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A good life is a personal life: Relationship fulfillment and work fulfillment in judgments of life quality[☆]

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Abstract

Three studies examined folk concepts of the good life in samples of college students and community adults. An experimental design varied a target's sex, work fulfillment (WF), and relationship fulfillment (RF). RF had the strongest effect on both judgments of life desirability and the person's moral goodness. WF was a significant but weaker influence. Targets with high RF were judged as more likely to go to heaven, whereas WF had no effect on this judgment. There was no effect for target gender. In Study 3, individual differences in intrinsic motivation in the relationship and work domains interacted with target fulfillment to predict desirability and moral goodness judgments. Overall, the results indicate that a good life must include fulfilling personal relationships; WF is a plus but seemingly not essential.

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1. Introduction

Sigmund Freud was once asked what a healthy person should do well. Freud famously replied, “Lieben und arbeiten.” (“To love and to work.”) Clearly, these are two central domains of human life. Indeed, many theories of optimal human experience include the capacity to relate to others and the capacity for meaningful work (e.g., Becker, 1992; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1989). These aspects of life reflect two orthogonal dimensions of human motivation (Bakan, 1963; McAdams, 1985): Communion and agency have been portrayed by McAdams (e.g., 1985) as the central human motives that combine to produce generativity, one the hallmarks of healthy maturity. Conflicts between family life and work are also common dilemmas facing modern citizens (e.g., Newman et al., 1992; Perkins & DeMeis, 1996). Some previous research has examined folk concepts of the good life (King & Napa, 1998; Scollon & King, 2004), but only work variables were studied. The purpose of the present research was to examine the contributions of both relationship and work fulfillment to ideas of a good life.

Satisfaction in relationships and satisfaction at work are strong correlates of overall life satisfaction (Judge & Watanabe, 1994). People who have good intimate connections to other people report greater feelings of subjective well-being and happiness (Myers & Diener, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 1998). People who are socially isolated experience poor mental and physical health (e.g., Lynch, 1979; Williams, Takeuchi, & Adair, 1992). Having fulfilling relationships can also be judged as morally good. Many religions advise people to be kind to others. Moral goods such as forgiveness, fidelity, and loyalty are also reflected in close interpersonal relationships.

Work fulfillment (WF) also leads to higher subjective well-being (Feldt, Kinnunen, & Maunao, 2000; Wiener, Muczyk, & Martin, 1992). Work provides an opportunity to engage in activities related to intrinsic motives such as autonomy and competence (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000). At work, individuals are more likely to experience “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Work is also a source of meaning in life, a strong correlate of subjective well-being (Ryff, 1989; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). People who see their work as a calling are more satisfied with their work and report higher life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). In a philosophical treatment of what makes a good life, Becker (1992) included “meaningful activity” (c.f., Aristotle’s concept of “eudemonia”).

Engagement in work may also be seen as morally good, in the context of the Protestant Work Ethic (Weber, 1930/1976). Earthly reward reflects God’s grace, and those who succeed on earth are thought to be among God’s chosen. Sloth is one of the seven deadly sins. Laziness is listed as one of the damning sins of Sodom. Furthermore, the idea that “idle hands are the devil’s workshop” implies that being actively engaged in work is a moral protective.

1.1. Predictions: Maslow vs. the individualistic society

Given that both WF and relationship fulfillment (RF) are part of the good life, we wondered: Is one more important than the other? In the studies reported here, we examined the *relative contribution* of RF and WF to judgments of a life as desirable and morally good. From an attachment theoretical perspective (e.g., Bowlby, 1982), social bonds predate exploration, and to the extent that work can be seen as the adult equivalent of exploration (c.f., Collins, 1996), we might expect that RF would be valued more highly than WF. Similarly, Maslow's (1968) motivational hierarchy places belongingness needs as more basic than esteem needs, and a recent review article demonstrated that the need to belong is both strong and pervasive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Using these perspectives, we predicted that RF should be more important to the good life than WF.

However, we acknowledged that in an individualistic, work-focused society such as the United States (e.g., Schor, 1991), WF could also be a very strong influence. The US is often described as the most individualistic culture in the world, valuing the self and its unique qualities above relationships with others (Hofstede, 2001). This is in contrast to more collectivistic cultures that place more value on close relationships (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Given that, we might expect that Americans would highly value work, as it is the most straightforward source of individual accomplishment. Relationships, which often entail sacrifices to the self, might be valued less.

