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## IS THE GOOD LIFE THE EASY LIFE?

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**ABSTRACT.** Three studies examined folk concepts of the good life. Participants rated the desirability and moral goodness of a life as a function of the happiness, meaning, and effort experienced. Happiness and meaning were solid predictors of the good life, replicating King and Napa (1998). Study 1 (N = 381) included wealth as an additional factor. Results showed little desire for exorbitant (over moderate) wealth, but also a desire to avoid poverty. When effort was operationalized as number of hours worked, respondents desired the easy life, particularly at moderate levels of income. When effort was operationalized as effortful engagement (Study 2), 186 undergraduates and 178 community adults rated the hardworking life as morally superior to the easy life. Community adults preferred meaningful lives of ease, while college students preferred meaningful lives that involved effort. Study 3 (N = 359) found the meaningful, effortful life was rated as most morally good, and the happy effortful life was rated as most desirable, happy, and meaningful. The role of hard work in naïve notions of The Good Life is discussed.

A number of potential components of the good life require effort – namely, economic success (Weber, 1930/1976), a sense of purpose and meaning (Ryff, 1989; Ryff and Singer, 1998, 1990a, 1990b), effective goal striving (Emmons, 1986), generativity (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992), competence and mastery (White, 1959), and close relationships (Ryff and Singer, 1998). In addition, conceptions of optimal human experience often include the quality of challenge, suggesting that fulfillment comes from effortful engagement (e.g., eudaimonia, Waterman, 1990a, 1993; intrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan, 1985; flow, Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Thus, when considering the good life, it is important to examine the role of effort in our conceptions of the ideal life. After all, simply knowing what makes a life good may not be sufficient in achieving it. Beliefs about the *means* to a good life may shed light on the life choices people make in their search for fulfillment.



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*People Know What It Takes to Lead a Good Life*

In a study of folk concepts of the good life (King and Napa, 1998), we asked participants to make ratings about the desirability and moral goodness of a life as a function of its happiness, meaningfulness, and wealth. We found that folk concepts of the good life converged with the subjective well-being (SWB) literature in that happiness and meaning in life overwhelmingly defined the “good life” and were strong indicators of a morally good life as well. In contrast, wealth was relatively unimportant to the good life (c.f., Diener et al., 1985; Diener et al., 1993). We concluded that people appear to know what it takes to lead a good life – but at the same time, it remained puzzling why people continue to behave as if they do not. For example, UCLA’s survey of college freshman consistently finds over 70% of its respondents rate “being well-off financially” as “very important” or “essential” (Astin et al., 1997). Since 1978, the importance of material wealth, in fact, has surpassed the importance of developing “a meaningful philosophy of life” (Astin et al., 1997). Similarly, Keyes (1999) notes that approximately 26 million Americans lead meaningless lives. These “languishing” individuals, according to Keyes, may not be suffering from depression or other illnesses, but they also lack any sense of positive well-being and purpose in life (see Keyes et al., 2002).

The present studies offer one possible explanation for the discrepancy between conceptions of the good life and the choices that people make – namely, that people may be unwilling to work hard to achieve happiness and meaning in life. The present program of studies, therefore, sought to address the role of effort in folk concepts of the good life. In particular, if the good life has been popularized as one long vacation, then we might expect naïve theories of the good life to ignore the role of hard work.

*Why Study Folk Concepts of the Good Life?*

In using folk concepts as a means of culturally defining the good life, we draw heavily upon the work of Jerome Bruner (1990) who considered folk psychology an “instrument of culture”. Rather than eschewing folk theories for their inaccuracies, academic psychology can learn from folk concepts because these notions reflect larger, culturally-shaped belief systems. As Bruner (1990) described, folk

psychology is “a system by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world” (p. 35). Folk theories are related to everyday practices, choices, and behaviors, in addition to local meaning systems (Harkness and Super, 1996). Bruner even remarked that “we might do better to study the nature and origins of the ‘naïve’ psychology” (p. 38) because it is folk psychology that gives meaning to people’s lives and actions. Harkness et al. (1996) describe parental beliefs (a form of folk psychology) as being neither the sole product of individual experience nor simply ideas that have been “absorbed in ‘prepackaged’ form” through one’s culture. Rather, “cultural belief systems . . . are at once individually constructed and culturally shared . . . the product of integration of a variety of experiences in the wider culture and in the family, dynamically changing in interaction with that experience, reflecting both individual history and dispositions and culturally normative ideas” (p. 289). Therefore, rather than treating folk concepts of the good life as error-ridden and uninformative, we sought to explore this rich source of meaning in order to further our understanding of the life well-lived.

Our other aim was to examine whether the role of effort in folk concepts of the good life shared any features with academic psychology’s theories of optimal functioning. Other studies of folk theories, for instance research on parental ethnotheories about the importance of self-esteem in child-rearing (e.g., Miller et al., 2002), indicate that folk psychologies are at least partially informed by academic theories. Thus, before describing the present studies, we examine popular beliefs about the value of effort and review the role of effort in a number of theories of optimal functioning in order to illustrate how we developed our predictions about the role of hard work in folk concepts of the good life.

### *The Value of Effort*

For most people, effort may be something to be avoided. Adam and Eve’s punishment was, after all, a lifetime of toil and labor. And, though TGIF may be a common utterance at the end of the work week, seldom will one hear the cries of TGIM on Monday morning. Arguably, exerting effort may even *innately* aversive (e.g., Eisenberger, 1992, 1996). In fact, hard work is just that – *hard*.

On the other hand, if people are averse to effort, certainly no one wants to admit to being lazy. For instance, although experience sampling studies (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) have found the average worker spends about 25% of the work day “goofing off”, a Gallup poll indicates that American workers are quick to label themselves as “workaholics” or “solid performers at work” (September 3, 1999). Virtually no one endorsed the self-label of “an underachiever who gets by with the minimum necessary to keep [one’s] job”. Laziness often informs negative stereotypes about others (e.g., Seccombe et al., 1998), and may even have negative moral implications. Laziness (along with pride and gluttony) was one of the sins of Sodom (Ezekiel, 16). Thus, it seems unlikely that a life of chronically low effort would be considered desirable or morally good.

#### *The Role of Effort in Optimal Human Functioning*

*Eudaimonia.*<sup>1</sup> Two distinctions exist among the facets of well-being: Hedonic versus eudaimonic well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Whereas hedonic well-being refers to pleasant feeling states, eudaimonia refers to furthering the development of one’s true potentials and purposes in living and often is independent of pleasant affect (Ryff, 1995; Waterman, 1990a). Hedonic happiness, however, can occur with little or no effort, often as the result of receiving the things one wants, whereas effort is crucial to the experience of eudaimonia. Furthermore, because eudaimonic activity expresses essential aspects of the self, it is accompanied by a sense of meaningfulness, growth, or mastery.

*Intrinsic motivation.* Explanations for the processes that underlie intrinsic motivation include an innate need to feel competent or as if one has “mastered” a task (Deci and Ryan, 1985; White, 1959). As in the discussion of eudaimonia, effort plays an important role in intrinsic motivation because individuals continually seek out situations that are more and more challenging, gradually increasing their current level of competence along the way (Danner and Lonky, 1981). To phrase it another way, once a task has been mastered, greater challenges must be introduced in order for the task to continue to meet the individual’s competency needs. Consequently,

intrinsically motivating activities often further one's capacities, a quality that resonates with eudaimonic themes (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

*Flow.* Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes flow as occurring when one exerts "voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile" (p. 3). The hallmark of flow is the matching of both high levels of skill and challenge. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), while pleasure can be easily attained, it is "impossible to experience flow without effort" (p. 48). Interestingly, people are three times more likely to experience flow in work than in leisure, although most people report that they would rather be doing something other than working (Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989).

