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**THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL VALUES AND  
SOCIETAL FACTORS ON THE PACE OF LIFE AND  
ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND  
LEISURE IN THE UNITED STATES, WESTERN  
EUROPE AND ESTONIA: A COMPARATIVE  
ANALYSIS**

**MA thesis**

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## **Abstract**

The present thesis describes values and socioeconomic factors in the United States and in Western Europe with a special interest in how these relate to time-use. Cultural traits associated with Americans (e.g. competitiveness, acquisitiveness and achievement orientation) are thought to foster work to a greater extent than traits commonly linked with West Europeans (e.g. solidarity, cooperation and appreciation of stability). Insecurity that emanates from liberality is likewise a factor motivating work in the United States while state-coordination provides a greater sense of security. Tax systems and labour market regulation, especially the degree of unionisation, have been explained as influencing the length of working time in a society. As a result of various factors, Americans work more hours than Europeans. Contemporary Estonians, too, can be seen as focused on work. Culturally there exists a tendency to see work as morally good. Liberal ideology promotes work-centeredness and self-reliance. The sense of insecurity has led to emphasising hard values and the role of work as the guarantor of survival. Consumerist desires can be met only once money has been earned through work. Also, catching up with the West motivates people to postpone personal gratification. Results of a survey among Estonian respondents conducted as part of the thesis further indicate the importance of work in the post-independence Estonian society.

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## 1. Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union life in Estonia has changed a great deal. The spread of Americanism has been seen in the affinity towards big cars, private houses and flashy consumer items, the significance of materialism, the importance of labels on things, the success of liberal ideology, achievement orientation, the emphasis on work, the deference to money, rampant individualism, veneration of competitiveness, the respect towards an enterprising mind, the need to prove one's wealth and power, lack of solidarity, the feelings of insecurity and of anxiety, and the rising contrasts between the rich and the poor or "the winners and losers". It can be argued that in terms of the things people hold in high regard, many similarities can now be found in the Estonian (and also other East Europeans countries) and the American approaches. At the same time, as Estonia is located in Europe and belongs in the European Union, the country is inevitably also influenced by the realities found in the western part of Europe. The present thesis sets out to look into some of the values people living in Estonia hold, more specifically to compare Estonian values to those in the United States and those in Western Europe, trying to trace American and European traits in the way of life and ways of thought in Estonia and changes of various aspects in Estonian reality following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The impact of values on the use of time (i.e. on work and leisure patterns) will be under special interest.

Both America and Western Europe represent Western culture in Huntington's sense, both are highly industrialized and both have some of the richest populations in the world. America's culture can be said to be based on the West European one having been imported/exported by the early settlers and thereafter developed and transformed there. Although sharing many traits and having much in common in basic ways of thinking and acting, the so-called "Western Culture" based on Christian religion and also comprising Estonia, is an abstraction and cannot be considered homogenous. Timothy Garton Ash, for instance proposes an overlap of 85 % between the American and European cultures leaving a margin for difference (Byatt). Americans (or the inhabitants of the United States as they are referred to in the present thesis) have various traits that set them apart from West Europeans, making relevant comparisons between the attitudes, values, opinions, general ways of thinking and behaving common to the two groups.

Generalisations and average people, the most typical representatives of the given societies will be dealt with. Thus Americans for the purposes of the present thesis are the inhabitants of the United States, and more specifically, those Americans belonging to the white middle-class, the country's (up until now) most numerous and influential group. For although the United States is a truly multicultural country and there also exist large groups of black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native American and so on, it is the white middle class Americans who hold most of the positions of power and whose values and attitudes are most likely to be referred to when talking about the country. Indeed, as pointed out by Tomlinson, the various minority groups within America are "in a real sense dominated by a mainstream white American culture," (qtd in Campbell, Davis and McKay 16) and can be said to be even Americanized themselves by the white cultural majority so that the image the rest of the world has of Americans tends to correspond overwhelmingly to the knowledge about the white American group of the Anglo-American WASP culture.