American culture has become even more self-oriented and less other-oriented in the last few decades; this is reflected in larger social trends such as the high divorce rate, longer work hours, and increased number of people living alone (Fukuyama, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Schor, 1991; Twenge & Campbell, 2001). Writing in the 1970s, Christopher Lasch (1979) argued that the United States promotes a "culture of narcissism," with Americans increasingly focusing on their own needs without regard to others. Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka (1981) confirmed these trends with empirical data from 1957 to 1976; Americans in 1976 were considerably more self-focused. Yankelovich (1981) documents similar changes in polling data over this time period. Bellah (1986) documents the pervasive self-focus of Americans in a series of case studies, concluding that American culture promotes a strong individualism. Thus, we have two competing predictions from two different theories: Maslow's hierarchy predicts that RF will be more important, but the strong individualism of American culture suggests that WF will be more important.

1.2. Possible gender differences

We also investigated the role of gender in these judgments. From a social role perspective (Eagly, 1987), the relationship domain has special significance to women while the work domain has special significance for men. Some empirical work supports this conjecture: In one study, job insecurity was related to lowered happiness only for men and not for women (De Witte, 1999). However, this differ-

ence might not be as strong as it once was. The relationship between socioeconomic status and self-esteem is now stronger for women than for men (Twenge & Campbell, 2002), and people believe that women are becoming progressively more work-oriented and assertive (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). Still, judgments of the quality of a woman's life might depend more on her RF, while the quality of a man's life might depend more on his success in the work domain. Thus, we predicted that gender would interact with the fulfillment variables to predict desirability and moral goodness judgments, with RF expected to be more crucial to quality of life judgments for female participants and female targets, and WF to be more central to quality of life judgments for male participants and male targets.

1.3. Overview of present research

Previous research (e.g., King & Napa, 1998) addressed views of the good life by varying only work-related variables. They found that people who enjoyed their jobs were judged as having better lives and as morally superior. Scollon and King (2004) found that people see moderate wealth and effortful work at a career as additional parts of a good and moral life. However, both of these articles focused exclusively on work fulfillment, and neither addressed the role of personal relationships. Thus this article is the first to examine the importance of relationships to the good life. As noted above, theorists such as Maslow would argue that the good life cannot be studied without considering the influence of relationships with others.

We sought to discover the relative contribution of relationships and work to perceptions of the good life. To address this question, we designed a scenario study to experimentally test perceptions of the good life; participants read descriptions of targets and reported their judgments of the person's life. Although judgments of scenarios lack the greater realism of real life experiences, they allowed us to use an experimental design to more precisely test perceptions of fulfillment domains. Using an experimental design eliminates the confounds present in a correlational study. Because participants were randomly assigned, between subjects, to read different scenarios, we can be confident that their judgments differed on the basis of the stimuli rather than some other individual difference.

This experimental scenario design also allowed us to focus on two life fulfillment domains: RF and WF. As noted above, these are generally agreed to be the two most important realms of fulfillment in life. We chose not to include other life domains in order to keep the study design as simple as possible (because we included gender of the target and the participant, the design is already $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$). Examining only RF and WF also allowed us to use an experimental design to determine the relative contribution of each domain without interference from other domains. This was our main goal: How much do relationship fulfillment and WF each contribute to the good life? We examined this question in a college student sample in Study 1 and a sample of community adults in Study 2. In Study 3, we also explored how these domains help fulfill human needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1995).

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants

Participants were 161 students at the University of Michigan (99 women, 62 men; mean age = 18.7; 74% White/non-Hispanic, 5% African-American, 5% Hispanic, 10% Asian, and 6.2% multiracial/“other”).¹

2.1.2. Materials and procedure

Questionnaires informed participants they would be examining a survey that had been completed by someone about his or her life. Target information was designed to represent all crossings of a 2 (sex of target) \times 2 (high vs. low RF) \times 2 (high vs. low WF) \times 2 (participant sex) between - subjects, random assignment design.²

The survey, ostensibly completed by the target, featured six questions with ratings from 1 (very little) to 5 (extremely much). RF items included, “I gain a strong sense of personal fulfillment in my family relationships,” “I feel that my interpersonal relationships lack meaning,” and “Spending time with others is a source of personal meaning in my life.” These items were rated 5, 1, and 4, and 1, 5, and 2 for high and low levels of RF, respectively. WF items included, “I gain a strong sense of personal fulfillment at my job,” “I feel like my job is something I have to do rather than something I want to do,” and “Working at my job is a source of personal meaning in my life.” These items were rated 5, 1, and 4, and 1, 5, and 2 for high and low levels of WF, respectively. The target had ostensibly circled his or her sex (spaces for the target’s name and place of employment were whited out). The questionnaires were completed using different handwriting for the male targets and female targets.

