

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **WORK, LEISURE AND WELL-BEING IN CHANGING SOCIAL CONDITIONS.**

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#### INTRODUCTION

Profound transformations are occurring in the nature and organisation of work with potentially far-reaching social and economic consequences. In many countries there is an intensification of work-loads, and increasing job insecurity (Transitions 2006). Organisations are demanding greater efficiency and introducing new technologies and working practices in response to the pressures of competition in the private sector and efficiency drives in the public sector. In some organisations flexibility of working practices are being coupled with policies purporting to support the integration of work and non-work life, sometimes in response to new attitudes, values and aspirations of key workers; but also to enhance creativity, improve company loyalty, and reduce absenteeism and turnover (Lewis, 2003b). Yet many employees are experiencing long working hours, intensified work loads, constantly changing work practices, and job insecurity (Burchall et al 1999, Transitions 2006). Stress at work and home is viewed as a major problem (Worral and Cooper, 2001, Schneider et al (2004. But a gap exists in many Western societies between State policies on work-life balance and the implementation of policies in practice (Transitions 2006). Major social differentiation exists in relation to gender, class, occupation and other aspects of diversity (Taylor 2001, 2002), with resources in Western societies being increasingly unequally distributed, and significant variations arising in health, wellbeing and quality of life (Wilkinson, 1996, 2000). In this context the meanings and concepts of work and leisure are being re-appraised, and the relationships between work, leisure, social structure and wellbeing have emerged as challenging concerns for researchers, educators and policy makers (Haworth and Veal, 2004)

This chapter briefly discusses concepts and research in work and leisure as a context to summarising a model of well-being focussing on the characteristics of situations and persons. The pivotal role played by enjoyment in well-being is then examined. The chapter concludes with some recommendations for research and policy.

## WORK AND LEISURE

Work has often been equated with labour. Yet work is important to human functioning.

Kohn and Schooler (1983) indicate that where work has substantive complexity there is an improvement in mental flexibility and self-esteem. Csikszentmihalyi and Le Fevre (1989) studying 'optimal experience' or 'flow' in a range of occupations, found that this came more from work than leisure. The historian of work, Applebaum (1992), considered that 'Work is like the spine which structures the way people live, how they make contact with material and social reality, and how they achieve status and self-esteem- Work is basic to the human condition, to the creation of the human environment, and to the context of human relationships'. In modern society, paid work has been found to be important for wellbeing. (Jahoda 1982, Warr 1987)

Leisure can be defined in a number of ways, for example as time left over from work or activities engaged in for intrinsic satisfaction. Today, the so-called 'residual' definition of leisure, that is time which is not occupied by paid work, unpaid work or personal chores and obligations, is widely accepted in research, (Roberts 1999 p5). However, Roberts (1999:23) notes that the residual definition of leisure proves difficult to apply to the unemployed and retired, as well as among women, regardless of their employment status. He also recognises that technological, economic and social changes in society impact on leisure, making it 'necessary to ask repeatedly whether we need revise our notions about what leisure is' (p5). This is particularly complex when considering work that is absorbing and identity affirming, where the boundaries between activities that can be considered work or leisure are blurred (Lewis, 2003a) A distinction can also be made between serious leisure and other forms of leisure. For example, Stebbins (2004) discusses serious leisure, volunteerism and quality of

life. His research shows that extended engagement in absorbing leisure activities which require effort can provide a range of rewards. But there are also costs involved, which entails a commitment to the pursuit. Stebbins argues that an optimal leisure lifestyle includes serious and 'unserious' leisure, the latter characterised as comprising immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training. Quality of leisure life is influenced by the people with whom leisure participants pursue their leisure (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). And leisure plays a part in establishing and maintaining social worlds (Unruh 1980), networks, and friendships.

The amount of a person's total waking life-time spent in non-work activities is now greater than the amount spent in paid work (Veal, 1987: 16), so the importance of leisure for people's lives should not be underestimated or obscured by the focus on paid work at certain points in the life course. A Government report in the UK on 'Life Satisfaction: the state of knowledge and implications for government' (Donovan, Halpern and Sargeant, 2002) cited strong links between work satisfaction and overall life satisfaction, and also between active leisure activities and overall satisfaction. The report noted the case for government intervention to boost life satisfaction, by encouraging a more leisured work-life balance. Recent research suggests that many people, especially in highly skilled jobs prefer not to cease working altogether when they reach retirement age, but they do want to work less (Barnes, et al 2004). Leisure can provide an important part in life with implications for health and well being.