All three of these theoretical perspectives include the notion of effortful engagement in optimal human functioning, but none focus on effort for its own sake. Rather effort is seen as valuable only when tied to meaningful or challenging activities. If naïve theories of the good life reflect these notions, then we would predict that in judging the quality of a life, the influence of effort on judgments would depend on meaning. With this in mind, we predicted an effort X meaning interaction such that the meaningful life of hard work would be considered the most desirable, while a meaningless life of hard work would be quite undesirable.

#### *Effort and Monetary Reward*

While psychological perspectives on optimal functioning indicate that the combination of effort and meaning is related to heightened fulfillment, we might also consider the relation between hard work and other potential aspects of the good life. One of these goods is material gain. Self-determination theory posits that behavior that is directed toward attaining extrinsic rewards is associated with lesser psychological functioning (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 1996). Yet, it may be that in the daily living of life, people justify hard work through its connection to money. In a study examining justifications for salaries of \$2 million dollars, MBA students most frequently cited performance, talents and abilities, and hard work as justification (Mitchell et al., 1993). The least endorsed factor was "good luck". Therefore, we might expect effort to interact with income to

predict the desirability of a life. Hard work justified by material gain might seem a reasonable trade-off.

Furthermore, we might expect this hard work for economic gain prediction to hold for moral goodness as well. At first, this prediction may seem to contradict traditional religious doctrines. The valuing of wealth as a moral good is not unusual, however, within the context of the Protestant work ethic which presents earning money as an ethical duty. According to Weber's (1930/1976) analysis of the Protestant work ethic, economic success might be considered a reward for following "God's will". In support of Weber's argument, King and Napa (1998) found that the person who was judged as most likely to go to heaven was the person who "had it all" – wealth, happiness, and meaning. If indeed success is considered a sign of God's grace, then how hard a person works to obtain success would be irrelevant in judgments of moral goodness. Moreover, easy success may be regarded as morally superior to hard won success – for surely, God wouldn't allow anyone but his favored people to turn an easy profit. On the other hand, a more Catholic world view would predict hard work to be essential to moral goodness. Exorbitant wealth paired with little effort may invite suspicion and harsh moral judgment.

### *Overview*

In three studies, participants examined a "Career Survey" that had been ostensibly completed by someone rating his or her occupation (King and Napa, 1998). We sought to examine the good life within the context of a person's career for two reasons. First, the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction is well established (Myers and Diener, 1995). Fifty-one percent of American workers say that work provides them with a "sense of identity" (Gallup Survey, August 24–26, 1999). Our second reason for framing the good life within a career context is that effort with regard to one's job may be more salient and quantifiable than effort expended in other areas. Undoubtedly, a mother's work "never ends", but an estimate of the number of hours on the clock or level of engagement makes little sense in this context.

In all three studies happiness, meaning, and effort served as our independent variables. Study 1 included wealth as an additional

factor, and Study 3 included personal choice. In Study 1, we operationalized effort as time spent working. In Studies 2 and 3, we operationalized effort as effortful engagement at work. In all three studies, participants rated the desirability of the life and the moral goodness of the target.

### *Predictions for Study 1*

In Study 1, responses of the fictional respondents were manipulated to be relatively happy or not, to be experiencing a great deal of meaning or not, to be working hard or not, and to be relatively wealthy or not. In our previous study (King and Napa, 1998), wealth was manipulated with only two levels of income which may not have been salient enough to detect any effects for money. Therefore, in Study 1, effects of wealth on the good life were compared across three levels of income, including below \$10000/year (low money), \$31–40000/year (medium money), and over \$200000/year (high money).

In replication of previous work, we predicted happiness and meaning in life (of the target) would have strong main effects on the ratings of the life as desirable and morally good, with the happy meaningful life being rated as most desirable and morally good. We predicted that there would be no difference between medium and high levels of income for the desirability of life. However, low levels of income were expected to be least desirable – given that SWB research has shown that once a person is able to meet life's basic needs, additional income has little effect on SWB (Diener et al., 1985; Diener et al., 1993). In addition, in accord with the Protestant work ethic, we predicted that moderate and high levels of income would be rated as significantly morally superior to low levels of income.

With regard to the influence of effort on the desirability of a life, two predictions seemed possible. First, consistent with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) findings with regard to the undesirability of work, it seemed likely that people would rate the easy life as more desirable than the hard life. However, the theories of optimal functioning indicate that effort paired with meaning is a particularly salubrious combination. If naïve notions of the good life are sensitive to this notion, we would expect an effort X meaning interaction such that

high effort paired with high meaning would be quite desirable. It may be that the meaning attached to effort reduces its aversiveness. Furthermore, we predicted an effort X money interaction such that high effort would be undesirable except at high levels of income.

With regard to effort and moral goodness no main effects were predicted. First, from the perspective of Weber's argument, how hard a person works to acquire wealth would be expected to be irrelevant to moral goodness. In other words, if material rewards alone are a sign of God's grace, then a person who makes over \$200,000 a year with little effort would be considered morally equal to someone who works hard to earn the same amount of money. On the other hand, if idle hands are the devil's instrument, then we would expect that hard work would be rated as morally good. In addition, from the perspective of the suffering servant, meaningful difficult work on earth might be thought to relate to heavenly reward (e.g., Mother Teresa).

## STUDY 1

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

Four hundred thirty-eight surveys were distributed, but complete data were obtained on 381 respondents<sup>2</sup> (167 males, 212 females, and 2 not reporting) whose ages ranged from 18 to 80 ( $M = 34.46$ ,  $SD = 12.40$ ). Participants were recruited from the Dallas area at their work places near the Southern Methodist University campus, or at various airports in the continental U.S. Represented ethnic groups included white/Anglo (77.1%), Black/African American (8.4%), Hispanic (9.2%), Asian (3.7%), and other (1.6%). Participants were approached by the experimenter or student from an upper level psychology course who received extra credit for distributing the questionnaires. All responses were anonymous.

#### *Materials and Procedure*

Participants examined a "Career Survey" (See Appendix A) ostensibly completed by a target individual and made ratings about the

target (King and Napa, 1998). Targets responses were “handwritten” and designed so that all fictional targets had a bachelor’s degree, and no information regarding gender or marital status was given. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 3 (high vs. medium vs. low money)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low meaning)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low happiness)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low effort) between-subjects design. For the high money condition, the target’s income was over \$200000 per year. For the medium and low money conditions, the target earned \$31000–40000 per year and less than \$10000 per year, respectively. The amount of meaning in life the target experienced was manipulated by 3 items including “My work is very rewarding and I find it personally meaningful”. For the high meaning condition, the target rated this item a 5 (completely true of me) whereas targets for the low meaning condition rated this item a 1 (completely false of me). Happiness was manipulated by 3 items including “At my job, I feel happy most of the time”. For the high happiness condition, the target rated this item a 5 and for the low happiness condition the target rated this item a 1. Effort was manipulated by the number of hours targets worked. Effort was manipulated with target reporting 60 (= high) vs. 20 (= low) hours of work per week. Naturally, surveys completed by targets who were making over \$200000 per year while only working 15 hours per week warranted some explanation. In order to make the surveys as realistic as possible, where the target indicated 15 hours of work per week, two possible explanations were provided. Participants in the low effort but high money condition (i.e., \$200000 per year and 15 hours of work per week) viewed surveys completed by targets who “inherited” their wealth. Participants in the low effort and either medium or low money condition (\$31000–40000 and less than \$10000 per year, respectively) viewed surveys completed by targets who worked “part-time”.