For desirability, participants rated how much they would like to have the life in question, how much this life seemed to be a “good” life, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely much), and the target’s overall quality of life on a scale from 1 (very low) to 10 (very high). These ratings were highly correlated (see [Table 1](#)), so for some analyses we combined these three items into an overall desirability index ($\alpha = .82$).

For moral goodness, participants rated the morality of the life on a scale from 1 to 5 and then rated the “final reward” that the target would likely face in the afterlife (after [King & Napa, 1998](#)), on a scale from 1 (punishment/hell) to 10 (reward/

¹ These data and the data in the other studies were all collected before 9/11/01. Thus they reflect American culture and views before the events of that day.

² In addition, target marital status was manipulated in Studies 1 and 2. (Thus, the first two studies employed a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ design). Target marital status interacted with RF for one variable only [quality of the life: $F(3, 144) = 21.03, p < .01$]. In this sample, the ratings for RF (low versus high) affected quality judgments more if the target was married (quality $M = 3.05$ for low, $M = 7.35$ for high) than if the target was single ($M = 3.70$ for low, $M = 6.55$ for high). Thus participants conjectured that a happy (versus unhappy) personal life was more important for married people versus single people. No other effects for marital status were found and, thus, this variable is not included in the additional analyses.

Table 1
Correlations and descriptive statistics for dependent measures, Study 1 ($n = 161$)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Liking	—				
2. Good life	.68	—			
3. Quality of life	.69	.81	—		
4. Moral	.41	.54	.51	—	
5. Final judgment	.34	.53	.52	.58	—
Mean	1.82	2.67	5.16	3.31	7.27
SD	1.12	1.24	2.46	.92	1.88

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .05$ or below.

heaven). We combined these into an moral judgment index for some analyses ($\alpha = .63$).

Finally, participants completed three self-ratings including “How important is religion in your life?” “How important is spirituality in your life?” and “How much do you religious beliefs influence your daily decisions?” on a 1–5 scale. Items were averaged to form a composite religiosity measure ($\alpha = .89$, $M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.19$).

2.2. Results and discussion

Correlations and descriptive statistics for all dependent measures are shown in Table 1. None of these related to sex, age, or religiosity. The independent variables (target sex, participant sex, WF, and RF) were entered into two multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) examining the desirability index and the moral judgment index.

Target sex and participant sex did not produce significant main effects or interactions. This was clear evidence against our second hypothesis, that RF would matter more for women and work fulfillment for men; on the contrary, our respondents were apparently not influenced by the target’s gender. Thus, we collapsed over target and participant sex in the remaining analyses.

2.2.1. Desirability

The results for the desirability of the life confirmed our first hypothesis: RF was considerably more important than WF. Both were important influences, however; Cohen’s (1977) description of effect sizes would classify the effect for WF as medium (d between .50 and .80) and the effect for RF as large or very large (above .80; these effect sizes are shown in Table 3). A 2 (RF) \times 2 (WF) MANOVA on the desirability index revealed significant multivariate main effects for both WF [$F(3, 144) = 12.17$, $p < .05$] and RF [$F(3, 144) = 72.49$, $p < .05$], qualified by a significant 2-way interaction [$F(3, 144) = 4.45$, $p < .05$].³ In analyses on individual items,

³ Following Cohen (1994), we have chosen a single α level of $p < .05$. Thus, we report only this α level. Many p values were $p < .01$ or $p < .001$, but Cohen (1994) suggests a single level and we follow this recommendation, particularly because we have reported effect sizes for most results.

this interaction was significant only for liking [$F(1,144) = 11.39, p < .05$]. The means for this interaction indicated that WF contributed to the desirability of a life only when RF was high. The combination of high WF and high RF was the most preferred life ($M = 3.03$), followed by the high RF/low WF cell ($M = 1.80$). Means for low RF were 1.40 for high WF and 1.08 for low WF. (These are different from the means in Table 3, which instead shows the combined conditions; for example, the mean for low WF combines the low WF, high RF condition and the low WF, low RF condition).

In analyses on individual items, liking, goodness, and quality all showed significant main effects for both WF and RF. Table 3 summarizes the main effects, including means, effect sizes, and significance tests for the differences in effects (this last analysis uses a z test to calculate whether the effect sizes for WF and RF are significantly different from each other). In every case, the effect for WF, though significant, was dwarfed by the significantly stronger effect for RF. Although both WF and RF were strong influences on judgments of life desirability, RF was stronger.