Iso-Ahola and Mannell (2004), examine the reciprocal relationship between leisure and health in contemporary context. They recognise that many people feel stressed because of financial difficulties and the dominance of work, and that in such situations leisure is used primarily for recuperation from work. The result is a passive leisure lifestyle and a reactive approach to personal health. They argue, on the basis of considerable research, that active leisure is important for health and wellbeing. Participation in both physical and non-physical leisure activities has been shown to reduce depression and anxiety, produce positive moods and enhance self-esteem and self-concept, facilitate social interaction, increase general

psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction, and improve cognitive functioning. Yet many people fail to discover active leisure. The authors argue that trying new things, and mastering challenges, is discouraged and undermined by the social system and environment.

However, the experiences of leisure and unpaid work in the household are not gender neutral. Kay (2001) argues that within households, the capacity of male and female partners to individually exercise choice in leisure is highly contingent upon explicit or implicit negotiation between them. Many studies have shown that, even when both partners are working, women still make a significantly greater contribution to domestic tasks, and there are key differences between men's ability to preserve personal leisure time, and the much more limited capacity of women to do so; though recent research (see special issue of *Leisure Studies* edited by Kay, 2006) shows the importance leisure can play in fatherhood. As individuals, men and women appear to give different priority to the work, family, leisure domains of their collective life, while simultaneously striving to achieve a mutually satisfying joint lifestyle. Kay (2001) argues that leisure is a significant domain of relative freedom and a primary site in which men and women can actively construct responses to social change. She considers that the recognition of this can contribute, at both a conceptual and empirical level, to a holistic understanding of contemporary lived experience; but that it raises the question about the extent to which we can realistically talk of families, collectively, being equipped to resolve the work-life dilemma.

Although experiences of work vary across different socio-political and cultural contexts, Haworth and Lewis (2005) drawing on two cross-national studies indicate that some general trends are nevertheless emerging across national boundaries. (*Transitions* [1] is a now completed study looking at work, family and well being in young adults in eight European countries. "*Looking Backwards to Go Forwards; The Integration of Paid Work and Personal Life*" [2] is a recently completed study of the harmonisation of paid work and personal life in seven countries in Europe, America, Africa and Asia). The pervasiveness of the trend towards intensification of work, reducing time and energy for other activities, and the gendered impact of this trend are evident in both studies.

The 'Transitions' study shows, for example, a drive for more efficiency and an intensification of work across all the countries as fewer people are expected to do more work. The study also reveals a widespread implementation gap between policies to support the reconciliation of work and family, whether at the state or workplace level, and actual practice; and persisting gender differences in work-life responsibilities and experiences in a range of social policy contexts. The *Transitions* case studies also show that both managers and work colleagues have a decisive role in creating the organisational climate and culture that contribute to the wellbeing of employed parents. (See also chapter 12 in this volume)

The study *'Looking Backwards to Go Forwards: The Integration of Paid Work and Personal Life'*. (See Lewis, Rapoport and Gambles, 2003; Rapoport, Lewis, Bailyn and Gambles, in press; Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, forthcoming) showed that the invasiveness of paid work into people's lives is moving from the 'developed' world to the 'developing' world. For example, people working in multinational companies in India tend to work long and intensive hours and report "work-life balance" as one of their major problems. The study found that many men and women in the countries studied report increased loneliness, and eroding support networks. The study also indicated that the barriers to satisfying and equitable harmonisation of paid work and personal life are largely societal and global rather than residing within individuals.

Rapoport et al (in press) argue "it is clear that current patterns of work create a lack of time and energy for the care of children, elders, and communities, as well as for pursuits that refresh the spirit and create the will and motivation for both employment and other activities." They argue there is a need to see this as a central issue in the global economy and point to the need for fundamental change for people sustainability.

## WORK, LEISURE, AND WELL-BEING

Research into work and leisure has significantly informed the study of well-being.

Jahoda (1982) has made a crucial case for the importance of the social institution of employment for well-being. She identified five categories of experience which employment automatically provides. These are: time structure, social contact, collective effort or purpose, social identity or status, and regular activity. Considerable research has shown the importance of these categories of experience for wellbeing (see Haworth 1997 for a summary). They have been incorporated in the nine environmental factors proposed by Warr, (1987) as important for wellbeing.