### *Dependent Measures*

*Desirability of a life.* Participants responded to three items: “How much would you like to have this person’s life?” and “How much is this person leading the good life?” on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely much). Also, participants rated the quality of the target’s life on a scale from 1 (very low) to 10 (very high).

*Moral goodness.* Participants responded to three questions. They rated how good and moral they thought the target was, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely much). Additionally, participants read and completed the following rating:

Many religions and philosophies include the idea of a “final judgment”. If there were such a thing as life after death, circle the number that best represents your guess as to what this person would experience

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
punishment					reward				
(“hell”)					(“heaven”)				

As in previous work, we found participants were quite willing to make this judgment. Although 1225 surveys were distributed, only 6% were returned without a response to this question.<sup>3</sup>

## RESULTS

All dependent measures correlated highly with one another (Pearson’s  $r$ ’s ranging from 0.36 to 0.79,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, a 2 (high vs. low meaning)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low happiness)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low effort)  $\times$  3 (high vs. medium vs. low money) multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the six dependent measures. Table I summarizes the results across all three studies. To avoid redundancy, we refer readers to Table I for the multivariate test statistics. An effort  $\times$  money interaction and a meaning  $\times$  money interaction qualified the main effects of happiness, meaning, and money. We present univariate analyses only for those effects for which the omnibus multivariate test reached significance.

Univariate tests revealed the effort  $\times$  money interaction was significant only for ratings of “How much would you like to have this life?” ( $F_{(2,380)} = 4.93$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). When the life was presented as either very poor (income less than \$10000) or very wealthy (income greater than \$200000), effort made no difference in the desirability of the life. However, for a life of medium wealth (\$31000–40000), participants preferred an easy life over an effortful one (see Figure 1). Interestingly, participants did not prefer the rich easy life any more than a rich effortful life. These findings suggest that the good life is sometimes equated with the easy life, and this relationship is qualified by wealth.

TABLE I  
Summary of multivariate analyses

	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3				
	Wilk's Lambda	$F_{(6,352)}$	Lambda	Wilk's	$F_{(6,345)}$ Lambda	Wilk's	$F_{(6,254)}$		
Main effects	H	0.87	9.18***	H	0.65	20.66***	H	0.69	18.98***
	Me	0.72	22.31***	Me	0.66	30.28***	Me	0.75	13.79***
	Mo	0.79	7.41***	E	0.96	2.54*	E	0.88	5.64***
Two-way interactions	E×Mo	0.93	2.04*	H×Me	0.95	3.30**	H×Me	0.87	6.20***
	Me×Mo	0.91	2.74**	Me×E	0.96	2.74*	H×E	0.95	2.19*
			H×S	0.96	2.31*				
Three-way interactions			Me×E×S	0.95	2.87*	Me×E×C			
								0.94	2.93**

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Study 1 dependent variables = Happiness (H), Meaning (Me), Effort (E), Money (Mo)

Study 2 dependent variables = Happiness (H), Meaning (Me), Effort (E), Money (S)

Study 3 dependent variables = Happiness (H), Meaning (Me), Effort (E), Money (C)

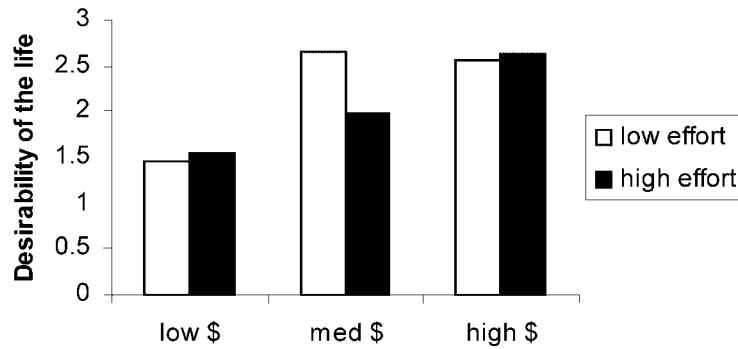


Figure 1. Study 1: Means for Effort X Money interaction for desirability of a life.

The meaning X money interaction emerged for perceptions of how much the target was leading the “good life” ( $F_{(2,380)} = 3.77$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and ratings of the person’s moral goodness ( $F_{(2,380)} = 3.48$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Figure 2 (top panel) shows that a meaningless life with little money was considered the least reflective of a good life. Although high meaning was always preferable to low meaning, this difference was greatest for the low money condition, perhaps suggesting that wealth compensates for lack of meaning to some extent. Similarly, although the target leading a meaningless life with little money was rated lowest in moral goodness (see Figure 2, bottom panel), the discrepancy between meaningful and meaningless lives was greatest under conditions of low income and least pronounced under conditions of high income, as if the meaningful life and meaningless life were virtually indistinguishable in terms of moral goodness as long as the person was very wealthy – a finding which highlights Weber’s notions that material success indicates God’s favor.

Main effects for money reached significance only for the questions of desirability of the life (all three  $F_{(2,380)}$ ’s  $> 10$ , all  $p$ ’s  $< 0.001$ ). Post hoc comparisons (Tukey’s HSD at 0.05 level) revealed that the high and medium-money conditions did not differ significantly ( $M = 10.61$  vs.  $M = 10.40$ ), but the low-money condition was different from the other two ( $M = 8.18$ ), suggesting that money may be an essential component of the good life but only to a certain extent. This finding converges with work on the relation of income to life satisfaction in that once the necessities of life are secured,

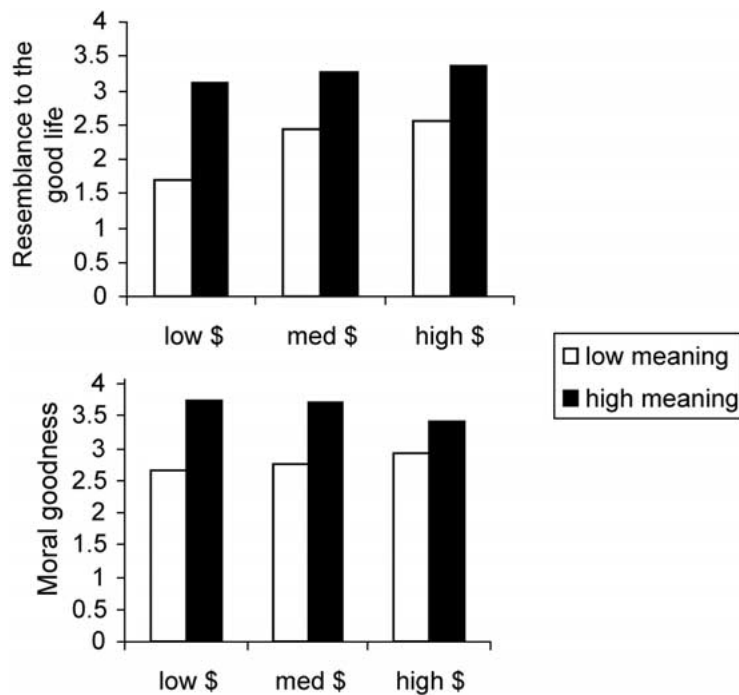


Figure 2. Study 1: Means for Meaning X Money interaction for ratings of a good life and moral goodness.

additional income has little relation to life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985; Diener et al., 1995).

Main effects for happiness and meaning replicated previous findings (King and Napa, 1998) in that the happy life was more desirable, more reflective of the “good life”, and higher in quality of life than the unhappy life; also, the happy life was seen as more good, moral, and likely to enter heaven (all  $F_{(1,380)}$ 's > 8, all  $p$ 's < 0.001). Likewise, meaningful lives were rated as more desirable and morally superior (all  $F_{(1,380)}$ 's > 31, all  $p$ 's < 0.001) to meaningless lives.