2.2.2. Moral goodness

Judgments of moral goodness were much more influenced by RF compared to WF. A MANCOVA on the moral judgment index (covarying religiosity) indicated significant multivariate main effects for WF [$F(2,142) = 4.77, p < .05$] and RF [$F(2,142) = 43.39, p < .05$] and no interactions.⁴ Analyses of individual items are summarized in Table 3. Moral goodness showed a weak but significant effect for WF and a much stronger effect for RF. The difference between the effect sizes is stronger here than for life desirability; the effect size for WF on moral goodness is small to medium (between .20 and .50), whereas the effect size for RF is large (above .80; Cohen, 1977). WF had no effect on judgments regarding the target's probability of going to heaven (in fact the means were slightly in the opposite direction). In contrast, RF had a dramatic effect on perceptions of going to heaven, with the effect size almost twice the .80 cutoff for a large effect size.

3. Study 2

Study 1 provides strong evidence for the centrality of relationship fulfillment (RF) to folk concepts of the good life. WF was also important, but the effects for RF were stronger. A life rich in relationships was also judged as morally superior. However, the conclusions of Study 1 are limited by the use of undergraduates. Students may not see WF as important because they have not yet had much work experience. In addition, perceptions of the good life may vary with age (e.g., Ryff, 1989). The non-effect for gender might also be a byproduct of the college student sample. Region

⁴ Participants also reported their religious affiliation; 31% were Catholic, 36% Protestant, 8.7% Jewish, 8.0% other religions, and 14% no religion. The reported results did not change when analyzed for Catholics only ($n = 50$); thus, there is no support for the idea that Catholics view work as a prerequisite for moral good or heavenly reward.

Table 2
Correlations and descriptive statistics for dependent measures, Study 2 ($n = 166$)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Liking	—				
2. Good life	.77	—			
3. Quality of life	.74	.79	—		
4. Moral	.47	.55	.52	—	
5. Final judgment	.56	.62	.58	.57	—
Mean	1.94	2.68	4.69	3.23	6.64
SD	1.24	1.20	2.49	1.12	1.13

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .05$ or below.

may also be a factor: The majority of respondents in Study 1 were from the Northern United States. Given the cultural and religious differences between the North and South, a replication across regions would be strong evidence for the generalizability of Study 1's conclusions. Thus, Study 2 sampled community adults from Dallas County, Texas.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants

One hundred and sixty-six adults (88 women, 7 not reporting) were recruited to participate in this study as they awaited jury duty in the Dallas County Courthouse.⁵ Ethnic representation was 78% White/Anglo, 12% African-American, 2% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1.2% identified as "other." Ages ranged from 20 to 69 ($M = 45.9$; $SD = 11.56$). 58.4% of the participants were born in Texas or the South (14% were from the Northeast, 18% from the Midwest, 4% from the West coast, with the rest not reporting).

3.1.2. Materials and procedures

Participants were told that the questionnaire (approximately 10 min) was anonymous and would involve evaluating another person's life. The method was again between-subjects with random assignment to conditions. Upon returning the questionnaire, the participants were given a piece of candy. Questionnaires were identical to Study 1. We once again combined the desirability, moral judgment, and religiosity questions into indexes.

3.2. Results and discussion

Table 2 displays the correlations and descriptive statistics for all dependent measures, none of which were related to sex, age, or religiosity. As in Study 1, there were no main effects or interactions for target or participant sex. Even among a sample of community adults in the South, gender did not influence judgments on the importance

⁵ Jurors were culled from the rolls of the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Table 3

Summary of results for Studies 1 and 2: means for significant main effects, and relative effect of work vs. relationship fulfillment

	Work fulfillment			Relationship fulfillment			Z
	Low	High	<i>d</i>	Low	High	<i>d</i>	
<i>Liking</i>							
Study 1	1.44 (.73)	2.21 (1.30)	0.74	1.24 (.53)	2.41 (1.24)	1.24	2.09*
Study 2	1.81 (1.25)	2.09 (1.24)	0.10	1.55 (1.09)	2.39 (1.27)	0.81	1.73
<i>Good life</i>							
Study 1	2.40 (1.14)	2.94 (1.28)	0.45	1.84 (.82)	3.50 (1.01)	1.82	5.43*
Study 2	2.50 (1.04)	2.81 (1.09)	0.63	2.17 (1.02)	3.17 (0.96)	1.05	2.55*
<i>Quality of life</i>							
Study 1	4.63 (2.26)	5.70 (2.54)	0.45	3.38 (1.67)	6.95 (1.70)	2.14	6.44*
Study 2	4.35 (2.48)	5.08 (2.48)	0.63	3.58 (2.17)	5.93 (2.25)	1.26	2.27*
<i>Moral goodness</i>							
Study 1	3.15 (.92)	3.47 (.90)	0.35	2.86 (.84)	3.76 (.77)	1.05	3.00*
Study 2	3.39 (1.05)	3.15 (1.97)	0.16	2.88 (1.13)	3.62 (0.99)	0.74	1.28
<i>Going to heaven</i>							
Study 1	7.31 (2.02)	7.23 (1.75)	0.04	6.20 (1.86)	8.35 (1.14)	1.43	2.82*
Study 2	6.72 (2.04)	6.58 (2.20)	0.07	5.71 (2.04)	7.61 (1.90)	0.96	1.85

Note. *d* = effect size, or the difference in terms of standard deviations (difference between means divided by the pooled standard deviation).

z = *z* for the difference between two effect sizes.