The same view has been also emphatically expressed by Samuel Huntington in his last (almost virulently anti-immigration) book “Who are we?”. The following is a representative quotation:

“America has always had its full share of subcultures. It has also had a mainstream Protestant culture, in which most of its people, whatever their subcultures, have shared. For almost four centuries this culture of the founding settlers has been the central and the lasting component of American identity“ (59).

Huntington’s right-wing, not to say racial bias is evident in his judgmental claim that

“Throughout American history, people who were not white Anglo-Saxon Protestants have become Americans through adopting America’s Anglo-Protestant culture and political values. This benefited them and the country” (61).

However, the figures he adduces to prove his point are fairly impressive: due to the unusually high birth rate of the Anglo-Protestant settlers, are fairly impressive:

“With no immigration after 1790, the 1990 American population would have been about 122 million instead of 249 million. In short, toward the end of the twentieth century, America was demographically roughly half the product of early settlers and slaves<sup>1</sup> and half that of the immigrants who joined the society the settlers had created” (46).

Huntington also refers to a more neutral scholarly work by David Hackett Fischer who, on the basis of studying the immigration patterns to the present-day US, concludes that

“in a cultural sense, most Americans are of Albion’s seed, no matter who their own forebears might have been. ... [T]he legacy of four British folk-ways in early America remains the most powerful determinant of the voluntary society in the United States today” Fischer (6-7).

A typical West European is harder to define seeing that instead of a single country there are a number of nation states with different languages and disparate cultures, and Europeans tend to feel loyalty towards their national identity rather than affiliate themselves with a pan-European identity. Nevertheless, a variety of characteristics can be attributed to West Europeans in general that set them apart from Americans viewed as a group. In case of Europeans both generalisations are made and specific areas or countries referred to where occasion commands. As regards Estonians, again, mainstream Estonian values are being discussed and those of other ethnic groups, including Russians, the largest minority group, have been left out.

Estonia’s location is towards the periphery from the standpoint of the western part of Europe. As pointed out by Marika Kirch, it can be considered a Western outpost on the borderline area between the Western and Russian-Orthodox-Byzantine civilizations, belonging to the wider Christian European civilization due to its Protestant-Lutheran religious heritage (Valk 88), and can additionally be viewed as an independent-minded little country not fitting into the Scandinavian pattern of a welfare society yet somewhat reluctant to wholeheartedly embrace and feel pride in the identity of a Baltic state. Since 2004 Estonia is a member of NATO and the European Union, which has strengthened its relationship with the West – with the United States and With Western Europe. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Estonian governments have actively affirmed the country’s independence from Russia and the sovereignty of its decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Huntington does not count the African slaves as part of the mainstream. His judgmentalism in this question is just barely veiled.

During the course of its history, the land that now forms the territory of the Republic of Estonia has been subjected to various influences. The pagan population was Christianised in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and having been turned into peasant serfs has been ruled over and no doubt influenced by Germans, Russians and Swedes first and foremost, but there have been additional contacts with various other European influences. The local peasants and the German ruling class lived side by side for centuries without mixing much. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the era of the romantic national awakening, educated enthusiasts started gathering folklore and laying the foundations for Estonian culture taking German culture of the long-term masters as the example from which to proceed. Perhaps owing to this German influence, although somewhat distant from Central and Western Europe, and also because of its position in the West as considered from Russia, Estonia was still regarded as the West during Soviet times. Estonia can thus be seen as lying in the sphere of multiple influences. When describing themselves, Estonians often refer to the mental images of the peasant forebears treasuring the land, holding on to their pagan roots and distrusting their detached German masters. Lack of assimilation with Russians and the silent resistance during the Soviet period are similarly brought up when discussing the Estonian history. Also cultural difference from other Baltic states and cultural proximity to the Finns are mentioned. At more recent times, signs of Americanization are detected and similarities with and differences from West Europeans pointed out. Estonia is seen as an independent state looking out for its interests in the world through cooperation with other nations and within international bodies within the increasingly globalised world.