No main effects emerged for effort. Nor were there any significant three or four-way interactions.<sup>4</sup> In summary, folk conceptions of the good life include happiness, meaning, and some minimal amount of money. Our prediction that individuals would prefer high effort when paired with high meaning was not supported. Nor did hard work play a role in perceptions of moral goodness. If anything,

the effort X money interaction suggests that individuals prefer the easy life over a difficult one.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Results from this study replicated previous findings in that happiness and meaning were overwhelmingly greater predictors of the good life than money. The main effect for money was driven by the sharp contrast between the low-money condition and the other two conditions and was only relevant to the desirability of a life, not moral judgments of the life. In short, people do not desire great riches, although they want to avoid poverty.

Levels of wealth moderated the desirability of effort. When income was \$31000–40000 per year, participants preferred the low-effort condition over the high-effort condition. Thus, it seems that the desirable life may include a sense of a “free lunch” – the pay off, without effort. One explanation of results with regard to effort is that effort was operationalized as number of hours work. There is certainly no reason to believe that people would want to work long hours without sufficient justification such as greater income. In fact, the law of least effort states that people will choose to expend the minimal amount of energy required for maximum reward (Hull, 1943). In addition, the number of hours engaged in a job may have little to do with the actual experience of engagement in the task – individuals may clock in for a 10 hour day but spend much of that time bored or watching the clock. Thus, it may be necessary to operationalize effort in such a way as to specify the kind of active engagement posited by theories of eudamonia or flow.

With this limitation in mind, Study 2 was designed to reinvestigate the relationship of effort to the good life by operationalizing effort in a different way – as expenditure of energy and engagement in hard work. In addition, for Study 2, we were interested in examining whether the modest preference for the easy life shown in Study 1 would generalize to college students as well as community adults. Money was dropped as an independent variable, as its relative unimportance in defining the good life has been well demonstrated (Study 1 and King and Napa, 1998).

*Predictions for Study 2*

We predicted effort would be related to higher quality of life and higher moral goodness. Furthermore, we predicted a significant meaning X effort interaction such that effort would be most desirable when paired with high meaning and most aversive when paired with low meaning. Previous research (King and Napa, 1998) has shown college students to be somewhat more idealistic in their ratings of the good life, therefore we predicted that college students would be more likely than noncollege adults to endorse effort as part of the good life.

## STUDY 2

## METHOD

*Participants*<sup>4</sup>

Three hundred ninety-two surveys were distributed, and 366 were returned with complete data (132 males, 232 females, 2 not reporting). Participants included 188 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology class (Mean age = 19.24, SD = 2.31), and 178 community adults who were recruited by the students enrolled in the class or individuals who were recruited at health fairs in and around the Dallas area (Mean age = 41.84, SD = 13.15). Represented ethnic groups within the college and community sample included White/Anglo (78.7% and 74%), Black/African American (5.3% and 9.6%), Hispanic (9.0% and 13.6%), Asian (6.4% and 2.3%), and other (0.5% and 0.6%).

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (high vs. low happiness) × 2 (high vs. low meaning) × 2 (high vs. low effort) between subjects design. Participants examined a “Career Survey” similar to that used in Study 1, except the survey did not contain information about the target’s income. Happiness and meaning were both manipulated by targets’ responses to the same items used to manipulate these variables in Study 1. Mixed in with the happiness and meaning items were three additional items about the degree of

effort the target exerted at his or her job. These items included “At the end of my work day, I feel exhausted”, “My job requires hard work”, and “My work requires my complete attention and involvement in the entire process”. These items were rated on a scale from 1 (completely false of me) to 5 (completely true of me). In the high-effort condition, targets rated the effort items as 5, 5, and 4, respectively. In the low-effort condition, targets rated the items as 1, 1, and 2, respectively.

### *Dependent Measures*

Participants completed dependent measures identical to those in Study 1.<sup>5</sup>

## RESULTS

### *Desirability of a Life<sup>6</sup>*

Dependent measures were highly intercorrelated ( $p$ 's ranging from 0.42 to 0.75). A 2 (high vs. low happiness)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low meaning)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low effort)  $\times$  2 (community vs. college sample) MANOVA performed on the six dependent measures revealed main effects for happiness, meaning, and effort. Main effects were qualified by a three-way meaning  $\times$  effort  $\times$  sample interaction. A happiness  $\times$  meaning interaction and a happiness  $\times$  sample interaction also reached significance.<sup>7</sup>

Univariate tests showed that the meaning  $\times$  effort  $\times$  sample interaction emerged for ratings of the desirability of the target's life and quality of the target's life ( $F_{(1,365)} = 8.54$  and  $14.84$ , both  $p$ 's  $< 0.01$ ). Figure 3 illustrates this cross-over interaction. College students exhibited the meaning  $\times$  effort interaction we predicted in which high effort paired with high meaning was considered the most desirable life; low meaning paired with high effort was the least desirable. Community adults showed the opposite pattern – for the meaningless life, high effort was preferred over low effort ( $M = 4.19$  vs.  $3.35$ ). For the condition of high meaning, they preferred a life of ease rather than hard work. Similarly, among community adults, meaning that can be acquired with low effort was indicative of greater quality of life, whereas college students rate the combina-

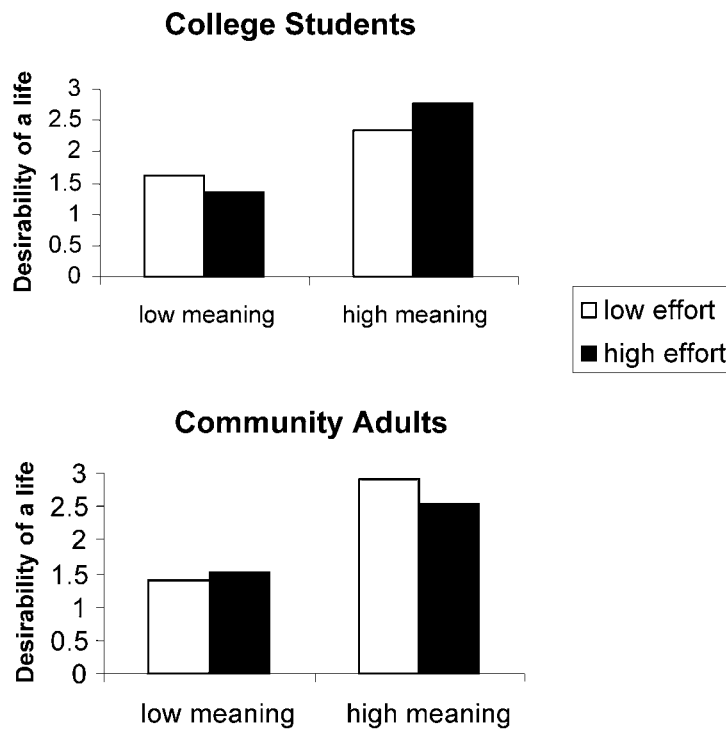


Figure 3. Study 2: Means for the Meaning X Effort X Sample interaction for desirability of a life.

tion of hard work and meaning as highest in quality. These findings suggest that community adults' conceptions of the good life support the notion that the good life is also the easy life, but that college students may be more sensitive to the idea of effortful engagement.

