How work shapes well-being

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Abstract:

This chapter explores the positive and negative ways that work affects individual well-being. The authors draw on psychological research to define well-being as the subjective psychological, physical and social experiences of individuals. Following a general discussion of well-being and its structure, they detail the various pathways through which work influences well-being. They discuss the considerable impact of work on how people spend their time, where and how well they live, their psychological experience of themselves and others, and other important effects of work. The chapter pays particularly close attention to the economic influence of work, the influence of the content of the work itself, and the context in which work happens on general well-being. Finally, key individual factors that shape the experience of work and its impact on individual well-being are considered. The chapter concludes by highlighting important avenues for future research.

Article:

> There is work that is work and there is play that is play; there is play that is work and work that is play. And in only one of these lies happiness.
>
> (Gelett Burgess)

Work has long held a significant role in people's lives (Ciulla, 2000; Gini, 2001; Kohn & Schooler, 1982; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). This is, in part, because of the ways in which work influences well-being. In much of the developmental lifecycle people are likely to be engaged in varied, rich, and complex relationships with the world of work—whether preparing for it, entering into it, or contemplating their exit from it (Erikson, 1968). For example, at the

tender age of 5, children have a working practical model of what work is and what role they expect it to play in their life (Berti & Bombi, 1988). In childhood, work is often idealized as children dream about what they may become. Upon entering the work force, many find that the realities of working life lead them to reconceptualize work as simply a way of meeting their needs (Brief & Aldag, 1989; Brief & Atieh, 1987; Brief, Brett, Futter, & Stein, 1997). Early career professionals may find that they thrive on the challenge and excitement of work. New parents learn about both the value and cost of their jobs to their families. After retirement, some retirees struggle to reconstruct their lives in the absence of the structure that work provides. While some people find deep fulfillment in their work, others feel a strong disdain for it, and still others find their relationship with their work vacillating over time and contexts. Though the meaning of work varies widely, that it has an impact on people's lives is well-established (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976). In a variety of ways, work matters to everyone (Warr & Wall, 1975).

Work can be a source of sustenance, wealth, joy, frustration, deep meaningfulness, and boredom. In recognition that work is a domain of life that shapes how people experience their lives in a broad sense, scholars have invested considerable effort in understanding the relationship between work and well-being. While some have studied the impact of work on life domains such as family and leisure (e.g., Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Rothbard, 2001), others have examined the role that these life domains play in the general experience of work (Snir & Harpaz, 2002). Though we touch on both literatures, we are primarily focused on understanding how work shapes well-being. First, we define well-being and explain why work has a hand in determining general well-being. Second, we explain how work shapes well-being, and what factors affect whether the relationship is generally positive or negative. In the third section we discuss the individual and contextual variables that may moderate the relationship between work and well-being.

Defining Well-Being

Other chapters in this book have already provided an in-depth understanding of general well-being (see Section II). We will therefore only briefly review our conceptualization of well-being and the assumptions that underlie it. Well-being is often used synonymously with wellness, health, and happiness. While different types and domains of well-being have been proposed, in the research literature there has been convergence regarding three core dimensions of well-being: psychological, physical, and social (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Further, while researchers have studied both objective and subjective indicators of well-being, in this chapter, we are focusing on the latter. Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as a "broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction" (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999, p. 277) and includes positive emotion, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning (Seligman, 2002). SWB refers to a set of constructs and experiences, rather than a single construct reflecting happiness or satisfaction (Myers & Diener, 1995; Ryff, 1989).

As Myers and Diener (1995) point out, high SWB reflects a "preponderance of positive thoughts and feelings about one's life" (p. 11) and includes a sense of satisfaction with life that comprises satisfaction with major life domains, including work, family, health, finances, and self. Lucas,

Diener and Suh (1996) suggest that SWB has two facets, cognitive and affective SWB. The affective component of SWB consists of the presence of positive affect (e.g., joy, elation, happiness, and contentment) and the absence of negative affect (e.g., guilt, sadness, anxiety, anger) (Diener et al., 1999). The cognitive component is an information-based appraisal of life in which people judge the extent to which their life measures up to expectations and resembles their ideal. Cognitive evaluations of satisfaction with each domain of life and life as a whole play an important role in SWB.