The present thesis aims to comment on the differences of values, ways of thought and life in Western Europe and in the United States, and to observe how the values, attitudes and opinions on various issues held in the Estonian society match up with those found in Western Europe and how they compare with those encountered in the United States. Values held by and embedded into the members of a society can be seen as shaping the functioning and organisation of the way of life there. Values and attitudes towards the issues of work, leisure, time and consumption will be under special attention as one important area through which cultural differences manifest themselves is the use of time in different societies. One of the guiding principles here was Edward Hall's (244) observation that – at least in monochronic societies – actual prioritising in terms of time allocated to an activity reflects underlying prioritising of values better than results of any questionnaires: a person claiming that children are “very important” for him may in reality spend only 10 minutes a day on/with them. Hall's argument that the latter indicator – which shows that in fact, children are **not** highly valued – is more reliable than explicitly stated values is cogent. In a way, by exploring patterns of time use, we are closer to finding out the desirable as against the desired than in through any other method. Thus, while the thesis is deliberately focussed on the use of time, it hopes to lay a foundation to a future comparative study of values, both the desired and the desirable, in general.

A perception of work and leisure being valued differently across the Atlantic Ocean is expressed in the popular generalisation “Americans live to work; Europeans work to live.” The saying is concerned with comparing the issue of time-use in America (United States) and in (Western) Europe, with further implications for a whole spectrum of other social and personal values that time-use is related to and indicative of. Essentially, the

saying voices the widespread cultural knowledge/stereotype that consumerism, competitiveness, achievement orientation and the influence of the all-pervading Protestant work-ethic drive Americans to work, while West Europeans lead more leisurely lives, treasuring things that rest outside the domain of work, and work in order to have the means to enjoy their lives. To use Rifkin's terms, the saying refers to the American commitment to "work ethic" and European appreciation of "leisure and deep play" (14). At any rate, a line of difference is drawn between Americans and West Europeans in terms of their preferences in the use of time that in turn affects the way of life as well as the quality of life on the two continents.

Before proceeding to the main body of the text, the concepts of work and leisure need to be clarified. In Jonathan Gershuny's explanation, all time-use by human-beings can be divided into paid work, unpaid work, leisure and sleep (5). Work can be explained as activity or effort carried out with the aim of achieving a result, and in the case of paid work, as an activity carried out with the aim of achieving a result and earning income. Work can be characterised by its social usefulness and by an element of coercion (Yves R. Simon 23, 34-39), and is undertaken for numerous further reasons, pay, social recognition, self-realization, security, interaction with colleagues and the need to do something among them. Although pay undoubtedly remains important, people with post-materialist orientation are likelier to appreciate the chance to express and cultivate themselves that accompanies work. Work can be interesting and inherently satisfying, though for many people this is not the case. Mass participation on the labour market whereby people sell their time and skills, buy their right for leisure and earn the means for which to ensure their daily existence and enjoy leisure can be considered a fundamental premise of the functioning of modern society.

The definition of "leisure" offered in Compact Oxford English Dictionary is "time spent in or free for relaxation or enjoyment." Leisure is often opposed to work in terms of likeability, being associated with the sentiments of ease, joy, lack of coercion, pleasure and rest. While work entails the elements of necessity and obligation, leisure is more often thought of as related to freedom of choice for filling time – a polarity captured in the terms "activities of legal fulfilment" (work-related activities) and "activities of free development" (activities done at will) by Simon (24)<sup>2</sup>. Leisure can be seen as recuperation from the effects of work (notably stress and fatigue), and as a necessary period of rest in preparation for work. Another way of viewing leisure would be as compensation for the drudgery of work, as relaxation and indulgence earned by dedicating a number of hours to compulsory effort. During leisure, an individual has the opportunity to interact with friends and family, to express his/her personality, to cultivate him/herself, to construct his/her identity and to charge his/her batteries. In a capitalistic consumer society, leisure is further treated as consumption time. People in their leisure time engage in activities or purchase products and services and thus keep other people employed (Gershuny 1). Leisure can be divided into active and passive leisure, with active leisure activities entailing a degree of mental or physical exertion, and passive leisure activities provoking less mental and physical effort on the part of the individual. It has been argued that active leisure yields greater benefits in terms of providing a boost to

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Twain's definition in the famous whitewashing episode in the "Adventures of Tom Sawyer" is perhaps the most apt: "Work consists of whatever a body is *obliged* to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is *not obliged* to do" (17, italics original).