Why would community adults prefer high effort for the meaningless life? One explanation is that community adults may have assumed hard work to bring a person other types of rewards besides happiness and meaning – for instance, material rewards. In the context of a meaningless life, working hard to earn a large paycheck could be viewed as a consolation. College students may have inferred the opposite – that hard work paired with meaningful activity leads to greater economic reward. For instance, the item “My work requires my complete attention and involvement in the entire process” may have lead participants to conclude the target had a more complex, and therefore higher paying job. However, given the inconsistencies across the two samples (i.e., there is no

reason to suspect one sample would make one type of inference while another sample would not), and that the effects of wealth have not been borne out in previous studies (Study 1 and King and Napa, 1998), it seems unlikely that participants were making inferences about the targets wealth, but rather their judgments reflected their ideas of effort and meaning as we intended.

If this is case, then, there are clear differences between the two samples in their views of effort. College students appear to view the good life in more optimistic terms – perhaps even naively ignoring the importance of material goods and overemphasizing the impact of personal efforts in life success, while community adults were more pragmatic. Interestingly, past research (King and Napa, 1998) has shown that non-college adults place more emphasis on the role of money in the good life than college students. Also, differences in life domains between the two samples may explain why effort was viewed more positively by college students. For instance, community adults may have more areas of life which require the investment of effort (e.g., work, family, community, etc.). In particular, the manipulation of effort included one item which tapped into energy depletion – “At the end of my work day, I feel exhausted”. Community adults may have interpreted effort put into work as detracting from time and energy spent with their families.

The happiness X sample interaction emerged for the desirability of the life and also for judgments of heavenly reward ( $F_{(1,365)} = 4.09$  and  $3.92$ , both  $p$ 's  $< 0.05$ ). Although both samples preferred a happy life over an unhappy one, college students rated the unhappy life lower than community adults, while community adults rated the happy life lower on desirability than the college students. These findings underscore the importance of personal happiness, especially within the context of the work environment, for college students. With regard to judgments of heavenly reward, ratings of the happy person were virtually identical across samples – both college students and community adults strongly believed the happy person was bound for heaven. However, community adults judged the unhappy target more harshly than college students – giving the unhappy target a rating of 5.79 (where 1 = “hell” and 10 = “heaven”). Compared to ratings for the happy life ( $M = 7.01$  for community adults), it appears that community adults consider

personal happiness more of a moral duty. The unhappy person's chances of entering heaven seem questionable.

The happiness X meaning interaction was significant only for ratings of the desirability of the life ( $F_{(1,365)} = 14.19, p < 0.001$ ). This interaction shows that people give the highest ratings to the combination of high happiness and high meaning, replicating the findings from King and Napa (1998).

While we did not find effort per se to be desirable, participants nonetheless indicated that effort has some moral value. For questions of how moral and how good is this person, main effects for effort emerged ( $F_{(1,365)} = 12.05$  and  $4.00$ , both  $p$ 's  $< 0.05$ ). Compared to the easy life, the life of hard work was rated higher on both of these measures.

Overall, main effects for happiness indicated that respondents rated the happy life higher than the unhappy life on measures of desirability of the life, quality of life, and resemblance to the "good life" (all  $F_{(1,365)}$ 's  $> 95$ , all  $p$ 's  $< 0.001$ ). Furthermore, the happy person was considered more moral, more good, and more likely to go to heaven than the unhappy person (all  $F_{(1,365)}$ 's  $> 15$ , all  $p$ 's  $< 0.001$ ). Main effects for meaning paralleled findings for happiness. In general, the meaningful life was more desirable than the meaningless one on all accounts (all  $F_{(1,365)}$ 's  $> 113$ , all  $p$ 's  $< 0.001$ ). Participants also rated the target leading a meaningful life higher in morality and goodness than the target leading a meaningless life (both  $F_{(1,365)}$ 's  $> 43$ , both  $p$ 's  $< 0.001$ ). Meaning in life also played considerable importance in judgments of heavenly reward ( $F_{(1,365)} = 54.33, p < 0.001$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of Study 2 indicate that, generally, when effort is operationalized as effortful engagement in hard work, it is perceived somewhat more positively. The main effects that emerged for effort indicated effort was viewed as morally good, but not desirable. However, college students showed some preference for the hard-working, meaningful life whereas community adults tended to prefer the easy, meaningful life.

Limitations arising out of our operationalization of effort in the present study warrant discussion. Study 2 operationalized effort in a way that departs from self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy in intrinsically motivated activities (Deci and Ryan, 1995). In trying to capture the realistic aspects of a job, we manipulated effort with items such as “My job requires hard work” and “My work requires my complete attention and involvement in the entire process” which did not tap into the dimension of personal choice. Since self-determination theorists posit personal freedom (“autonomy”) as one of the three central and universal human needs (Ryan and Deci, 2001), Study 3 sought to address the issue of choice with regard to the value of effort in a good life.

Additionally, we dropped the item about feeling exhausted at the end of the day for three reasons. First, it was difficult to word the exhaustion question in terms of personal choice vs. task demands. Second, the notion of having one’s energy depleted raised the issue of whether our sample might be concerned that the effort required for this job would rob them of energy for other life domains. Finally, theories of flow and intrinsic motivation might suggest that one is energized by these activities and that drawing attention to the energy depletion might carry a more negative connotation than is appropriate.

Neither of the previous studies included manipulation checks to ensure that participants were responding to our manipulations in the ways intended. Furthermore, we were interested in probing whether our manipulations might actually impact on the amount of the independent variables participants assumed the target was experiencing. For example, does meaning add to perceptions of happiness? And does happiness add to perceptions of meaningfulness? Is the combination of happiness and effort related to attributions of greater meaning? Alternatively, hard work may be difficult to separate from meaning, so effort alone might enhance attributions of meaning.

Finally, we note that Studies 1 and 2 relied on convenience samples – individuals who were recruited from a variety of situations by psychology students. In Study 3, we sought to collect data from a more randomly selected sample – relying on the random selection of registered voters in Dallas County who were selected for jury duty. Though this sample is still drawn from a particular context –

an urban setting in the southwest, Study 3 avoids the kind of selection bias that may have reduced the generalizability of the first two studies.

### *Overview and Predictions for Study 3*

In Study 3, a sample of registered voters who had been contacted by the Dallas County Court System were recruited to participate in the study. Materials for this study were identical to those in the previous studies, except that the factor of personal choice was added by subtly changing the wording of the effort items. In the low choice condition, effort was portrayed as required by the task (e.g., “My work takes a lot of effort”; “My work requires a lot of hard work”). In the high choice condition, effort was made a personal choice of the target (e.g., “I put a lot of effort into my work”; “I work hard at my job”).

For Study 3, we predicted that the strong effects for happiness and meaning would again replicate. In addition, we predicted that high effort would be associated with greater desirability and moral goodness. Furthermore, according to self-determination theory, we would predict an effort X choice interaction such that high effort paired with high choice would be associated with highest levels of desirability and moral goodness. In addition, we predicted that low effort/high choice individuals would be judged as most immoral – since this pattern would seem to indicate that an individual chooses to be “lazy” and is therefore more responsible than one who fails to work hard simply because a job does not require it.

With regard to our manipulation checks, we predicted that happiness and meaning would provide additive effects on one another such that meaning would enhance the effects of the happiness manipulation on happiness judgments and happiness would enhance the effects of the meaning manipulation on judgments of meaningfulness. Finally, we predicted that effort would also be associated with enhanced attributions of meaningfulness.

## STUDY 3

## METHOD

*Participants*<sup>7</sup>

Three hundred ninety-five participants surveys were distributed to individuals waiting to be selected as jurors for the Dallas County jury pool. Complete data were obtained on 275 participants (124 males, 150 females, 1 not reporting).<sup>8</sup> Mean age of participants was 42.03 (SD = 12.09). Represented ethnic groups included White/Anglo (77.4%), Black/African American (10.6%), Hispanic (8%), Asian (2.2%), and other (1.8%). Participants were offered a piece of candy in return for their participation.