Jahoda emphasises that in modern society it is the social institution of employment which is the main provider of the five categories of experience. While recognising that other institutions may enforce one or more of these categories of experience, Jahoda stresses that none of them combine them all with as compelling a reason as earning a living. Jahoda does recognise that the quality of experience of some jobs can be very poor and emphasises the importance of improving and humanising employment. Jahoda also emphasises the important influence the institution of employment has on shaping thought and behaviour. She considers that since the Industrial Revolution employment has shaped the form of our daily lives, our experience of work and leisure, and our attitudes, values and beliefs. Jahoda (1986) agrees that human beings are striving, coping, planning, interpreting creatures, but adds that the tendency to shape one's life from the inside-out operates within the possibilities and constraints of social arrangements which we passively accept and which shape life from the outside-in. A great deal of life consists of passively following unexamined social rules, not of our making but largely imposed by the collective plans of our ancestors. Some of these rules meet basic human needs, even if we become aware of them only when they are broken by, for example, the enforced exclusion from an institution as in unemployment. Jahoda regards dependency on social institutions not as good or bad but as the *sine qua non* of human existence.

An influential model of the influence of characteristics of situations and persons on wellbeing has been proposed by Warr (1987, 1999). The model draws on that proposed by Jahoda (1982). It also encompasses features which Fryer and Payne (1984) highlight in their

personal 'agency account of people coping well with unemployment. Warr (1987) identified nine 'situational' factors, or 'Principal Environmental Influences' important for wellbeing, measured on several dimensions. These factors are: opportunity for control, environmental clarity, opportunity for skill use, externally generated goals, variety, opportunity for interpersonal contact, valued social position, availability of money, and physical security. These features of the environment are considered to interact with characteristics of the person to facilitate or constrain psychological wellbeing or mental health. Warr produced a classification of 'enduring' personal characteristics which interact with situational factors on mental health. These person factors include baseline mental health, demographic factors such as age and gender, values, and abilities. Baseline mental health includes several features often considered as elements of personality, such as neuroticism, self-confidence, hardiness, and locus of control. It is recognised that wellbeing has many components (see Haworth 2004), and that what we view as important may be culturally determined. In his concept of mental health from a Western perspective, Warr (1987) advocates the measurement of affective wellbeing, competence, autonomy, aspiration and integrated functioning. However, it is the measure of affective wellbeing (Warr 1990), which has received the greatest empirical attention by Warr and colleagues. Warr (1987,1990) devised a series of scales to measure affective wellbeing on three principal axis: the 'pleasure axis' (measuring displeasure to pleasure, by questions on enjoyment, satisfaction and happiness), the 'anxiety-contentment' axis, and the 'depression-enthusiasm' axis. The scales can be administered to measure affective wellbeing in work or in leisure.

Research conducted at Manchester University developing a questionnaire measure of the nine Principal Environmental Influences (PEIs) (summarised in Haworth 1997), shows strong associations between each of the nine PEIs and measures of mental health. Bryce and Haworth (2003) have also shown that the influence of control on wellbeing can operate by different pathways in males and females

An important development of the model, discussed in Haworth (1997, 2004), is the inclusion of the role of enjoyment. A study by Haworth, Jarman and Lee (1997) used

questionnaires to measure the PEIs, the person factor: locus of control, and well-being. The Experience Sampling Method was also used over a period of one week to measure positive subjective states, including enjoyment. The study indicated the important role enjoyment played in the link between person, situational factors and well-being. Rotter (1966,1990) emphasises that locus of control is a learned expectancy, rather than a fixed trait.. Furnham and Steele (1993) also note that while locus of control beliefs may influence experience, the reverse may also be true. They suggest that positive successful life experiences probable increase internal locus of control beliefs through optimistic attributions. These may increase confidence, initiative and positive motivation, and thus lead to more successful experiences. Rotter (1982) indicates the possible importance of ‘enhancement behaviours’, which he viewed as specific cognitive activities that are used by those with an internal locus of control disposition to enhance and maintain good feelings. However, Uleman and Bargh (1989) also indicate the importance of subconscious processes in wellbeing, and Merleau-Ponty (1962) in his Embodiment theory of consciousness indicates the importance of both non-reflective and reflective interactions in Being (see Haworth 2000). Conceivably, positive subjective states could influence person factors, such as dispositions, coping styles etc, through both reflective and non -reflective interactions. In turn, person factors could influence wellbeing directly, or indirectly through access to situational factors important for wellbeing. The model can be investigated in both work and non-work situations, using the questionnaires given in Haworth (1997). Qualitative methods, including interviews, accounts, observation, and ethnographic studies (Haworth 1996, Crossley 2000) can be used to investigate particular aspects in greater detail.