“psychological well-being, self-esteem and self-concept, social interaction, life-satisfaction and happiness” (Haworth 12), but passive leisure too is important in allowing an individual to relax. In modern times many individuals are also experiencing the fusion of work and leisure making it difficult for them to determine where work ends and leisure begins.

The majority of people spend a large part of their time working, thus the amount of time they have left over for leisure depends on their working time. A problem can be perceived when work begins to dominate an individual’s life, when the individual feels he/she is working too long and has too little leisure<sup>3</sup>. This can happen for various reasons, notably the employers’ demands, peer pressure or the need to make money to consume or pay debts. People sigh at not having sufficient time for themselves, complain about having too much to do in too little time, sense work to proceed at a faster pace and regret work-related problems not leaving much space for personal life. In the age of the ever increasing tempo of work and of satisfaction of many basic needs, the questions of work-life balance and quality of life have become ever more pertinent. Statistically Americans have longer working hours and thus less free time than West Europeans (see below). The notions “time scarcity”, “time crunch”, “time bind”, “time squeeze”, “time poverty” and “time famine” referred to on various instances in the popular media as well as by scholars such as Schor have similarly been associated with Americans more. What brings about the difference?

Some explanations rely on cultural factors, stressing the different values and historical conditions that shape the minds of those living in the US and those inhabiting West European countries as having a role in the current patterns of time-allocation. Traits like individuality, self-reliance, competitiveness, initiative, ambition, achievement orientation, valorisation of success and consumerism that are habitually thought to belong to the American psyche can all be linked with the need of an individual to dedicate him/herself to work. Additionally, the importance assigned to working hard could be considered psychologically important for Americans due to the frequent re-iteration of myths stressing the significance of enterprise, toil and perseverance. Traits such as orientation towards the community, compassion, solidarity, connectedness and co-operation traditionally associated with West Europeans can be seen as to some extent taking the pressure off an individual to work to an excessive degree in order to excel beyond all others. Such cultural differences between the Americans and Europeans have been pointed out by e.g. Rifkin, Pells, Barzini, and Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote among many others.

Further explanations of the differences between American and West European working patterns deal with socioeconomic factors, assigning importance to taxation (e.g. Prescott), the degree of unionisation and the role of state activity in providing welfare and enforcing legislation (e.g. Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote). It is noted that in liberal

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<sup>3</sup> A disclaimer is in order here: the definitions of work and leisure used here as well as the problems associated with excessive work do not apply to the fortunate though arguably not very large group of people, often in creative and/or intellectual occupations, for whom work and leisure in the best-case scenario fuse into one enjoyable activity of living where intense work is associated with the famous “flow”— the mental state of operation in which the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing by a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity – a term proposed by positive psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, widely referenced across a variety of fields and popularized, among others, by Goleman.

market societies oriented on growth and competition, work hours tend to be longer than in societies where the state actively interferes in the economy and organises the lives of its citizens with more vigour (e.g. Gershuny). Socioeconomic variation can be seen as resulting from the divergent preferences of the members of the society.

Differences in working time and leisure have given rise to a plethora of stereotypes of coffee-sipping leisurely Europeans reading in parks and cooking gourmet meals to be enjoyed in the company of friends, and of everything shutting down in the month of August and on Sundays. These stereotypes are often contrasted with similarly ubiquitous images of the stressed (fat) and over-worked Americans toiling away at the office driven by the Protestant work-ethic pulping in their veins and the pleasures of the shopping mall and shiny gimmicks flashing before their eyes. The need to keep on consuming and to outperform their peers, often attributed to Americans, can be seen as a powerful factor urging them to work more.