* *p* < .05 or below.

of RF vs. WF. Even in this sample, our hypothesis predicting an effect for target gender was unsupported. We thus collapsed the data into a 2 (RF) × 2 (WF) design.

3.2.1. Desirability

The results confirm those found in Study 1: WF was somewhat important to the desirability of a life, but RF was extremely important. Once again, effect sizes for WF were small to medium, and those for RF were large. Significant multivariate main effects for both WF [$F(3, 150) = 5.17, p < .05$] and RF [$F(3, 150) = 20.48, p < .05$] on the desirability index were qualified by a marginally significant interaction [$F(3, 150) = 2.17, p < .10$]. This interaction was significant only for liking [$F(1, 152) = 4.83, p < .05$]. As in Study 1, the combination of high WF and high RF was the most preferred life ($M = 2.93$) and the means followed a similar pattern as in Study 1 (2.04 for high RF/low WF; and 1.50, 1.59, for low WF/low RF, high WF/low RF, respectively; just as in Study 1, these means are different from those in Table 3 because Table 3 collapses across conditions).⁶ Table 3 summarizes the significant

⁶ To examine the potential effects of sample (college vs. jury) on these variables, an additional ANCOVA was computed, including sample as a factor. No main effects were found for sample or three way interactions were found. Two-way interactions for sample × RF ($F(1, 292) = 4.73$) and sample × WF ($F(1, 292) = 7.38$) did emerge. For both of these interactions, the pattern of means indicated that the main effects for work and RF were enhanced in the jury sample, compared to the student sample.

main effects for both independent variables, across desirability measures. Both RF and WF produced increases in desirability, but RF produced much stronger effects.

3.2.2. *Moral goodness*

Only RF predicted judgments of moral goodness; there was no difference based on WF. These results are similar to, but stronger than, those in Study 1. A MANCOVA on the moral judgment index, controlling for religiosity, indicated no interactions. Significant main effects emerged for RF [multivariate $F(2,137)=18.53$, $p<.05$]. Higher RF was associated with higher judgments of morality and, even more dramatically, with rating the target as more likely to go to heaven (see Table 3). As in Study 1, high WF was associated with slightly lower ratings on these variables.

4. Study 3

In the first two studies, our respondents clearly valued the personal over the work domain for judgments of a life. These results are clear and somewhat surprising, given that the present samples are drawn from the clearly “individualistic” culture of the United States (Hofstede, 2001). The absence of gender effects was also surprising.

General theories of motivation (e.g., Self Determination Theory, Deci & Ryan, 2000), give no reason to expect a privileging of either domain. Loving and working are essentially horizontally arranged in these motivational schemes. From the Self Determination Theory perspective, the domain in which intrinsic needs are met ought to be preferred. To explore the factors contributing to the stronger effects for relationships vs. work, we constructed short scales measuring the three organismic motives described by Self Determination Theory (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness, Deci & Ryan, 1995). We asked participants to rate how much each of these needs was met in relationships and at work. We expected to find same main effects as were shown in Studies 1 and 2; however, we also predicted that the privileging of each domain would be explained by the intrinsic motives met within them.

4.1. *Method*

4.1.1. *participants*

Three hundred and thirty individuals participated in this study: 162 drawn from the Dallas County jury pool (93 women, 2 not reporting) and 168 psychology students from Southern Methodist University (123 women). These were all different individuals than those who participated in Study 2. Ages ranged from 17 to 70 ($M=31.17$; $SD=14.80$). Represented ethnicities included 73% White/not Hispanic, 12% African American, 9% Latin, 1% Native American, 4% Asian, and 1% Multiracial.

4.1.2. *Materials and procedure*

Jurors were approached while awaiting jury duty and were given a piece of candy in return for completing the questionnaire. Students completed the questionnaire to receive credit in psychology classes. Responses were anonymous.