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants were randomly assigned to one of sixteen cells in a 2 (high vs. low happiness)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low meaning)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low effort)  $\times$  2 (chosen effort vs. taskdictated effort) between subjects design. The target stimulus was a "Career Survey" similar to that used in Study 2. However, in the present study we changed the wording of the effort questions to reflect personal choice or not. Effort items distinguished between effort which was "required" by the job itself (no choice effort condition: e.g., "My work takes a lot of effort" "My work requires a lot of hard work" and "My work requires my complete attention and involvement in the entire process") and effort which was chosen by the target (choice effort condition: e.g., "I put a lot of effort into my work" "I work hard at my job" and "I take great care in my work and am deeply involved in the entire process"). As was the case in the first two studies, these items were rated on a scale from 1 (completely false of me) to 5 (completely true of me). For both surveys, participants in the high effort condition viewed surveys in which the effort items were rated 5, 5, and 4, respectively. Participants in the low effort condition viewed surveys in which the effort items were rated 1, 1, and 2, respectively. Happiness and meaning were manipulated using the same items as were used in Studies 1 and 2, and no information about the target's income was included.

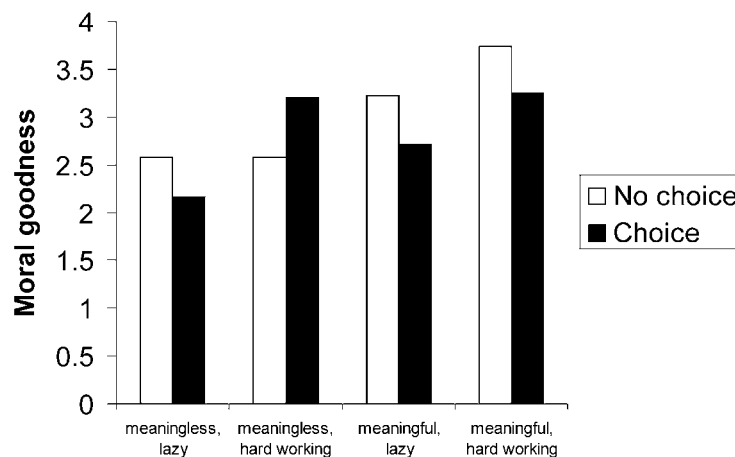


Figure 4. Study 3: Means for the Meaning X Effort X Choice interaction for moral goodness.

### *Dependent Measures*

Participants completed the same dependent measures as in Studies 1 and 2. As a manipulation check of our independent variables, participants were asked how happy they thought the target was, how much they thought the target was leading a meaningful life, and how lazy they thought the target was on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely much) scale.

## RESULTS

### *Desirability of a Life*<sup>9</sup>

All dependent measures correlated from 0.44 to 0.81, therefore a 2 (high vs. low happiness)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low meaning)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low effort)  $\times$  2 (no choice vs. choice) MANOVA was performed on the dependent measures. Main effects for happiness, meaning, effort, and choice were qualified by a significant three-way meaning X effort X choice interaction. Additionally, two significant two-way interactions emerged: happiness X meaning and happiness X effort.

Univariate tests revealed that the meaning X effort X choice interaction reached significance only for ratings of "How good is this person?" Figure 4 indicates that the highest ratings of moral goodness were for the meaningful life of "required" effort. There was no difference in ratings of the meaningless life of chosen hard work vs.

the meaningful life of chosen hard work. However, lives of chosen ease were rated as less moral. Targets who were not working hard, and who led meaningless lives by choice were seen as most despicable. Thus, the factor of choice appeared to have its strongest effects on making the easy life appear more egregious if self-determined, and the effortful life as more moral if not self-determined. One possibility is that participants viewed those targets whose work "required" them to work hard as fulfilling a need that the situation provided, perhaps answering to a sense of duty or obligation to a greater cause.

The significant happiness X meaning interaction emerged for all dependent measures except responses to "How good is this person?" (all  $F_{(1,274)}$ 's  $> 4$ , all  $p$ 's  $< 0.05$ ). Consistent with findings from Study 2 and King and Napa (1998), respondents reported an overwhelming preference for the combination of high happiness and high meaning compared to alternative combinations of happiness and meaning.

Of greater theoretical interest is the happiness X effort interaction which emerged for all measures of the desirability of a life ("How much would you like to have this life?" "How much is this person leading the good life?" and ratings of the target's quality of life). The pattern for these interactions was identical across measures; thus, Figure 5 shows the means for only the desirability of the life. As shown, effort was irrelevant in ratings of the desirability of an unhappy life ( $M$ 's = 7.59 for high effort vs. 6.92 for low effort), but for ratings of the happy life, effort added significantly to the desirability of the life ( $M$ 's = 11.83 for high effort vs. 8.88 for low effort). These results seem to indicate that within the context of a happy life, hard work is seen as a positive feature. In addition, it is notable that no significant differences emerged with regard to whether effort was presented as a personal choice or a given feature of one's job. We speculate that the life of hard, happy work may have been viewed as most fun.

Overall, significant main effects for happiness indicated that the happy life was rated as more desirable than the unhappy life (all  $F_{(1,274)}$ 's  $> 43$ , all  $p$ 's  $< 0.001$ ) and more morally good ( $F_{(1,274)} = 4.20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Univariate tests for "How moral is this person?" and likelihood of heavenly reward did not attain significance. With regards to the main effects for meaning, the meaningful life scored

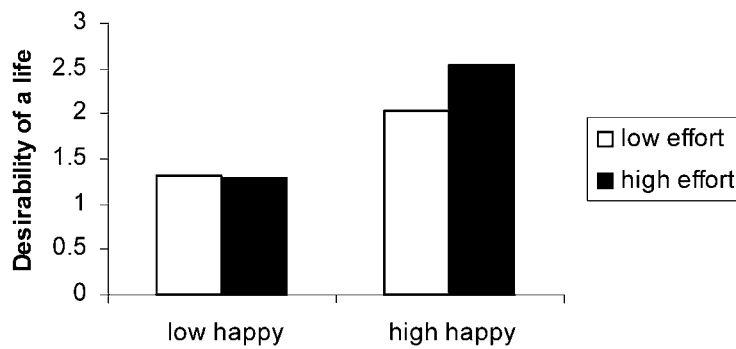


Figure 5. Study 3: Means for the Happiness X Effort interaction for desirability of a life.

higher than the meaningless life on all measures of desirability and moral goodness (all  $F_{(1,274)}$ 's > 20, all  $p$ 's < 0.001). Main effects for effort were also robust across all six dependent measures such that hard work was more preferable, and morally superior to the easy life (all  $F_{(1,274)}$ 's > 4, all  $p$ 's < 0.05), suggesting that effort per se may be a desirable component of the good life, especially when operationalized as effortful engagement and not confused with energy depletion.

#### *Manipulation Checks*

A 2 (high vs. low happiness)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low meaning)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low effort)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low effort choice) MANOVA was performed on the three manipulation check items: "How happy is this person?" "How meaningful is this person's life?" and "How lazy is this person?" in order to examine, first, if our manipulations worked and, second, to see if there were unexpected interactive effects of the independent variables on each other. First, main effects emerged for happiness, meaning, and effort (see Table II for test statistics), indicating that our manipulations did work – the happy life was rated as happier, the meaningful life rated as more meaningful, and the easy life received higher ratings of laziness.

