her book, *The Working Life: The Promise and Betrayal of Modern Work*, Ciulla (2000) writes about the history of attitudes towards work and the evolution of contemporary work values. She notes, "The work ethic that we have inherited is not a single concept but an amalgamation of three ideas". The first idea is *the principle of fairness and social obligation*. Able-bodied people should provide for themselves, it is their duty. The second element is the idea that *one should perform one's work to the best of his or her abilities*. The third idea is that *work itself has moral and spiritual value*, and a person is called to work by God.

The three ideas of *fairness*, *personal excellence*, and *personal goodness* grew the idea we choose to call the western work ethic. This concept, like all other related work value concepts, originates from (Weber, 1905/2002) idea of the protestant work ethic. We find this concept, the western work ethic, is appropriate in our study as it fits well with the questions used by the European Value Study to measure work values.

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Note that throughout this discussion, various work value terms will be used interchangeably, such as: work commitment; work norm; protestant work ethic and western work ethic. These and many other similar terms have sprung up that all originate from Weber (1905/2002) concept, the protestant work ethic. Despite the small variations in meaning, they all entail the same general idea: Work is important and virtuous.

The negative consequence of unemployment

There is a consensus among scholars that unemployment leads to lowered well-being; this has been confirmed in several meta-analyses (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; Paul & Moser, 2009). For example, Murphy and Athanasou (1999) examined 16 longitudinal studies from nine countries measuring unemployment's effect on mental health. Unemployed people who found a job during the studies showed medium improvement to their mental health ($d = 0.54$). Thus their mental health improved by more than half a standard deviation. Those who lost their job reported worse mental health, a small-medium effect (0.36; Cohen, 1977) of roughly one third of a standard deviation.

A few studies suggest that work values might moderate this frequently reported association (Paul & Moser, 2006). This is possibly because unemployed people who find work to be unimportant feel less guilty due to the congruity between employment status and their work values. Whereas, unemployed people with strong work values feel more guilty due to the discrepancy between their values and employment status (e.g. Festinger, 1957; Higgins, 1987).

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The moderating effect of work values

Not everyone shares the negative experience often followed by unemployment (Fineman, 1983). People differ in their passion for work. Those who are unemployed but find work to be fulfilling feel worse and are more prone to non-psychiatric disorders than those who don't share their work commitment (Paul & Moser, 2006). A few studies have shown that people with high employment commitment display more distress while unemployed (e.g. Stafford, Jackson, & Banks, 1980; Ullah, Banks, & Warr, 1985). Furthermore, a few longitudinal studies show the same effect (e.g. Jackson, Stafford, Banks, & Warr, 1983; Rowley, 2011).

This moderation effect is interesting because of its effect on individuals. People with low WWE feel similar during unemployment as during employment, which is positive from a certain point of view. However, a person who feels satisfied during unemployment is less motivated to look for a job (Prussia, Fugate, & Kinicki, 2001). Society wants people to look for jobs when unemployed, but also wants everyone to feel good. So people with high WWE are more motivated but feel worse; people with low WWE on the other hand, feel better but are less motivated to find a job.

The rationale for this study

Most of these studies have focused on well-being measures, such as: depression, anxiety, and distress (e.g. Feather & Bond, 1983; Jackson et al., 1983; Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999; Stafford et al., 1980). Therefore, the literature has solely focused on the two affective dimensions of the subjective well-being (positive and negative affect), while neglecting the cognitive dimension (life satisfaction or domain satisfaction). SWB is a measure of quality of life, which includes a person's

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emotional reactions and cognitive judgment of his life. To fully understand the scope of this moderation effect, it is necessary to see if the effect also applies to the cognitive dimension of SWB.

Life satisfaction. It is desirable to be satisfied with life. Low life satisfaction among adults predicts the onset of depression (Lewinsohn, Redner, & Seeley, 1991). Life satisfaction has been found to correlate with effective interpersonal relationships (Furr & Funder, 1998), school dropout (Frisch et al., 2002), occupational functioning (Marks & Flemming, 1999), and health status (Veenhoven, 1988). Furthermore, low life satisfaction has been shown to relate to risk behaviors and various mood-related disorders among adolescents as well (Gilman & Huebner, 2003).

Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) name five examples of factors affecting a person's evaluation of her life satisfaction: Desire to change life, satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with the past, satisfaction with the future, and significant others' view of one's life. Most likely, an unemployed person with a passion to work desires to change his or her life and is unsatisfied with his or her current life. Whereas an unemployed person with low work commitment might view the current life more positively and have a less desire to change.

Misleading non-significant findings for this effect. To our knowledge, there are only two studies that have examined the moderating effect of work commitment on the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. Neither study found a moderating effect, but both have serious limitations, which might explain the non-significant findings.

First, Feather and O'Brien (1986) found that 17-18 year old school leavers' work commitment did not moderate the relationship between unemployment and

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their life satisfaction. These results cannot be generalized to adults (Lennings, 1993) since the sample consists only of adolescents with no prior experience in the workforce. Adolescents have been found to be less job involved than adults (O'Brien & Kabanoff, 1979), and are not as heavily affected by unemployment as adults are (Cassidy, 1994). Possibly their self-esteem is not yet work-dependent (Patterson, 1997), and because of fewer financial obligations.

Second, Stavrova, Schlösser, and Fetchenhauer (2011) similarly concluded that a person's *personal injunctive norm to work* (work commitment) did not moderate the relationship between life satisfaction and unemployment, but a country's average work norm did (*societal injunctive norm to work*). That is, unemployed people suffer because of social pressure and disapproval, but not because of a discrepancy between values and employment status. However, Stavrova et al. (2011) did not exclude unemployed people doing volunteering work from their sample. We believe this is a limitation to their study, because volunteering work relieves some of the suffering.

The rationale behind excluding unemployed people engaging in volunteering work needs an explanation. Volunteers – sometimes referred to as the third employment sector (Anheier, 2005) – are a gray area between the employed and unemployed. According to Jahoda's (1981) *deprivation model*, people acquire five latent byproducts from work: time structure; social contacts; the experience of social purposes; status and identity; and regular activity. The suffering of the unemployed is due to the lack of these byproducts from their lives. Arguably, volunteering work can fulfill most of these byproducts. Furthermore, it has been argued that work values should be defined as a person attributing virtue and value to work in general, instead of just paid work (Shamir, 1986). Excluding unemployed volunteers in

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research on the effects of unemployment, gives the researcher two distinct groups to compare: One group receives Jahoda's byproducts; the other group does not (Feather & Bond, 1983).

Hypotheses

To meet the limitations regarding generalizability in the study by Feather and O'Brien (1986) we use a nationally representative sample. Further, we exclude volunteers in order to meet limitations in the study by Stavrova et al. (2011). Hence, our sample contains two clearly distinct groups: employed and unemployed.

First, we hypothesize that life satisfaction is lower among the unemployed, as numerous studies have found.

Second, we hypothesize that the western work ethic moderates the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. Thus, because of the discrepancy between values and employment status, we expect the life satisfaction of unemployed people with high WWE to be lower than those who have low WWE.

METHOD

Procedure and study design

Data from the European Values Study (2008) was used (EVS, 2010a). The research program has been gathering longitudinal cross-national data from the year 1981 across Europe. The survey was issued in a personal in-home manner by trained interviewers. Respondents were informed about the nature and purpose of the study.

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A cross-sectional study design was used. The dependent variable in the study was life satisfaction; the independent variables were employment status and the western work ethic.

Participants

A random sample of 1500 inhabitants 18 years or older was chosen from the national registry in Iceland. Thereof, 808 persons (399 men, 49.4% and 409 women, 50.6%) participated, giving a response rate of 53.9%. Average age of participants was 45 years ($SD = 6.85$; range 18 - 99 years). Employed respondents were 593 ($M age = 45$; 308 men, 51.9% and 285 women, 48.1%) and unemployed were 39 ($M age = 30$; 17 men, 43.6% and 22 women, 56.4%). Participants received a gift of chocolate in return for participation, and were entered into a prize draw, where they had a chance of winning 70 or 700 Euros (EVS, 2010b, p. 7). Data was collected between July 15th 2009 and Mars 15th 2010 (EVS, 2010b).

Measures

All measures were derived from the EVS 2010 database for Iceland (EVS, 2010a). Life satisfaction was measured with the question: "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" A 10-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (*dissatisfied*) to 10 (*satisfied*) was used (question 11).