Research shows that both cognitive and affective well-being are influenced by work, using various terms such as *employee well-being, working well-being*, and *work-related well-being* to refer to individual experiences of and functioning within the work domain. Many studies have defined well-being predominantly in terms of domain-specific satisfaction (i.e., job satisfaction; Weiss, 2002), while others have adopted a broader definition that encompasses the overall quality of functioning at work (Warr, 1987). In this chapter, we build upon and extend these literatures by considering how one's work experiences influence their generalized feelings and cognitions about life. We begin doing so in the next section by considering why work shapes well-being.

The Influence of Work on Well-Being

Among the domains of life to which people dedicate their time and energy, work holds a special place. This is partly due to the sheer number of hours dedicated to it—most adults spend one-third of their waking lives working (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Beyond the time invested in work, there are important economic (Brief & Aldag, 1989), social (Dutton & Ragins, 2006), and psychological (Rosso et al., 2010) functions of work that underscore the "central place that work plays in life and society" (Warr & Wall, 1975, p. 10). People experience significant ties to work, both physically and psychologically (Ciulla, 2000). It often determines where people live and even shapes what they do during non-working hours (Meissner, 1971). The way people think about themselves and feel about their lives is significantly impacted by their work for several reasons.

The first is the time devoted to work over the course of life. Most adults spend the bulk of their waking hours engaged in some form of work. This time commitment can lead to the blurring of boundaries between home and work, allowing individuals' feelings and thoughts about their work to spill over into other areas of life. Scholars have argued that these blurred boundaries have reshaped the nature of work itself (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Barley 1996; Bridges 1994). Work has largely retained its definition as activities done for pay (Brief & Nord, 1990), but the form, timing, and structural arrangements of these activities have undergone significant changes, particularly for knowledge workers (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Barley & Kunda, 2004; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999). These changes to the nature of work serve to further blur the boundary between work and non-work domains for many knowledge workers, who are increasingly expected to work from any location at any time. While scholars have made several predictions about how these changes affect the nature of work (e.g., Schor, 1991; Sennett, 1998, 2008), the influence of these changes on well-being is not well understood.

Second, where people live (and how they live) depends in large part on where they work. While it used to be more common for people to find work in the local environment in which they lived, it is now the case that—particularly in the USA—increasing numbers of people move to locales based on their jobs (Blackburn, 2009; Sennett, 1998). Furthermore, the job often dictates the way in which people spend their days and nights, and the leisure time they have available. Adjusting to the demands of our society, many people do not work a traditional 9–5 job for 40 hours a week. Some employees take on positions in which they work nights, while others work for days, weeks, or even months without a break. As a result, work schedules significantly impact family life, hobbies, and even physical health.

It is not only the geography of life that is influenced by work: for most, the material trappings of life are dictated by the means that work provides. Mortgages, rent levels, forms of transportation, and creature comforts are largely a function of what one can afford—which is, in turn, a direct outcome of what one earns. The possibilities offered by one's work range from unsustainable (Leana, Mittal, & Stiehl, 2012) to luxurious. Work defines the mode of life experiences far beyond the physical realities of the job.

Third, people invest a significant amount of time in work even before they actually begin their jobs; work is typically a domain for which people prepare themselves for some time. While relatively few pursue the career of their childhood fantasies, it is assumed that most children will work when they complete their schooling. This assumption fuels investments in education and training in order to make the school-to-work transition a success. Whether educated in vocational-technical programs, colleges, or postgraduate university settings, most people grow up with the expectation that they will work in adulthood. As such, people make significant investments in what they do for a living even before they are working.

Fourth, people experience strong psychological ties to their work. People's sense of themselves is intimately connected to their work (Lawler & Hall, 1970). Consider the first things people tell others about themselves upon meeting at a party. Work, and in particular, the identity implications of work, are salient in how people come to think of themselves. Scholars suggest that this cognitive bond with work is increasing (Casey, 1995; Rosso et al., 2010; Sennett, 2008). For better or for worse, work is an important element of what defines people (Gini, 2001). This is true even in the most direct sense; research suggests that the kind of work people do influences their cognitive structures over time (Kohn & Schooler, 1982).