A significant happiness X meaning interaction and a happiness X effort interaction also emerged. For the happiness X meaning interaction, univariate tests reached significance for all ratings of happiness, meaningfulness, and laziness (all  $F$ 's<sub>(1,271)</sub> > 4, all  $p$ 's < 0.05). Figure 6 shows the means for these interactions. The happy and meaningful life was rated highest in happiness ( $M = 3.46$ ) and

TABLE II  
Summary of multivariate analyses of manipulation checks

		Study 3	
		wilk's Lambda	$F_{3,254}$
Main effects	H	0.52	77.82***
	Me	0.73	32.04***
	E	0.83	16.90***
Two-way interactions	H×Me	0.93	6.27***
	H×E	0.94	5.61**
	Me×C	0.97	2.25 <sup>†</sup>
	E×C	0.97	2.26 <sup>†</sup>

Study 3 independent variables = Happiness (H), Meaning (Me), Effort (E), Choice (C)

<sup>†</sup>  $p = .80$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

meaning ( $M = 4.25$ ) and lowest in laziness ( $M = 2.09$ ). The unhappy, meaningless life was rated least happy ( $M = 1.60$ ) and meaningful ( $M = 1.76$ ), but not the most lazy ( $M = 2.59$ ). The laziest target was one leading a happy, meaningless life ( $M = 2.84$ ). If unhappiness is viewed as a motivating state (i.e., a state which might lead one to take action and make changes), then the combination of happiness and meaninglessness may have been judged particularly harshly because participants inferred the target was not working to overcome his/her state of meaninglessness.

The happiness X effort interaction emerged as significant for all three manipulation check variables (all  $F_{(1,271)}$ 's  $> 4$ , all  $p$ 's  $< 0.05$ ). Figure 7 shows the means for how happy, meaningful, and lazy participants thought the target was. The life high in happiness and effort was rated as most happy ( $M = 3.87$ ), most meaningful ( $M = 3.14$ ), and least lazy ( $M = 1.66$ ). Again, we suspect that participants viewed this life as most fun. Interestingly, the combination of high happiness and low effort resulted in the highest ratings of laziness ( $M = 3.27$ ). Similar to the happy meaningless target, the happy lazy person might have been perceived as self-satisfied or complacent.

In general, there was contamination between the concepts of happiness and meaning, attesting to the difficulty in separating the

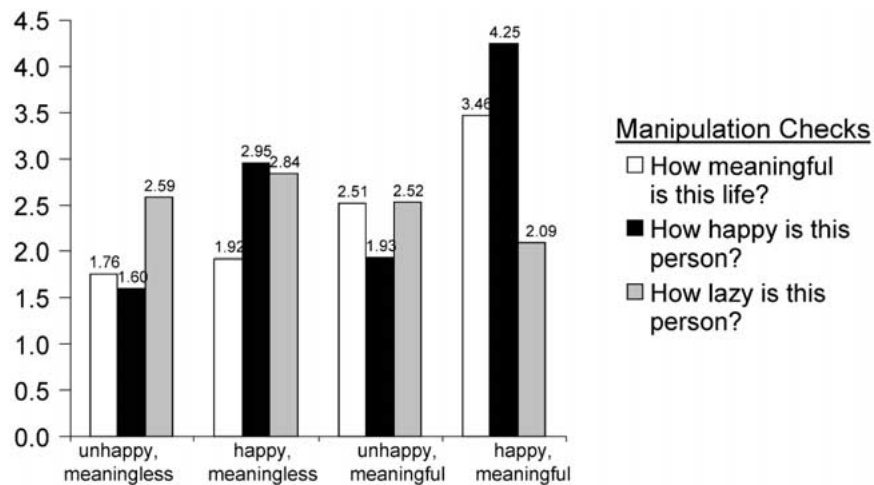


Figure 6. Study 3 Manipulation Checks: Means for Happiness X Meaning interaction.

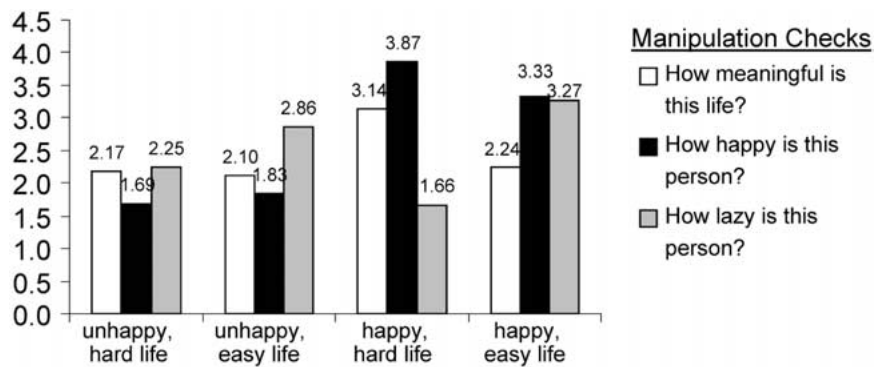


Figure 7. Study 3 Manipulation Checks: Means for Happiness X Effort interaction.

two constructs. Main effects revealed that the happy life was rated as more meaningful than the unhappy life ( $F_{(1,271)} = 19.95, p < 0.001, M = 2.69$  vs.  $2.14$ ). The meaningful life was considered happier than the meaningless life ( $F_{(1,271)} = 43.89, p < 0.001, M = 3.09$  vs.  $2.28$ ), the meaningless life was perceived as higher in laziness ( $F_{(1,271)} = 6.61, p < 0.02, M = 3.82$  vs.  $3.67$ ). But happiness alone had no effect on perceptions of laziness ( $F_{(1,271)} = 0.32, n.s.$ ). The direction of the main effect for effort indicated that participants perceived high effort alone to be more meaningful than low effort ( $F_{(1,271)} = 15.54, p < 0.001$ ).

Finally, a meaning X choice interaction and an effort X choice interaction approached significance. Means from these interactions revealed that respondents gave highest ratings of meaningfulness to the target who was leading a meaningful life not by choice – a finding which contradicts self-determination theory which emphasizes the importance of being able to choose one's activities. Also, the life of self-determined ease (low effort by choice) was rated the laziest of all combinations of choice and effort.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

Is effort part of The Good Life? The answer to this question seems to be “it depends” – it depends on who is making the judgment, the kind of effort required, and what else the person is experiencing. Study 1 indicated that the good life is clearly the easy life when it comes to working long hours. In addition, the predicted interactions of meaning X effort and money X effort did not emerge. In fact, at moderate levels of income the easy life was definitely preferred. For Study 2, effort operationalized as engagement in a task and energy depletion, was viewed somewhat more positively, particularly by college students as opposed to community adults. The community adults showed clear preference for an easy life of meaningful activity.

Finally, in Study 3, when effort was operationalized only as effortful engagement and not confused with energy depletion, effort was a preferred aspect of the good life. In addition, Study 3 showed that effort was most desirable in the context of an already happy life. Effort was also recognized as a moral good in Study 3, though, interestingly, effort was most valued when it was not chosen, and the lack of effort was most condemned when it was chosen. Finally, effort, when combined with other aspects of the good life, was shown to enhance attributions of happiness and meaning.

Although there were some consistencies across the results of the three studies, there were also some inconsistencies as well. One way to clarify these inconsistencies is to consider how much effort in one life domain conflicts with other life domains. With regard to work hours (as in Study 1), this issue is paramount – time spent at work cannot be invested in family or social activities. With regard to energy expenditure, it may have been assumed by participants in

Study 2 that a person who is exhausted at the end of the work day is therefore unable to expend energy in other life domains. In Study 3, when this item was removed effort was perceived more positively. Thus, active engagement in effortful activity may be viewed as an important part of a meaningful life – but only if there is a possibility of balance with other life interests. This explanation might also serve to justify the differences found between college and noncollege participants in Study 2. Noncollege adults may have a greater number of other commitments and may therefore be more sensitive to the sacrifice that effort in the area of work may require for other life domains.