Western work ethic was measured with five questions (question 18): (1) "To fully develop your talents, you need to have a job"; (2) "It is humiliating to receive money without having to work for it"; (3) "People who don't work turn lazy; (4) "Work is a duty towards society"; and (5) "Work should always come first, even if it means less spare time". Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale from 1

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(*agree strongly*) to 5 (*disagree strongly*). These questions were combined to form the factor: western work ethic ($\alpha = 0.66$).

Respondents were asked about their employment status (question 111).

Persons working more than 30 hours per week, less than 30 hours per week, self-employed, or in military service were dummy coded as 1 (*employed*). Those who reported being unemployed were coded as 0. All other values (retired or pensioned; doing housework; student; and disabled) were coded as missing.

Background variables. Respondents were shown a list of voluntary organizations and activities (see Appendix), and were asked whether they were currently doing unpaid voluntary work for any of the organizations. This list consisted of 17 voluntary organizations and activities.

Unemployed persons doing volunteering work were excluded from the analysis. Employed people doing volunteering work however were included. The rationale for this is to have two distinct groups to compare. As argued in the introduction, volunteers can be considered to be a gray area between unemployment and employment. Volunteering work fulfills Jahoda's (1981) latent byproducts: time structure; social contacts; the experience of social purposes; status and identity; and regular activity. Furthermore, work commitment and western work ethic cannot be considered to be concepts only referring to paid employment. This is because work commitment has been found to be stable; thus could not be affected by an unstable concept such as financial stress.

Statistical analyses

Linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses using the statistical software R 2.15.0 (R Development Core Team, 2012). A listwise deletion method

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was used to remove missing data; i.e. cases that had one missing observation on any of the following variables: life satisfaction, western work ethic, employment status, and volunteer work, were dropped from the analysis. After omitting all unemployed volunteers, and everyone who was not employed or unemployed (students, retired, etc.), we ended with a final sample of 609 respondents (583 employed and 29 unemployed). That is 75.4% of the former 808 observations.

The variables representing the western work ethic (Q18A, Q18B, Q18C, Q18D and Q18E) were inverted so a high score would indicate a high work ethic. An aggregated mean variable was made from the five questions representing the western work ethic. The aggregated WWE variable was centered before: (a) the interaction term was computed, and (b) it was entered into the regression model. The WWE variable was centered at three different levels: one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean score, and one standard deviation above the mean. Centering the moderation variable at three levels allows us to assess the simple effect of employment status at three levels of the western work ethic. Low WWE represents those who scored one SD below the mean; medium WWE represents those who scored at the mean of WWE; and high WWE represents those who scored one SD above mean. The mean of WWE was 2.78 (SD = 0.67; see Table 1). Thus, a low WWE was centered at 2.11 ($2.78 - 0.67$), medium WWE was centered at the mean, 2.78, and high WWE was centered at 3.45 ($2.78 + 0.67$). An interaction term was computed for each of the three centered WWE variables.

Assumptions. Examining the assumptions of linear regression, we observed life satisfaction was negatively skewed (-1.48) with a kurtosis of 3.45; transforming the data did not produce a more suitable distribution. WWE on the other hand, had a normal distribution (skewness = 0.38, kurtosis = 0.07). The assumptions of linearity

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and exogeneity; normality of the error variance; and homoscedasticity were not violated.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Most people are generally satisfied with their life. A mean score of 8.11 in the Icelandic population reflects this well (see Table 1). But not everyone is satisfied, one respondent reported a life satisfaction of 1, and 6% reported a life satisfaction below 6 (out of 10). After omitting everyone who was not employed or unemployed, the final sample of 609 consisted of 583 employed (95.73%) and 29 unemployed (4.27%). The moderation variable, WWE, had a mean score of 2.78 (SD = 0.67; range = 1 – 5) and an acceptable reliability of $\alpha = 0.66$.

Insert Table 1 here

Employment status and life satisfaction

We hypothesized that life satisfaction would be lower among unemployed people. As can be seen in table 2, this hypothesis was supported. Those who were employed were more satisfied with life than those who were unemployed ($b = 1.21, p < 0.00$). However, the regression equation explained only a small proportion of variance in life satisfaction scores among respondents, $R^2 = 0.03, F(1, 604) = 17.48, p < 0.001$,

Insert Table 2 here

hinting that third variable might be affecting this relationship. Can this unexplained variation be partly explained by our ethic to work?