As pointed out by several authors such as Burns, both modern work with its 24-hour availability, demands for multi-tasking and constant interruptions, as well as modern leisure, on account of the ever-increasing choice of options to fill it as well as the mounting commoditization, could be treated as contributing to an individual's sense of harriedness and lack of time. This could especially be the case for Americans who statistically spend more time at their workplace and manifest greater consumerist tendencies that need to be funded by work. People may not be working more than their forebears in terms of hours, but modern work is intense and fast-paced, and often psychologically tiring while many modern leisure activities could be seen as needing prior planning and the availability of money on both sides of the Atlantic. Still, as Europeans have more leisure at their disposal one can argue that their lives indeed are less harried than those of Americans.

If Americans live to work and West Europeans work to live then it can be asked how Estonia compares in terms of people's time-use and attitudes to work and leisure. East Europeans in general tend more towards emphasising toil as against leisure with longer working hours in the new EU member states than in the old 15 (see below). Also, differences can be found as regards the values held. Estonians tend to ascribe importance to material possessions, individualism and achievement as opposed to solidarity and co-operation treasured in "Old Europe". Though stemming from different sources, many values seem to correspond to the ones held in the United States. What people believe to be significant thus, could be somewhere between Western Europe and the United States.

The present thesis sets out to outline some of the ways values in contemporary Estonia resemble those in the United States and those in Western Europe. Value change is a dynamic process and the aim of the thesis does not lie in finding whether American or West European values have had a greater impact on Estonian values. Rather, the ways in which certain aspects common to everyday life in Estonia reflect or differ from the realities in the United States and in Western Europe will be addressed with a special interest in the domain of time-use. One of the objectives of the present thesis will be to outline differences in the American and West European attitudes to work and leisure, and determine the causes of the variation that allow the saying "Americans live to work; Europeans work to live" to have become so widely used. Basic values, socioeconomic factors as well as the influence of daily pressures and consumerism shall be observed. The second objective of the thesis is to observe how Estonian realities and attitudes

compare with those in the United States and Europe, in terms of the relationship between work and leisure and the concomitant values and socioeconomic conditions. The first part of the section of the thesis dealing with Estonians will give an overview as to the values, socioeconomic conditions and relevant general lifestyle issues in Estonia. Many Estonians sense their life and/or the life of the society to be consumed by work for various reasons, including cultural and socioeconomic factors. To conclude the discussion of Estonian values lying between the American and West European ones, the results of a survey conducted among Estonian respondents will be presented.

## **2 Culture and Values as Influencing Attitudes to Work and Leisure in the United States and in Western Europe**

The saying “Americans live to work; Europeans work to live” belongs to the sphere of generalisations. People from different cultures are perceived as behaving differently and holding different opinions on certain issues. Divergences in hours worked are popularly explained as stemming from varying cultural and historical backgrounds. In the following part of the thesis, an overview is given of cultural aspects that characterise the US and those that are associated with Western Europe with a view on the influence the underlying values and myths are believed to have on labour-leisure patterns.

### **2.1. The Concepts of Culture, National Character, Stereotypes and Values**

When referring to differences between those belonging to different groups, for example nationalities, the concepts of culture, stereotype, national character and values are often resorted to. These concepts need to be addressed before proceeding with the discussion on how Americans and Europeans differ.

To begin with, culture, in the context of the present thesis, will be understood as the way of life of a group of people incorporating their underlying values, beliefs and traditions. Hofstede has referred to culture as the collective programming of the mind of the entire society (“Culture’s Consequences” 10-11). Brought up in a certain community, a person will adopt and internalise the rules and norms necessary for functioning in that given society, or as expressed by Arndt and Janney “growing up to become a normal member of a culture is largely a matter of learning how to perceive, think, and behave as others in the culture do” (qtd in Eelen 199). Cross-cultural comparative studies such as the World Value Survey confirm there to be consistent variation between the values and attitudes of people across countries and verify Hofstede’s claims according to which “nationality predisposes our thinking” (“Culture’s Consequences” XV) and “human behaviour is not random but to a certain extent predictable” (ibid 1).