Fifth, work also helps satisfy many psychological needs for achievement and individual purpose (Warr & Wall, 1975). A sense of purpose in work is one of the ways in which work comes to be seen as meaningful (Rosso et al., 2010). Ryff (1989) defines purpose as a sense of directedness and intentionality in life, building on a tradition that suggests that pursuing a purpose in life or work, brings meaning to life (Aristotle, 2000; Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998; Seligman, 2002). At the extreme end of this argument, Frankl (1959) has argued that having a sense of purpose in life is necessary for survival. For those who pursue their life's purpose through work (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), the importance of work for a basic sense of well-being is indisputable.

Sixth, the social bonds of our lives are intimately connected to work. Whether others at work are friends, mentors, colleagues, or general acquaintances, research suggests that our sense of who we are is informed by the social landscape at work (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). It is telling that when offering depictions of their jobs, people often offer depictions of their work interactions and relationships instead (Sandelands & Boudens, 2000). The rootedness of social bonds at work is evidenced in part by the number and importance of celebrated social events that cross into the work domain. People come together with their work colleagues around hiring, promotions, retirements, and other markers of entry into, progress within, or exit from the work domain. That people experience strong social bonds at work is cause for celebration—the Gallup organization notes that having even one "best friend" at work is a predictor of positive well-being (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003). However, if people make significant social investments at work, there exists the potential for conflict between the work and home domains. Considerable research on the conflict between work and home suggests that clarity in how one is investing one's time in social bonds and obligations between these two spheres is important.

Seventh, work influences well-being because it is a domain that is infused with affect. Whether in the context of the work itself (Hochschild, 1983; Margolis & Molinsky, 2008) or the interactions and relationships that compose the job (Dutton, 2003; Porath & Erez, 2007; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003), people experience a range of emotions of varying strength at work (Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000). To the extent that well-being is informed by affect, the sign and power of the charge left by one's work is an important component to understanding well-being. As Campbell and colleagues (1976) point out, 20% of the variance in overall well-being is explained by well-being related to one's work. When work is a source of joy, this bond between the self and work can be powerful and positive. As Maslow notes about his own work, "I think I am just most happy, and most fulfilled, and most myself, and most being as if that's where I were meant to be when I am involved in my work" (Frick, 1971, p. 31). Research on people's experience of the emotional spillover from work to other domains of life, such as family and leisure, suggests that whether work is a positive or negative experience matters for how people engage in and experience the non-work domains of life (Rothbard, 2001; Williams & Alliger, 1994).

This summary of research on the interface between the work and life domains suggests that any understanding of well-being must take into account the role of work in people's lives. Work shapes people's physical, emotional and cognitive experiences, influencing every aspect of life. Research on unemployment underscores the critical role of work for general well-being. Nationally, high levels of unemployment are a strong negative predictor of well-being (Frey & Stutzer, 2002a, 2002b). At the individual level, unemployment can be devastating to well-being (Helliwell, 2003). By studying what happens to people who have lost a job, Jahoda's (1982) influential work suggests that work fulfills both manifest and latent functions in life. In addition to enabling people to earn a living, work also provides a temporal structure to the day, allows people to participate in a collective effort, and gives them some measure of status and identity from their work roles. In the next section, we consider the direct pathways through which work shapes well-being.

How Work Shapes Well-Being

Work influences well-being in three ways. First, from an economic perspective, the work contract affects well-being. Second, the work itself has psychological and physiological implications for well-being. Third, the work context influences well-being in a variety of ways. We take each kind of influence in turn, describing the evidence of its impact and the implications for its role in well-being.

Work as a contract

In its most basic form, work is an exchange of effort for compensation. It is an essential means through which people meet their basic needs of shelter and food. Being able to meet these needs is essential for well-being. As such, economics plays an important role in shaping one's quality of life, in that the specific terms of the employment contract influence well-being. This influence operates in two ways: in a literal sense and in a psychological sense.