Participants saw the same target questionnaires as in Studies 1 and 2, except sex of target was dropped. Participants then completed the same quality of life ratings about the target as in Studies 1 and 2. They also completed a measure of their own needs (not the target's) in both the work and relationship domains. These were written to reflect the three needs in Self Determination Theory. Three item scales were created to measure each of the three intrinsic needs. Sample items from each scale include "I have mastered important tasks," for competence, "I feel independent," for autonomy, and "I feel accepted and loved," for relatedness. Items were rated on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely much). Scales ranged in reliabilities from .61 for workplace autonomy to .79 for workplace relatedness. Thus this study measured participants' ratings of the target as well as participants' own ratings of needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

4.2. Results and discussion

Means and correlations of dependent measures are shown in Table 4. Once again these were not related to sex, age or religiosity.

The results provide an explanation for our findings in Studies 1 and 2: participants reported that the relationship domain met more of their intrinsic needs than the work domain did (see Table 5). This was true for 5 of the 6 comparisons. This helps explain

Table 4
Correlations and descriptive statistics for dependent measures and values measures, Study 3 ($n = 330$)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Liking	—				
2. Good life	.48	—			
3. Quality of life	.74	.57	—		
4. Moral	.44	.64	.54	—	
5. Final judgment	.40	.50	.54	.54	—
Mean	1.83	3.13	4.89	3.10	6.57
<i>SD</i>	1.11	.93	2.36	.93	2.18

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .05$ or below.

Table 5
Ratings of needs met in work and relationship domains, Study 3

Need	Work	Relationships	
Student sample ($n = 168$)			Paired t (167)
Autonomy	5.65	5.82	2.37*
Competence	5.45	5.56	1.58
Relatedness	4.75	5.89	10.79*
Jury sample ($n = 162$)			Paired t (161)
Autonomy	5.76	5.88	1.97*
Competence	5.56	5.36	-2.94*
Relatedness	5.28	5.81	5.41*

* $p < .05$ or below.

why relationship fulfillment was so much more important for the good life. This is consistent with Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000): the relationships domain is most satisfying to intrinsic needs, so the relationships domain is more valued.

Students saw competence as similar across domains, whereas the jurors viewed the work domain as a greater outlet for competence motivation. Even needs for autonomy, which one would expect to be higher in the work domain, were higher in the relationship domain. This demonstrates how the relationship domain satisfies more intrinsic needs even in individualistic areas such as autonomy. It should also be kept in mind that both of these samples (student and jury pool) probably held jobs low in autonomy (as the majority of jobs below the professional level involve a supervisor, set work hours, and little freedom). On the other hand, it is somewhat surprising that the student respondents did not hold a more idealistic view of their future work lives.

Next, the data were simplified in two ways. The short need scales were highly correlated within life domain (WF or RF). Thus, the three scales were aggregated to create “Work Intrinsic Motivation” ($\alpha = .70$) and “Relationship Intrinsic Motivation” ($\alpha = .74$). We also combined the judgment ratings into composite indexes of desirability and moral judgment, as in Studies 1 and 2.

These results once again showed that RF was a much stronger influence than WF. To test the potential moderating effects of need satisfaction on desirability and moral goodness, 2 (high vs. low WF) \times 2 (high vs. low RF) ANCOVAs were computed on for the desirability and moral goodness, controlling for the two need scores.⁷ The covariates for need scores were not significantly associated with desirability. Rather, as in Studies 1 and 2, main effects for RF [$F(1,305) = 237.18, p < .05$] and WF [$F(1,305) = 52.38, p < .05$] were qualified by a significant two-way interaction [$F(1,305) = 26.18, p < .05$]. Examination of the means for this effect showed that WF added something only when RF was high. For low RF, the means for low vs. high WF were $-.66$ vs. $-.50$, respectively. For high RF, low vs. high WF means were 0.12 vs. 1.0 , respectively.

The covariates of intrinsic need satisfaction did contribute significantly to the prediction of moral goodness [$F(1, 305) = 6.30, p < .05$]. However, even controlling for these, the main effect of RF was significant [$F(1, 305) = 182.57, p < .05$], as was the interaction of RF and WF [$F(1, 304) = 6.27, p < .05$]. The means for this interaction are shown in Fig. 1. For low RF, enjoying one’s work was related to lower judgments of moral goodness. For high RF, however, WF added moral goodness ($M_s = .44$ vs. $.64$).

Do individuals who have their needs met in the work (or relationship) domain judge a life of fulfilling work (or relationships) more positively? To address this question, the intrinsic need composites were transformed into mean deviation scores. The product of these two scores with each other and the RF and WF factors (0 = low,

⁷ To test for sex of participant effects, a 2 (sex) \times 2 (RF) \times 2 (WF) ANCOVA was computed for both dependent measures, controlling for the need ratings. Once again, no significant main effects or interactions for sex emerged.