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The moderating effect of the western work ethic when unemployed

volunteers are excluded

It will be recalled that the western work ethic was expected to moderate the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. Results from the regression analysis with life satisfaction as a dependent variable, employment status as an independent variable and WWE as a moderator are presented in table 3. As hypothesized, the interaction between WWE and employment status was statistically significant ($b = 1.02, p = 0.02$). The overall regression equation explained a rather small proportion of variance in life satisfaction scores among respondents, $R^2 = 0.05$, $F(3, 584) = 9.78, p < 0.001$.

Insert Table 3 here

To explore the nature of this interaction, the effect of employment status on life satisfaction for each of the three WWE groups was plotted in figure 1. While life satisfaction remained relatively constant among the respondents with low WWE, unemployed respondents were substantially less satisfied with life when they had medium or high levels of WWE, measuring with a mean life satisfaction of 7.1 and 6.2 out of 10.

Insert Figure 1 here

To test the effect of employment status on life satisfaction for each group, separate equations for: those who scored low, medium, and high on WWE were developed. Tests of simple slopes revealed that the slope for those who scored low on WWE was not significant, $t(584) = 0.86, p = 0.39$, whereas that for medium

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WWE ($t(584) = 3.60, p < 0.001$), and high WWE ($t(584) = 4.59, p < 0.001$) were significant (see Table 4).

Insert Table 4 here

To summarize, the hypothesis that the employment status – life satisfaction relationship would be moderated by the western work ethic received support. In addition to the significant moderation effect that was predicted, respondents with low WWE seemed unaffected by unemployment regarding their satisfaction with life whereas respondents with medium and high WWE were affected.

DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to address two questions. First, is life satisfaction lower among unemployed people in Iceland? Results supported this hypothesis. People without a job reported lower life satisfaction.

Unemployed people's suffering can be explained by Jahoda's (1981) latent byproducts. According to Jahoda, unemployed people are lacking five latent byproducts in life that employment provides: time structure; social contacts; the experience of social purposes; status and identity; and regular activity. These factors are, according to Jahoda, necessary to maintain life satisfaction. According to Jahoda (1982) getting fulfillment to these latent byproducts is a "psychological requirement" (Jahoda, 1982, p. 59). Therefore, a person deprived of time structure, social purposes, etc. is less mentally healthy according to Jahoda's argument.

Secondly, the aim of the present study was to answer the question: Is the relationship between employment status and life satisfaction moderated by the western work ethic? The finding also supports this hypothesis; the relationship was

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moderated by the western work ethic. The stronger the western work ethic, the greater the difference in life satisfaction between employed and unemployed people. In fact, while unemployed people possessing medium or high western work ethic were markedly less satisfied with their life than employed people with equivalent western work values. People with low work ethic seemed unaffected by their employment status.

These findings can be explained by Festinger's (1957) self-discrepancy theory (SDT). Like other discrepancy theories, SDT states that a discrepancy between values and a person's circumstances causes imbalance that leads to various psychological problems (Higgins, 2006). More specifically, SDT states that a discrepancy between current situation and one's beliefs (actual/own : ought/own discrepancy) makes a person vulnerable to guilt, self-contempt and uneasiness. Thus, a person willing, but unable to work feels unsatisfied.

As the results show, an employed person with high WWE is very satisfied ($M = 8.0$) because values and employment status are congruent. For the unemployed with high WWE, the discrepancy between current situation and values greatly affects life satisfaction ($M = 6.2$). In contrast, people with low WWE seem unaffected by unemployment regarding life satisfaction. The congruence between employment status and the values of the unemployed group with low WWE can explain these findings.

Previous Research

Our results were in line with the expectations generated by previous studies examining the moderating effect of work commitment on the relationship between employment status and health related dependent variables (Paul & Moser, 2006).

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Using 42 studies, Paul and Moser found that incongruence between employment status and employment commitment resulted in enhanced distress levels: with frequent signs of depression, anxiety; and low levels of well-being and self-esteem. The strength of the association ranged from $r = 0.13$ to $r = 0.19$ for mixed symptoms of distress. However, since the focus of their meta-analysis was on work commitment's moderation effect on the relationship between unemployment and health, the findings of Paul and Moser only provided indirect evidence the hypothesis tested in the present study. Only two papers have studied the same research question as we do, using life satisfaction as a dependent variable (Feather & O'Brien, 1986; Stavrova et al., 2011). The results of these studies were inconsistent with our results.