In the literal sense, the employment contract matters to well-being because it determines whether or not people are able to meet their basic needs and aspirations. A key element of the employment contract is pay. It is often assumed that the greater the pay, the greater the resulting well-being must be. In some of the world's poorest nations, this assumption holds, however the relationship becomes less strong as national wealth increases. In wealthy Western societies, research suggests that while income is positively correlated with well-being (Diener & Diener, 1995), the relationship is moderate, with correlations of only 0.13 (Diener, Sandvik, Seidlidz, & Diener, 1993). Some research has suggested that income is not related to emotional well-being at all (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Other evidence suggests that income may have a *negative* relationship with other life domains that influence well-being. Moreover, while the average salary in wealthy nations has grown steadily in the past 50 years, so have rates of anxiety and depression (Diener & Seligman, 2004). In light of this complex relationship Diener and Seligman (2004) explain that, "Money is an inexact surrogate for well-being, and the more prosperous a society becomes, the more inexact a surrogate income becomes" (p. 2). This research suggests that the context influences how people evaluate their own well-being. Those living in a modernized, wealthy society in which "the good life" is a cultural ideal will have very different standards and aspirations for well-being than will individuals living in poorer nations.

Well-being is also influenced by how people evaluate the fairness of their employment contracts. Assessments of fairness have three main roots: the distribution of resources (distributive justice), the fairness of decision-making procedures (procedural justice), and the type of interpersonal treatment a person receives (interactional justice) (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005). Given the focus of employment contracts on the relationship between effort, or inputs, and rewards, or outputs, perceptions of fairness in this exchange are important for well-being. Equity theory has demonstrated that people need to sense that their inputs are equal to their perceived outputs in order to feel fairly treated (Adams, 1965).

Perceptions of fairness in the work contract have been linked to employee well-being (Lawson, Noblet, & Rodwell, 2009). When employees feel that they are treated fairly they enjoy higher job satisfaction and better physical health, are more committed to and trusting of their organization, perform better, and engage in more voluntary citizenship behaviors (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson,

Porter, & Ng, 2001; Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007; Liden, Wayne, Kraimer, & Sparrowe, 2003). Conversely, when employees perceive a lack of fairness, they experience poorer psychological and physical health (Caza & Cortina, 2008), highlighting another link between work and well-being.

The work itself

Attributes of the work itself also influence well-being in both positive and negative ways (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Harned, Ormerod, Palmieri, Collinsworth, & Reed, 2002; Maslach, 1982; Meyer & Allen, 1991). These effects can be generally understood through two established approaches to understanding subjective well-being: hedonic and eudaimonic traditions (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonic tradition focuses on the experiences of happiness, while the eudaimonic tradition focuses on fulfillment and personal growth (Keyes et al., 2002). Viewed this way, hedonic approaches to understanding the influence of work on well-being focus on the relationship between the job itself and employees' experienced job satisfaction, defined as the subjective judgments employees make about their work situation (Locke, 1976). In contrast, eudaimonic approaches to understanding the influence of work on well-being focus on how work can shape perceptions of meaningfulness and fulfillment.

Several characteristics of work impact people's evaluations of their jobs, which spill over into perceptions of their lives. For instance, when people perceive their jobs as having high levels of autonomy, skill variety, task identity, and task significance, they experience increased well-being (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Lawler, 1971). More recent research on job design suggests that well-being can be boosted through the reorganization of the work itself (see Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007 for a review). The relationship between job characteristics and general well-being may be partially explained by job satisfaction. The more satisfied people are with their work, the more positive their satisfaction with life, a key component of well-being (Campbell et al., 1976; Rice, Near, & Hunt, 1980).

Other research suggests that over and above job satisfaction, the perceived meaningfulness of work will influence general well-being. Specifically, meaningful work has been linked with several key outcomes, including engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996), and personal fulfillment (Kahn, 2007).Work also affects well-being through its impact on how people perceive themselves in relation to their life's aspirations. To the extent that it provides people with a sense of challenge and accomplishment, work will positively influence well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2002).