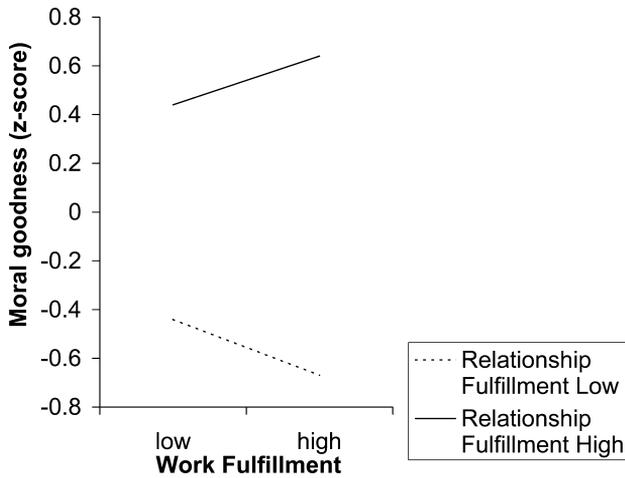


Fig. 1. Moral goodness as a function of fulfillment in relationships and work.

Table 6

Regression equation predicting desirability composite from intrinsic values at work, intrinsic values in relationships, and the interactions of these variables, Study 3

	Standardized β	
Step 1 Main effects		$R^2 \text{ cha} = .37^*$
Intrinsic/work	-.03	
Intrinsic/relationships	.06	
Work fulfillment	.15*	
Relationship fulfillment	.39*	
Interactions		$R^2 \text{ cha} = .06^*$
WF \times RF	.29*	
WF \times intrinsic work	.17*	
RF \times intrinsic relationship	.08	
WF \times intrinsic relationship	-.22*	
RF \times intrinsic work	-.26*	
Intrinsic W \times Intrinsic R	-.04	

Note. WF, work fulfillment; RF, relationship fulfillment.

* $p < .05$ or below.

1 = high) were used as interaction terms in two hierarchical regression equations. In both equations, the main effects of RF and WF and the centered scores for intrinsic motivation were entered on the first step and all two-way interactions were entered on the second step.

Table 6 shows the results for desirability. Main effects for the manipulated variables were qualified by the two-way interaction of these variables and interactions between the manipulated variables and the intrinsic need measures. As predicted, WF interacted with intrinsic need satisfaction at work to predict heightened desirability ratings. Unexpected interactions emerged between WF and relationship motivation and RF and work motivation. In both cases the negative beta weights suggest that

individuals whose intrinsic needs are met in one domain tend to be harsher judges of a life in which fulfillment is enjoyed in the other. Someone whose needs were met in the relationship domain, for example, tended to dislike a person who was high in WF.

In the regression equation for moral goodness, only the main effects contributed a significant increment to the R^2 (.26, $p < .05$). On this step, only RF contributed significantly to the prediction of moral goodness (standardized $\alpha = .44$, $p < .05$).⁸

5. General discussion

These studies provide consistent and robust evidence for the definitive role of RF in folk concepts of a good life. This conclusion held across participant gender, target gender, two different geographic regions, and a broad range of ages and life situations. This research is consistent with the literature on subjective well-being, which concludes that fulfillment in relationships is important for a good and happy life (Myers & Diener, 1995). It is also consistent with belongingness theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), which argues that the need to feel close to others is one of the most fundamental human motivations (see also Maslow, 1968). People do not desire the life of a lonely person, and they do not believe that these individuals will find their reward in the afterlife.

5.1. Individualism and relationships

However, these results are somewhat surprising given the American emphasis on individual achievement and success (e.g., Baumeister, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The US is the most individualistic country in the world (Hofstede, 2001), and this self-focus has only increased in recent decades (Fukuyama, 1999; Lasch, 1979; Twenge & Campbell, 2001; Veroff et al., 1981). The results are also unexpected given the American emphasis on work. For example, workers in the United States take the least vacation time of workers in any country in the world (Schor, 1991). Yet, for men and women, students and community adults, RF was a central determinant of judgments of a life as desirable and morally good. WF influenced judgments of the desirability of a life, but its effect was weak compared to the strong influence of RF. Although the US is clearly an individualistic country, these results show that this characterization cannot be taken too far: even cultures high in individualism place a strong value on relationships. Our respondents seemed to hold to the motto “No one ever said on their deathbed, ‘I wish I’d spent more time at the office.’”