Culture has been found to take precedence over the individual. Gino Eelen refers to Talcott Parsons, a noted American sociologist, when explaining the relations between culture and the individual. Parsons asserted that culture exists apart from and on a higher level than the individual in effect dominating the thoughts and behaviour of the individual (Eelen 189). According to the Parsonian worldview “cultural beliefs and values determine the actual structure of social systems, which in turn organize the fulfilment of psychological and physical needs” (190) and Eelen further quotes Williams’s assertion according to which culture “is not conceived of as constituted by an aggregate of individuals, nor by individuals themselves, but rather by an atemporal and symbolic organization of ideas, values and norms” (189-190). Cultures then exist independent of individuals and determine a large measure of the behaviour and thought pattern of the individuals inhabiting them.

Though people living within a certain culture are indoctrinated into the culture and culture shapes the way they perceive their surroundings, people sharing a culture are not identical as they are influenced by varied personal circumstances. Rather, there exists a cultural consensus – a certain degree of sharedness of values, scripts and norms between members of a culture which makes the majority of those belonging to a specified culture to act similarly under similar circumstances, or as noted by Eelen with reference to Parson’s theory, “sharedness will therefore be limited to ‘broad features’ of the culture,

while a more detailed look will reveal so many differences that each individual is actually a ‘unique variant’ of this shared culture” (205). It is exactly these ‘broad features,’ central tendencies or mainstream views within cultures that shall be under observation in the present thesis. Knowledge as to the cultural background of an individual, though not all-conclusive, will reveal certain values and beliefs the individual is likelier to adhere to in comparison with someone from a culture that holds different values and beliefs.

Finding similarities in people belonging to some group, predicting their behaviour from their belongingness to that group and labelling people with group-specific features can be seen as pointing to the direction of stereotypes. Stereotypes are simplifying beliefs and statements based on generalisations about certain groups – the appearance, thought patterns and behaviour considered typical among and expected of the members of a particular group or community. Such schemata or “pictures in the head” as dubbed by Walter Lippman offer images ready for use in social situations when individuals of various groups are encountered (Lehtonen 66). Handy though they may be, these simplifications ought to be approached with caution, as stereotypes may influence the perceiver’s expectations and concentrate his/her attention on certain features of the other while ignoring some features. As claimed by Scollon and Scollon, stereotypes are overgeneralisations accompanied by an ideological position (155). All members of a group are treated as possessing certain characteristics and these characteristics are further assigned “some exaggerated positive or negative value” (ibid). While there do exist intercultural differences in objective reality, stereotypes are biased fallacies that offer a limited view of cultures and stereotyping should thus be avoided.

National character, or *volkgeist*, the spirit of the people, is a term attributing certain traits and characteristics to a group of people based on generalisations about their shared nationality. Numerous books have been written on the subject of the American character and traits that have endured through centuries are commonly used to explain the way Americans behave to this day. Wilkinson, the compiler of one such book, asserts that “Americans tend to have a distinctive bundle of values, attitudes, and feelings about themselves” (1) – values that differ from those traditionally thought of in connection with Europe, and set America apart from its closest ally and readiest object of comparison. Although at times criticised as stereotypical, these characteristics and simplifications cast light onto the prevailing mentalities and widespread tendencies in the societies to which they refer.

The term value, understood in the personal, ethical and cultural sense (as opposed to e.g. financial or mathematical sense) as a general principle to guide thoughts and action, has proved difficult to define with various scholars offering a range of definitions. For Kluckhohn “a value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable, which influences the selection of available modes, means and ends of action” (qtd in Hitlin and Piliavin 362), Rokeach explains a value to be “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (Rokeach 5) and Van Deth and Scarbrough see values as “non-empirical – that is, not directly observable – conceptions of the desirable, used in moral discourse, with a particular relevance for behaviour” (22). Values can thus be summed up as constituting certain fundamental internal guidelines that influence people’s perceptions of situations, their behaviour, and their understanding of what is morally good and bad,

right and wrong, desirable and undesirable. Values are the underlying general latent principles belonging to the core of a culture, and though not visible on the surface, and often unconscious, can be inferred from the actions, thoughts and talk of individuals. Each individual has values and the values of individuals within the same culture may differ, but values of those within a cultural sphere tend to be more similar than the values of people from different cultures. Although values are relatively stable being embedded deep within people, they can gradually change during a person's lifetime and in the case of societies due to changed circumstances. Examples of values include individualism, collectivism, competitiveness, religiosity and harmony to bring a few, and on the basis of such abstract orientations people form more concrete attitudes and direct their actions.