Finally, the temporal structure of work may also influence well-being through both psychological and physiological means. Work is a primary source of structure for people's hours, days, and weeks. This can have a positive influence on well-being if the structure of work is compatible with people's non-work aspirations. For example, the routine of work provides a sense of control and structure, but can be problematic if it conflicts with other aspects of life. Work is especially problematic if it is non-traditional in form, such as with shift work. Over 20% of the population works nights, and while society has made adjustments to accommodate these individuals (e.g., 24-hour stores and gyms), there are several aspects of shift work that

compromise their well-being. Research has linked shift work with increased work-to-family conflict and poorer physical and mental well-being (Barnes-Farrell et al., 2008; Driesen, Jansen, Kant, Mohren, & van Ameslvoort, 2010; Wilson, Chen, & Fernandes, 2007). The negative physical health effects appear to be linked to the development of circadian rhythm desynchronization, which results in sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal dysfunction, and a less effective immune system (LaDou, 1982). More recent research has shown that individual differences in internal time (chronotype) play a key role in people's ability to adjust to shift work, making it possible for some to avoid the more negative physiological effects of working at night (Kantermann, Juda, Vetter, Roenneberg, 2010).

The temporal structure of work may also affect the ability to engage in non-work activities. Non-work activities are an important way that people recover from work (Sonnentag, 2003). It is essential for people to recover from stresses and fatigue caused by work in order to maintain physical, social, and mental health (Rook & Zijstra, 2006). In particular, people whose jobs involve shift work or late nights may not have the same recreational or family opportunities as do those with more traditional jobs. As a result, shift workers experience reduced social opportunities and alienation from their communities (Rosenthal & Howe, 1984). These complications with other domains of life are likely to decrease general well-being.

The work context

As described earlier, the economic results and content of work are critical inputs to well-being. However, the setting in which one works, whether the organization, the other people encountered in the course of the job, or the physical setting of work itself, also matters for well-being. Next, we describe the potential for these factors to influence well-being.

Most people who work do so in organizations. Whether employees work in offices, on the road, at home, or at client sites, the organizations that employ them can be significant sources of meaning in work (Rosso et al., 2010). Organizations provide employees with a social group to which they belong (Bartel & Dutton, 2001), which can help to address a basic human need for belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Employees also benefit from their identification with their organizations and draw a sense of community from the bonds they experience with others there. In particular, Brickson (2005, 2007) points out that organizations themselves have identity orientations, and can be understood as individualistic, relational, or collectivistic in their identity and their approach to a variety of constituents, including employees. To the extent that employees feel their own identities are congruent with the identity orientation of their organization (i.e., individualistic, relational, or collectivistic) a sense of belongingness and well-being can result. And, of course, those who are members of organizations held in high esteem by the self and others experience benefits from their ability to experience that part of their identity that is defined by membership in the organization.

Within organizations, employees work together to achieve a variety of work goals. The opportunities people have to create meaningful relationships with those they work with represent one of the most salient ways in which organizations contribute to well-being. While relationships with others at work can range from positive and supportive (Dutton, 2003) to abusive (Tepper, 2000) and uncivil (Porath & Erez, 2007)—indeed, Hughes observed that those

encountered at work "can do the most to make life sweet or sour" (1950, p. 321)—they represent important social ties that inform general well-being. Dutton (2003) has detailed the positive impact that high-quality connections at work can have on both employees and their organizations. Literature on social support has revealed the myriad benefits of relationships (or even interactions) with others that provide symbolic or concrete support (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 1997). Social support at work has emerged as a key variable for explaining positive outcomes for people at work (e.g., Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1999). Whether through the smallest glance or gesture or through powerful demonstrations of support, people encountered on the job give employees a variety of cues from which their understanding of how others see them, their job, and their role in the organization is composed (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Thus, to the extent that well-being is influenced by the nature of interactions and relationships with others, it is clear that work is a major arena of life in which others contribute to well-being.

The physical environment of work is another important input to well-being. The effect of the work environments on individuals' well-being begins with the safety and security of the workplace. In a basic sense, the physical environment at work must be safe and secure in order for employees to experience positive well-being (Barling & Frone, 2004). But more than guarantees of a work environment in which one need not worry about injuries, mishaps, or exposure to danger, it turns out that simple factors in the physical environment can make a significant difference to well-being.

For instance, the ways in which work environments are organized can influence employees' psychological and physical well-being. Specifically, whether work environments are set up to incorporate the outdoors and other aspects of nature can have a significant effect on general well-being. One of the most examined aspects of workplace design is the use of windows. Research suggests that windows are an essential element to well-being at work; 90% of employees who work in windowless offices are dissatisfied with their work environments, feel depressed, and lack stimulation (Ruys, 1970). Researchers have demonstrated that a window can help restore depleted attention processes (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and balance hormone production and regulation (Kuller & Lindsten, 1992).