The inconsistency between our results and those of Feather and O'Brien (1986) and Stavrova et al. (2011) may be attributed to a very different sample being used. Feather and O'Brien used a limited sample of adolescents, whereas the present study used a sample from the general population of Icelanders. Adolescents, who have little or no prior work experience, and fewer financial obligations, have been found to be less job involved than adults (O'Brien & Kabanoff, 1979). Thus their values should not be generalized onto adults (Lennings, 1993). The results presented here can be generalized to all ages, whereas the results of Feather and O'Brien only apply to adolescents.

Stavrova et al. (2011) on the other hand, used a large sample from the general population of 28 European countries and their conclusion was: A person's personal injunctive norm to work (work commitment) does not moderate the relationship between life satisfaction and unemployment. Thus, no dissatisfaction occurs because the person is in a position that is inconsistent with his or her values. However, in

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contrast to the present research, unemployed people doing volunteering work were not excluded from the sample used in the analysis. Volunteering work provides a person with latent byproducts (Jahoda, 1981), just as paid employment does and including these participants in the analysis is therefore questionable. We argue that, since unemployed volunteers were not omitted from the analysis, Stavrova et al. (2011) gave misleading results. A portion of their unemployed group was getting relief from their apathy.

Implications

The practical implications, we argue, regards the difference in needs for the low vs. high WWE people. It can be argued that people with low work ethic fare better because their life satisfaction is not affected by their employment status. However, long-term unemployment has been found to be harmful on an individual basis (Patterson, 1997). In fact suffering, despite its negative effect, is regarded as quite motivating (Prussia et al., 2001). According to hedonistic view, people do try to change their behavior to avoid suffering and low life satisfaction. Therefore, people with low WWE can be expected to be less active in their job hunt, simply because they don't experience the decline in life satisfaction following unemployment. In contrast, unemployed people with high WWE have considerably lower LS during unemployment. Due to their suffering, it can be assumed that they are more active in their job search. This proposition has in fact been studied with a longitudinal study; employment commitment predicts job search and job search predicts reemployment (Prussia et al., 2001).

Another implication for research on work ethic and related constructs regards the definition of employment status. Traditionally, employment has been equated

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with working. However, being unemployed does not necessarily mean that people are not working, even though they are not working in exchange for money. A significant proportion of unemployed people reverts to the third sector (volunteering jobs), and is therefore working. For volunteers with high WWE, the discrepancy between ideal employment status and real employment status may be significantly less since they are in fact working. Not considering this in research on work ethic can have dramatic effects on the results; academics must therefore distinguish and define clearly the employment groups in their studies.

Clearly, the present research does not differentiate cause from association with cross-sectional data. However, the evidence for the moderation effect of WWE is theoretically convincing. Furthermore, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have confirmed the effect more frequently than not (Paul & Moser, 2006). In future research, experimental designs should be used to explore the causal nature of the constructs examined here.

It must also be noted that the explained variance for both models was very low ($R^2 = 0.03$ and 0.05), but significant nonetheless ($p < 0.001$ for both coefficients). However, there are many variables that affect life satisfaction (Edwards & Klemmack, 1973), so each variable can be expected to only explain a small proportion of its variance.

The remaining question is: can these results be generalized? Certainly, the results apply to the Icelandic public since a large random sample was drawn from the Icelandic registry. The first variable that comes to mind regarding generalization to other countries is culture type. People in individualistic cultures have been found to be more affected by unemployment regarding their life satisfaction and happiness than people in collectivistic cultures (Martella & Maass, 2000). However, culture

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type may only affect the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction (and well-being). Culture type should not affect the moderating effect of the western work ethic or other work value concepts; because if people in fact strongly endorse WWE they are by definition in a state of discrepancy. However, most research done on this relationship has been done in individualistic countries like Britain (e.g. Jackson et al., 1983; Stafford et al., 1980) and Australia (e.g. Feather & O'Brien, 1986; Wiener et al., 1999). The definition of the western work ethic and other related concepts entails a component relating to individualism (personal excellence) and another to collectivism (fairness and social obligation). Therefore, an individualistic country harnesses one part of the concept while a collectivistic country harnesses another. Therefore, studies of this effect are needed in collectivistic countries like China or Venezuela to estimate the generalization potential.