How can we reconcile these results with the pervasive individualism of American life? Perhaps Americans seek individual fulfillment and a sense of accomplishment through relationships. Although work seems the most logical domain for individual

⁸ Additional steps, adding in possible three-way and 4-way interactions did not contribute a significant change in R^2 in either equation.

achievement, most people gain much positive emotion and a sense of accomplishment from their relationships. People are regularly praised for finding a desirable partner, getting married, and having children; thus these relationships are seen as achievements just as much as accomplishments at work. This system can break down when relationships become conflicted and/or do not fulfill individual needs and desires. This may explain why the United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world: Americans seek individual fulfillment and achievement through marriage based on romantic love, but end the relationship when individual needs are no longer met.

5.2. *Lack of gender differences*

The lack of gender differences was also surprising. Stereotypes suggest that women value, or are supposed to value, relationships over work, and that men value work over relationships. Thus, we predicted that women would be judged more harshly for having low RF, and men for having low WF. This prediction received no support, however: neither respondent or target gender affected judgments of the importance of RF vs. WF in the good life. One possible explanation might be change over time: Gender roles have undergone a substantial shift over the last few decades. The results of this study are consistent with empirical data and folk beliefs suggesting that sex differences in many domains are fading away (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000; Twenge, 1997, 2001).

5.3. *Intrinsic needs and motives*

The robust findings of the first two studies were extended and clarified in Study 3. In general the relationships domain meets the most intrinsic needs. Thus, as Self Determination Theory would predict (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the domain that fulfills intrinsic needs is the domain that is the most valued. One interpretation of these results is that people in general may underestimate the role of work in fulfilling lives. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) found that people were more likely to experience flow while at work but were also more likely to say that wished they were somewhere else. Study 3 also indicates that the individual who sacrifices RF for WF may be viewed as morally inferior (see Fig. 1). This person may be seen as self-centered or too autonomous, as they are placing individual WF ahead of relationships. In general, concepts of virtue and social desirability center on doing what is best for everyone even if this is counter to the wishes of the individual (e.g., Hogan, 1973; Baumeister & Exline, 1999). Thus, the person who puts his or her individual WF before RF will be seen as violating these concepts of virtue.

Motives tended to predict more negative judgments of undesired domains rather than enhanced positive judgments of desired domains. Apparently, individuals find a life of enjoyment that they cannot relate to as undesirable. People who value work, for example, may judge a very relationship-centered person harshly. Alternatively, it may be that people tend to see love and work in conflict, and thus they view a life that is fulfilling in one domain as inevitably shortchanged in the other.

5.4. Limitations

One limitation of these results is that the scope of RF and WF may not be conceptually equal. For example, RF includes relationships with friends, partners, and family; RF can include many domains in life from individual interactions with partners or children to group interactions such as church or community organizations. In contrast, WF includes only work. Perhaps our results would have differed if we included other forms of personal achievement within WF. However, the very pervasiveness of RF shows why it is so important: people interact with others almost constantly, so fulfillment in relationships is going to be a very important part of the concept of the good life.

Another limitation might lie in the samples we used. Although the jury samples capture a much wider range of experience, age, and socioeconomic status than the student samples, the jury pool may be somewhat biased toward the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. If this is the case, most people in this sample probably have unfulfilling jobs. This may partially explain why they favored RF so heavily over WF. If this study were conducted with a sample of professionals, the results might have favored WF more than in the present samples. The replication in the higher socioeconomic status student samples provides some evidence against this idea, though it is still a sample that has not experienced fulfilling work. However, it seems equally plausible that students would have an idealistic view of their future work lives. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to replicate the study with a sample of people who have fulfilling work lives.

5.5. Conclusions

The results indicate that RF is the most important part of the lay concept of a good life. These results, however, stand in contrast to the typical American experience. People regularly work long hours even as they say that relationships are central to their lives. As Juliet Schor (1991) documents in her book *The Overworked American*, the average worker has added an extra 164 hours (an entire month) to the work year over the past three decades.

The results of these studies suggest two important implications. First, people should focus on relationships more if they want to live “the good life.” However, putting relationships first is much easier said than done for most modern Americans, given our emphasis on individual goals (e.g., Baumeister, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Second, and perhaps more significantly, it is only individuals for whom intrinsic needs are met in the workplace that work becomes an integral part of the desired life. Work has been shown to be an important correlate of optimal human states (cf., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Recognizing the potential of work in the fulfilling life may require experiences with fulfilling work, itself.

The privileging of the interpersonal domain over work is perhaps less surprising given the national reaction to the events of September 11 (note that the data for these studies were collected prior to 9/11/2001). Following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it was not uncommon to hear people remark that their first

thought was to call their families, and that the attacks helped them to see what was “really important.” The present studies demonstrate that regardless of the way Americans spend their time and the values that seem to dictate their life choices, relationships are the centerpiece of our notion of the good life.

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