Broad differences can be and have repeatedly been pointed out between the characteristics of the main-stream American and West European ways of thinking and behaving. There further exist a number of stereotypes pertaining to Americans and West Europeans, but when omitting these overgeneralisations, it has to be acknowledged that some features are more common to the United States than they are to Western Europe, while West Europeans will tend to follow certain courses of action with greater frequency than Americans. Cultures exert an enormous formative influence on individuals, though it must be borne in mind that no individual subscribes to all the characteristics existent within their culture. While the term 'stereotype' represents a negative and biased concept, cultural differences merit attention and description of the broad general tendencies within cultures should prove useful in terms of understanding intercultural variance.

## **2.2. The American and European Characters**

America has been compared to Europe throughout its known history. It has fulfilled the role of the other, a mirror, an object of comparison and contrast, at once similar but different. The settlers took their European culture with them, but transplanted it onto a foreign continent with different circumstances and influences. The way of life that emerged in the changed conditions was not and could not be identical with the daily realities of the people on the old continent. In the following paragraphs a general overview of the traits traditionally attributed to Americans and then those thought of in connection with West Europeans will be given with reference to history.

### **2.2.1. American Cultural Character**

Some of the keywords most readily associated with Americans include mobility, energy, enthusiasm, individualism, consumerism, conformity, enterprise, work ethic, competitiveness, anti-statism, religiosity, practicality, patriotism, acquisitiveness and achievement orientation to give but a short and incomplete list (see e.g. Pells, Rifkin, the essays in Wilkinson). Many of these traits have been explained with the relative newness of the continent, for though the East coast has been inhabited by those of European descent for centuries, Americans have the habit of stressing their historylessness and of playing down their past as compared to that of Europe's long tale. Originally, America was seen as the land of the future, a place to start again, where it was possible to build a new life from nothing and achieve things not possible in the more rigid, stratified and traditional Europe. Yesterday, life in Europe and one's family background mattered little as everyone was equal in their pursuit for a golden tomorrow in America.

Americans' experiences through the ages are often referred to when explaining the traits thought part and parcel of their national character as seen today. John A. Moore and Myron Roberts have listed three basic theses, "the Puritan thesis", "the Frontier thesis" and "the Melting-pot thesis" as having shaped the formation of the American psyche (20-28). Though these three theses may be viewed as mere myths by some, repeated often enough they have turned into powerful explanations for describing the Americans' disposition towards the world stressing hard work, duty, religiosity, independence, competitiveness, optimism, opportunity, effort-mindedness and a need to fit into the society by accepting the prevalent American traits. Belief in these myths can be regarded as characteristic of the mainstream of the American culture.

According to the Puritan thesis, America's first European settlers bestowed upon their descendants their work ethic, their morality, their sense of purpose, their religiosity and the feeling of chosenness. Work ethic, most importantly, is an interior drive to work hard (originally for the glory of God) and a sense of duty that forbids one to rest at ease when tasks need to be carried out. The Puritan fearing damnation thought it important to honour obligations and look for signs that would indicate if he/she was among the select. Accumulation of wealth was considered a manifestation of godly providence and thus could be seen as explaining the American penchant for acquisitiveness. As according to Max Weber it was the belief of a Calvinist that "God helps those who help themselves" (115), self-sufficiency was praised and laziness deplored. An individual created his/her own salvation or a conviction of his/her salvation through living a worthy life and working in the name of God. Thus the Puritans could be credited with installing action-orientation into the American character, making valued the state of keeping busy and making Americans uncomfortable and awkward with the thought of being without doing. Stewart has deemed doing "the dominant activity for the Americans" (56) laying it out that doing can further be linked with the American "importance on achievement, emphasis on visible accomplishments, and the stress on measurement" (57) Accordingly, Stewart notes that foreigners often pick up on the sense of speed of life and of perennial activity in America (56). That the ethos is still very much alive is demonstrated by a number of studies. In a 1990 International Values Survey of ten countries, 87% of Americans reported that they took a great deal of pride in their work. This was markedly different from other countries surveyed (apart from Great Britain). In both former Western and former Eastern Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Hungary and Spain the corresponding figure was, without exception, below 30%, reaching the low of 15% in France (International Values ...).