The effects of work on well-being vary widely, from an important and positive input to well-being to a source of negativity and dysfunction. We have considered some of the most important pathways through which work shapes well-being. Our treatment of work and well-being may seem to suggest that the effects of work on well-being are fixed across individuals. However, research suggests that people vary in their experience of the work they do in predictable ways, and that their general orientation toward work may predict how they feel about their work. In the following section, we consider the role of the individual as it moderates the relationship between work and well-being.

Individual Patterns in the Experience of Work

For decades, scholars of organizations waged a debate over the question of whether the situation or the person mattered more in determining work attitudes and experience (e.g., Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989; Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986). In the end, both sides won; scholars now (mostly) agree that the attributes of the situation matter—including the nature of the work itself, the

organizational context, and people encountered on the job—*and* attributes of the person matter as well. Indeed, current research tends to account for and include both categories of inputs in order to reflect that both are likely to have an impact on the relationships being studied.

Past research has argued that attitudes toward work are determined in large part by stable individual differences such as personality (Alderfer, 1972; Staw et al., 1986). According to this view, individual factors like social class, demographic factors, and needs influence the experience of work. By marshaling research evidence across situations and time, there is stability in how individuals rate their well-being related to their work (Arvey, Bouchard, Segal, & Abraham, 1989; Staw et al., 1986), scholars have supported a view that underscores the importance of individual differences in shaping the experience of work.

More recently, research on work orientation (Wrzesniewski, 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) has suggested that people can experience their work in one of three ways: as a job, a career, or a calling (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Those with job orientations primarily view work as a means to a financial end, and work to support their lives outside of the job. In contrast, those with career orientations work primarily to advance in their occupation, whether within or between organizations, and to reap the benefits of the increased standing and power that comes with advancement. Finally, those with calling orientations work not for financial ends or for career advancement but for the fulfillment that the work itself brings them. Those with callings tend to view work as inseparable from the rest of their lives and feel that their work contributes to making the world a better place. Researchers have described callings as work that is one's duty and destiny (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), a source of fulfillment that is important to one's identity (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), a social contribution to the wider world (Wrzesniewski, 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), expressive of one's purpose (Hall & Chandler, 2005), and comprises one's passion, identity, urgency, engulfing consciousness, longevity, sense of meaning, and domain-specific self-esteem (Dobrow, 2006a).

Given the relationship between well-being and domain-specific and general satisfaction, work orientation matters for understanding well-being. While job and career orientations have been associated with lower levels of well-being on the job and off, calling orientation has emerged in a number of studies as a strong positive correlate of well-being. Research on work orientations suggests that they are associated with work and life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Several positive outcomes have been associated with having a calling, such as work, life, and health satisfaction (Dobrow, 2006a; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) and lower absenteeism from work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Callings have also been associated with more satisfaction from the work domain than other major life domains, such as leisure time (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). People with callings have more passion for and enjoyment of their work (Novak, 1996; Vallerand et al., 2003), stronger identification and engagement with their work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow, 2006a), and perform at higher levels than those without callings (Hall & Chandler, 2005).

A calling may even serve as a buffer against markers of negative functioning. Bunderson and Thompson (2009) describe research indicating that those with callings are less likely to suffer from stress, depression, and conflict between work and the rest of life (Oates, Hall, & Anderson, 2005; Treadgold, 1999). While most of the extant research seems to paint a positive

picture of viewing work as a calling, researchers are beginning to assess drawbacks associated with callings (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow, 2006b). For example, Bunderson and Thompson (2009) suggest that a calling is a "double-edged sword" that involves profound experiences of sacrifice and vigilance among those who feel their work is a sacred duty they must perform. Callings also hold the possibility of leading to depletion and burnout when they become an all-consuming activity in life (Caza & Cardador, 2009; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Overall, it appears that work orientations offer a helpful window to understanding how people experience their work in ways that are likely to directly affect well-being, as well as interact with the likelihood that their job design and work contexts will promote well-being. Future research will likely explore how moderating factors such as work orientation may transform the relationship between inputs to the job and the experience of well-being that results. In the next section, we consider evidence of the positive and negative impact of work on well-being.