Extensive research shows that enjoyment in both leisure and work is important for wellbeing, (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988, Clarke and Haworth 1994, Haworth and Evans 1995, Bryce and Haworth 2002). Delle Fave and Massimini (2003 ) note that creative activities in leisure, work, and social interaction can give rise to ‘flow’ or ‘optimal’ experiences. These experiences foster individual development and an increase in skills in the lifelong cultivation of specific interests and activities.

## **Enjoyment and Flow**

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) distinguish between pleasure and enjoyment. They note that ‘Pleasure is the good feeling that comes from satisfying homeostatic needs such as hunger, sex, and bodily comfort. Enjoyment on the other hand, refers to the good feelings people experience when they break through the limits of homeostasis – when they do something that stretches them beyond what they were – in an athletic event, an artistic performance, a good deed, a stimulating conversation. Enjoyment, rather than pleasure, is what leads to personal growth and long term happiness’.

Csikszentmihalyi has long considered enjoyment to play a pivotal role in wellbeing. In a pioneering study, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) set out to understand enjoyment in its own terms and to describe what makes an activity enjoyable. He found that when artists, athletes and creative professionals were asked to describe the best times experienced in their favourite activities they all mentioned a dynamic balance between opportunity and ability as crucial. Optimal experience, or ‘flow’ as some of the respondents’ described it, could be differentiated from states of boredom, in which there is less to do than what one is capable of, and from anxiety, which occurs when things to do are more than one can cope with.

Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) report several in-depth accounts of flow and its importance for subjective wellbeing. They summarise the main dimensions of enjoyable flow as:

- Intense involvement
- Clarity of goals and feedback
- Deep concentration
- Transcendence of self
- Lack of self consciousness
- Loss of a sense of time
- Intrinsically rewarding experience
- Balance between skill and challenge

Csikszentmihalyi (1991, p 36) notes that in the flow state action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He expresses it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between stimulus and response, between past, present and future. It is considered that flow can be obtained in almost any activity, with the goals of activities serving as mere tokens that justify the activity by giving it direction and determining rules of action. Csikszentmihalyi emphasises that flow activities need not be active in the physical sense, and that amongst the most frequently mentioned enjoyable activities are reading and being with other people. He also recognises that the flow experience is not good in an absolute sense, and that whether the consequences of any particular instance of flow is good in the larger sense needs to be discussed in terms of more inclusive social criteria. Burglary, for example, can be a flow experience.

Flow has also been extensively investigated using the experience sampling method (ESM). Respondents answer questions about activity and subjective states on short scales in a diary several times a day in response to signals from a pre-programmed device such as a watch or radio pager. Several such studies are reported in Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988). The defining characteristic of flow in these studies is a balance between skill and challenge. An important development of the three-channel model of flow (anxiety, flow, boredom) proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) was made by Massimini and Carli (1988) by using the level of challenge as well as the skill challenge ratio (e.g. greater, equal and less) to give more differentiated models. A four-channel model showed that people were found to report the most positive subjective states when challenge and skills were in balance and when both were above the mean levels for the week of testing. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988 p 260) note that when both challenges and skills are below what is customary for a person, it does not make sense to expect a person to be in flow, even if the two variables are perfectly balanced.

Studies by Clarke and Haworth (1994) and by Haworth and Evans (1995) showed that activities described as highly challenging with skill equal were highly enjoyable about only half of the times. Further, these studies showed that high enjoyment could be experienced when individuals engaged in activities which were described as only of a low challenge, such as watching TV. It is important to note, however, that high enjoyment was more often associated with high challenge met with equal skill (flow). Also, when high challenge met with equal skill is found to be enjoyable this seems to be beneficial for wellbeing. In the study of college students by Clarke and Haworth (1994) subjects who had flow experiences which were highly enjoyable were found to score significantly higher on several standard questionnaire measures of psychological wellbeing (Warr 1990, Warr, Cook and Wall 1979, Goldberg 1978) than subjects who did not experience flow as highly enjoyable. The enjoyable flow group also experienced more happiness, relaxation, and interest, on average, as measured by the ESM, than those who did not experience flow as highly enjoyable. Thus enjoyable flow seems to be important for psychological wellbeing, though this requires further exploration.