It is also notable that the way effort was operationalized in the first two studies might have seemed aversive. Is effort which is operationalized as engagement that does not deplete energy really effort at all? Ironically, the results of Study 3 suggest that people are willing to work hard – but only if it is easy. Which of these operational definitions best represents the experience of effort in daily life is debatable.

#### *The Relation between Effort and Happiness*

In Study 3, effort interacted with happiness to predict desirability. We have suggested that the tendency to view this combination as desirable may represent the naïve psychologist's recognition of flow. In the context of a happy person, effort was seen as enhancing experienced happiness and meaning in life. The combination of happiness and effort certainly jibes with a variety of perspectives on optimal functioning.

Participants may have assumed that the target who was happy and engaged in a difficult task was performing successfully – a variable that was ignored in the present study. Perhaps one of the chief pay-offs of hard work is a high quality product. Engagement in difficult tasks may be more desirable when the quality of one's work is of interest. Future research that incorporates the variable of quality would allow us to examine the extent to which a job well done serves as its own reward.

#### *Paradoxical Impact of Choice*

One interesting result of Study 3 was that chosen effort was often seen as less good than task-required effort. One way to view these

results is to consider that indiscriminately working hard may be viewed somewhat less positively than working hard when it is required by a task. It may be that individuals who are perceived as just always working hard are assumed to be low in ability (e.g., Dweck et al., 1995; Elliott and Dweck, 1988; c.f., Shepperd et al., 1994).

Another interpretation of this finding is that high effort, regardless of its origins in the person or the task tends to be seen as doing one's duty – meeting task demands. Individuals who expend low effort because a task does not demand it would also be seen as fulfilling their duty. In contrast, a low effort individual who chooses to expend low effort may be viewed as shirking his or her duties. The demand is so obvious for individuals to say they choose to work hard, it is difficult to imagine participants not judging quite harshly an individual who brazenly admits to being deliberately lazy.

#### *Limitations and Areas for Future Research*

The present studies must be interpreted with the caveat that they represent culture specific, historically situated notions of the good life. Certainly, there are few areas in which cultures would disagree more than on definitions of the good life. Leisure and personal happiness, for example, are largely Western and modern concerns (Engel, 1988). And definitions of effort vary widely from culture to culture. In American society, people's motivation is largely based on the cultural stereotype of work as something to be avoided as much as possible (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) or as simply a means to an end, whereas in Japan, effort is viewed more positively because it is believed that there are intrinsic benefits to persisting at tasks (Holloway, 1988). However, given that the bulk of studies on subjective wellbeing have been conducted in Western societies, the present studies, although limited, serve as a good start to understanding what makes a life good.

These three studies, as well as our previous work, have taken a "one size fits all" approach to defining the good life. The large effects we have obtained for variables like happiness and meaning justify this approach, to some extent. However, even robust components of the good life may be relative values. It may be that some individuals sacrifice happiness to accomplish other goals, others sacrifice meaning in the service of money, or sacrifice prestige in

the service of meaning. Research that allows for the tailoring of values to individual lives will be necessary to uncover the individual differences that drive the constructions of the variety of possible good lives.

### *Effort, Happiness, and Meaning*

One explanation for why individuals may not value effort as essential to leading a good life is that hard work may very well have little to do with meaning and happiness for the average American worker. Modern capitalist society has largely been blamed for reducing labor to simply a means of serving consumption whereas other systems, such as Buddhism, value labor as the primary means of expression of human creativity – essentially, the expression of one's true being (Schummacher, 1973). However, as employees have become more specified in their tasks and less identified with the end-product of their labors, effort has come to be regarded as no more than an exchange for a weekly paycheck. Job satisfaction research reveals that the most satisfied employees are the ones who feel a sense of control over their work and that their efforts have impact (Myers, 1992). In fact, Gagne, Senecal and Koestner (1997) found task significance and meaningfulness were the greatest predictors of intrinsic motivation and satisfaction at work. Unfortunately, this means that upper-level employees, such as those at the managerial level or higher, tend to be more satisfied than those in lower-status positions (Myers, 1992). Furthermore, the crux of programs such as unemployment and welfare compensation is that they are erroneously believed to be adequate replacements for meaningful work – thereby robbing workers of their essential value as human beings.

It is notable that the strongest effects were, as in previous work, for happiness and meaning. In general, people want happy and meaningful lives. Dedication to difficult work may have its most important impact on the good life via its relation to pleasant affect. Apparently, happiness has the capacity to transform even onerous tasks into desirable and morally good occupations. Quite simply, individuals who enjoy the difficult work in which they are engaged are seen as leading desirable, good lives. Happy individuals who opt for the easy life, in contrast, take a less desirable and even morally questionable path.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## APPENDIX A

## SAMPLE CAREER SURVEY FOR STUDY 1

Name                     

Place of Employment                     

What is your highest level of education? (Check one)

Grade school  High school  Some college   
 B.A./B.S.  M.A./M.S.  Ph.D.  Other (explain)

What is your combined family income? (Check one)

Less than \$10000  \$11-20000  \$21-30000   
 \$31-40000  \$41-50000  \$51-70000   
 \$71-100000  \$100-200000  greater than \$200000

Please estimate the total number of hours you spend working each week (include time spent at your place of employment and time spent working at home)   60  

If your response to the previous question was less than 20 hours, please explain:

---

Rate the following items with regard to how much each is **true** of you in your job, using the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
<b>completely</b>				<b>completely</b>
<b>false of me</b>				<b>true of me</b>

  5   My work is very rewarding and I find it personally meaningful.

  1   I truly enjoy going to work everyday.

  5   In my job I really feel like I am touching the lives of people.

  2   At my job, I feel happy most of the time.

  5   My job involves a lot of hassles.

  4   My work will leave a legacy for future generations.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's notion of happiness as the ultimate goal is a frequently cited yet widely misunderstood concept that traces its roots to the unfortunate translation of eudaimonia as happiness (Kraut, 1979; Telfer, 1980; Waterman, 1990a). Interestingly, had eudaimonia been interpreted differently, research on positive functioning may well have taken an entirely different course (Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1990a).

<sup>2</sup> For all three studies, individuals included in the subsample did not differ from the larger sample set in age, ethnicity, or responses to any of our dependent variables.

<sup>3</sup> Since religiosity might be expected to relate to this last question, participants' selfreported religiosity was measured by asking "How important is religion in your life?" and "How much do your personal religious beliefs influence your daily decisions?" on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely much). Composite religiosity scores were computed as a mean of the two items ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ). For all analyses, when religiosity was included as a covariate, results were virtually identical to the MANOVA. Therefore, we present the more parsimonious analyses.

<sup>4</sup> Multivariate tests for meaning X effort and happiness X money interactions approached significance. We do not interpret these marginally significant interactions given that they were unpredicted and the probability of attaining a significant interaction in a  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3$  design is greater than 0.05.

<sup>5</sup> Also, religiosity was measured using the same items as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

<sup>6</sup> When we included religiosity and age as covariates, results were essentially the same as the MANOVA.

<sup>7</sup> A meaning X effort interaction also emerged, but we do not interpret this interaction because the meaning X effort X sample interaction supersedes the two-way interaction.

<sup>8</sup> Many more surveys were returned incomplete for this sample than those in Studies 1 and 2. Participants did not have as much time to complete the surveys as in Studies 1 and 2, and may have been less familiar with the format of psychology surveys and scales.

<sup>9</sup> Religiosity was measured using the same items as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ), but when this measure was included as a covariate, results did not differ from the MANOVA.

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