The Helpful and Harmful Effects of Work on Well-Being

We began this chapter by describing seven reasons why work is an important factor in shaping well-being. We then went on to detail how the work contract, the work itself, and the work context influence well-being through their effects on psychological, physical, and social variables. Through this we have established that a variety of aspects of work influence well-being. Generally, many aspects of work seem to have a largely positive impact on well-being (e.g., increased meaningfulness), some have a largely negative impact on well-being (e.g., shiftwork), and still others have a complicated relationship with well-being (e.g., income). However, a variety of individual-level moderators are likely to influence the relationship between work and well-being. Additionally, there may also be broader temporal effects than those considered here. Specifically, the relationship between work and well-being may vary across the lifespan as the meaning of work shifts within the broader context of life.

A large literature on work-to-family conflict suggests that how people manage work and family roles has major implications for well-being, job performance, and family functioning (Gareis, Barnett, Ertel, & Berkman, 2009). Traditionally, the interface between work and family has been viewed in largely negative terms. While work provided people with the economic means to provide for their families, it also caused psychological and physical distance within families. For people who are trying to balance competing priorities of work and family life, a deficit-based perspective on work and family can be fairly troubling. Early research on work-family conflict has established that failure to balance competing priorities and demands can result in sacrificed well-being (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

However, this relationship between work and family roles and well-being is not always negative (Rothbard, 2001). In fact, research has supported the concept of work–family enrichment, defined as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73). Toward this end, researchers have explored the ways that resources and experiences gained from one's work role can improve performance and quality of life in one's family role, and vice versa (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006; Rothbard, 2001). Recent support for this argument comes from a rather unexpected population:

new parents. Research with new working parents suggests that work remains an important influence on well-being even when life priorities are readjusted. Specifically, many new mothers decrease the number of hours they work (or stop working altogether) and many new fathers increase the number of hours they work, a trend that involves drawbacks (Keizer, Dykstra, & Poortman, 2010). It is this change in work hours that accounts in part for decreased partner satisfaction and increased negative affect—mothers who remained in their jobs or increased working hours showed decreased negative affect. These findings confirm that during critical family life transitions, when the work–family interface seems to have the most potential for conflict, work can provide important benefits that increase the quality of one's life.

Conclusion and Future Directions

There are a number of important future research directions that hold promise for increasing understanding of the powerful and complex relationship between work and well-being. First, researchers can do more to explore the dynamic nature of the relationship between work and well-being. In this chapter, we have considered how a series of variables influence well-being. However, these variables do not exist in isolation; it is essential to understand how they interact to influence well-being. For instance, do aspects of a fair work contract mitigate the effects of a poor working environment? Does shift work dampen the effect of meaningful work on well-being? In general, how do the variables that contribute to increased or decreased well-being interact with one another in ways that suggest important information about their relative strength?

A second related research question is to understand how individuals and organizations can sustain a positive relationship between work and well-being over time. There are obviously many benefits to well-being for individuals, such as increased physical health and longevity (Diener et al., 1999), but there are also a number of benefits to organizations (Diener & Seligman, 2004). For instance, employee well-being is related to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Fleming, 2000; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002), and decreased turnover and shirking (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Thus, it is essential to better understand how to sustain positive spillovers of work to well-being.

However, sustaining a positive relationship between work and well-being over time may be difficult. Working life often spans several decades. As people move through their life trajectory, they may be looking for different things from their work. For example, young professionals gain materially from employment, but are likely to gain psychologically as well (Diener & Seligman, 2004). As young professionals make the transition into parenthood, the influence of work on well-being is likely to change. Work may become a place for adult connections, satisfaction, and feelings of competence and belongingness (Keizer et al., 2010). As people move into later stages of their careers, they may find that their well-being is more influenced by the ability to make contributions to others in their work and lives (Erikson, 1968). At any one stage, it seems that there is a potential for both positive and negative effects of work on well-being. It is important to understand how the influence of work on well-being waxes and wanes between being a positive or negative force in the various life-stages through which individuals work. Building from this, future research should explore the ways that people can shape their work to continually get positive benefits from it as the meaning of the work shifts throughout their lives.

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