Enjoyable flow experiences come from a wide range of activities. In the study of young people by Haworth and Evans (1995) highly enjoyable flow experiences were most frequently associated with the job, followed by listening to music. Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) in an ESM study, found, contrary to expectations, that the vast majority of flow experiences, measured as perceived balanced skill-challenge experiences above the person's average level, came when people were at work rather than in free time. A study by Haworth and Hill (1992) of young adult white-collar workers shows similar results.

A small study of working women by Allison and Duncan (1987, 1988) used a questionnaire they devised to measure enjoyable flow. The results showed work to be the primary source of flow for professional workers, whereas for blue-collar women it was leisure. The greatest source of flow in leisure was found to be in interpersonal relationships for both groups, particularly those with children. Using a similar questionnaire, a study of male and female office workers by Bryce and Haworth (2002) showed flow to be associated

with wellbeing. Results also emphasised the importance of interpersonal relationships for flow in women. This is consistent with previous research indicating the importance of social interaction in leisure for women, arguably resulting from gender demands. (Deem, 1986; Green, Hebron and Woodward, 1990; Shaw, 1994; Samuel, 1996)

### **Work-life balance**

Currently there is much concern with work-life balance. Primeau (1996), however, argues that it is not possible to say what is a healthy work-life balance. He suggests that occupational psychologists should examine the range of affective experiences that occur during engagement in one's customary round of occupations in daily life. He sites an important example being research into enjoyable, challenging ('flow') experiences in daily life. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999) indicate that while work and family can be in conflict, having negative effects on each other, they can also be integrated, having reciprocal positive effects. For example, positive attitudes and experiences in one domain may spill over to the other domain permitting fuller and more enjoyable participation in that role. They note that 'Stressful, rigid work environments that demand extended commitments can interfere with family life, whereas, flexible work environments that provide opportunities for self control can enrich family life' (p409). They call for the adoption of a life stage perspective in research, and more research into dual earner families. Lewis (2003a) also notes that managing multiple work and non-work (especially family) roles can be very stressful, but can also create opportunities for multiple sources of satisfaction and wellbeing. Information technology is now increasingly allowing work to be done in almost any situation, creating pressures and opportunities.

### **CONCLUSIONS.**

The ways in which we conceptualise work, leisure and well being are in flux, reflecting, in part, the changing societal, economic and community contexts in which work and leisure take place (Haworth and Lewis, 2005). The conceptualisation of well-being is shifting from a

concern with stress and illness to include a focus on positive experiences.

Both work and leisure are important for wellbeing. Taylor (2002) in a report on the ESRC funded Future of Work programme advocates that a determined effort is required to assess the purpose of paid work in all our lives, and the need to negotiate a genuine trade-off between the needs of job efficiency and leisure. Governments rightly place a very high priority on action to stimulate employment, for both economic and social reasons. Leisure facilities and opportunities are also provided by National and Local government, and by educational institutions. Voluntary associations and groups also play an important role in leisure provision, occasionally funded by grants. But leisure opportunities are often cut back. While leisure is in many ways an individual phenomenon, the social and economic institution of leisure, arguably, needs to be more in balance with the social and economic institution of employment.

Taylor (2002) considers that class and occupational differences remain of fundamental importance to any understanding of the world of work. Class is also important in understanding the world of leisure (Cricher and Bramham (2004). It is thus important to monitor the distribution of resources available for work and leisure in different groups in society, whether these are analysed by class, gender, age, ethnicity or location. Equally important in societies characterised by diversity, is research into the experiences and motivations of individuals with varying work and leisure life-styles.

Haworth (1997 ch7) argues that the diversity of individual experience and requirements, is not merely a function of rational knowledge, but is built into the bodily fibre of experience and social networks of practice reflecting both the social and temporal nature of human endeavour. Recognising this means there is no one correct policy for work and leisure. In rapidly changing societies, time is needed for social practices to meet new requirements; and social practices need to be monitored and evaluated, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

## NOTES

[1] [www.workliferesearch.org/transitions/](http://www.workliferesearch.org/transitions/) Professor Sue Lewis was project Director.

Dr John Haworth was a team member specialising in well-being.

[2] The study *Looking Backwards to Go Forwards. The Integration of Paid Work and Personal Life* was funded by a grant from The Ford Foundation to Rhona Rapoport at the Institute for Family and Environment Research.

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