Finally, the moderating effect of work values needs to be studied further with the subjective well-being concept in mind. As discussed, researchers have only looked at the affective dimensions of the SWB. A greater emphasis on the cognitive dimension is in order, especially in light of these results.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics*

	Life satisfaction	Employment	WWE
Life satisfaction	-	0.37 ^a	-0.11 ^b
Employment		-	-0.08 ^a
WWE			-
Mean	8.11	-	2.78
SD	1.47	-	0.67

^aPolyserial correlation. ^bPearson correlation.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

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Table 2. *Model 1: Employment status' effect on life satisfaction*

	b_i	SE	95% CI	t -value	p -value
Intercept	6.96	0.28	6.40 – 7.52	24.53	0.000***
Employment	1.21	0.29	0.64 – 1.78	4.18	0.000***

Note: CI = confidence interval.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

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Table 3. *Model 2: The moderating effect of WWE on the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction*

	b_I	SE	95% CI	t -value	p -value
Intercept	10.45	1.27	7.95 – 12.95	8.22	0.000***
Employment	-1.77	1.30	-4.32 – 0.78	-1.36	0.174
WWE	-1.20	0.43	-2.04 – 0.36	-2.82	0.005**
Employment * WWE	1.02	0.44	0.16 – 1.87	2.32	0.021*

Note: CI = confidence interval.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

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Table 4. *The effect of employment status on life satisfaction for the low, medium and high WWV groups*

	b_1	SE	95% CI	t -value	p -value
Employment ^a					
Low WWE	0.38	0.45	-0.49 – 1.26	0.86	0.390
Medium WWE	1.06	0.29	-0.48 – 1.64	3.60	< 0.001***
High WWE	1.73	0.37	0.99 – 2.47	4.59	< 0.001***

Note: CI = confidence interval.

^aCoefficients in respect to the centering of the western work ethic.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

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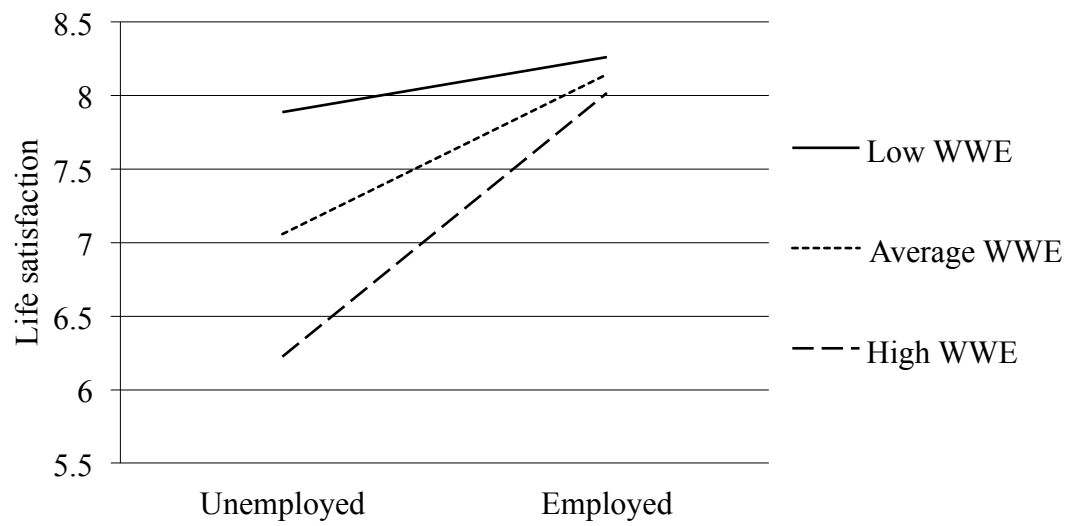


Figure 1. *The moderation effect of the western work ethic on the relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction*

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APPENDIX

Q5: List of voluntary organizations and activities in questionnaire

- a) Social welfare
- b) Religious or church organizations
- c) Education, arts, music or cultural
- d) Trade unions
- e) Political parties or groups
- f) Local community action on issues like poverty, unemployment etc.
- g) Third world development or human rights
- h) Conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights
- i) Professional associations
- j) Youth work
- k) Sports or recreation
- l) Women's groups
- m) Peace movement
- n) Voluntary organizations concerned with health
- o) Rescue unit
- p) Senior citizens associations
- q) Other