A heightened concern for morality could also be seen as a vestige of the Puritans, and though at modern times religiosity has decreased, America remains the most religious advanced industrial nation in the world. Drawing from the theory of manifest destiny, Americans have the moral obligation to excel and take the part of a beacon or a city on the hill in showing the right path to follow for the whole humanity.

The Frontier thesis of the rugged independent-minded Pioneers struggling for survival on the border between civilization and wilderness but still striving towards a better future left Americans with an inheritance of the importance of personal action, bravery, and fortitude of character in conquering the hostile surroundings that though menacing promised opportunity to rise. The frontier was a line to be extended in order to broaden inhabitable land – it was a line that could lead to bounty yet to be discovered. A life on

the frontier promised adventures and opportunities for self-fulfilment (though it equally propagated violence and did not guarantee success). For the self-reliant frontier-men and women, family background mattered little, everyone was responsible for what happened to him/her and all had to stand out for their interests in competition with similar-minded independent individuals. Optimism was a key characteristic of the Pioneers as a brighter future was envisioned as a reward for overcoming present hardship and the future was something that was in the hands of the individual to create. The traits of individualism, self-sufficiency, restlessness, striving, energy, egalitarianism and eagerness can be seen as deriving from the Pioneers as explained by Moore and Roberts and numerous further commentators.

The Melting-pot thesis suggests that newcomers to American society were for a long time assimilated by their accepting and adopting the most widespread American values and attitudes, thus becoming American without changing the core of Americanness but rather contributing to the diverse homogeneity of the society. The motto “E Pluribus Unum” (Out of many, one) printed on the dollar banknotes further solidifies the notion of the creation of one nation from many different strands. In newer times the salad-bowl model of assimilation whereby immigrants retain their previous traits and adopt additional American traits thus contributing to the versatility of the American society has been propagated. The new model has been the object of fierce debate (cf Huntington above).

Other powerful myths pertaining to America’s past can be thought of, one such being that expressed by the slogan “from-rags-to-riches”. An eminent myth with a wide circulation in the American mentality considers personal merit to be more important than background in the United States. The concept of from-rags-to-riches of the self-made man may also be seen as a subdivision of the frontier thesis, but fitted to more urban surroundings of especially the Gilded Age of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The story of a paperboy becoming a millionaire forms an important part of the myth of the equality, ability and opportunity of everyone to work themselves up the society ladder. Effort, toil, diligence, resolution, thrift and dedication were considered the prized characteristics necessary for the self-motivated American to gain a better life, or in the words of Irvin G. Wyllie “one’s social status, education, race, religion and nationality were not important, rather industry, sobriety, perseverance, honesty and similar virtues were keys to material salvation” (301). The 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that character and the “virtues that come from within” (ibid) play an instrumental role in getting rich and the notion that through hard work and with the help of willpower anyone and everyone is able to achieve an improved position in life reverberate and persist in contemporary American consciousness side by side with the vestiges of the Protestant work ethic, although some (e.g. Rifkin) lament the demise of the propensity to work for some Americans decrying the phenomenon of people aiming to get rich without toiling for it sufficiently. Still, Kulckhohns’ notion of “effort-optimism” states that Americans tend to see success as a reward for hard work and believe hard work will lead to desired results and realising ambitions (Stewart 59)

Another idea used in connection with Americans is that of the M-Factor. The notion originally conjured by Pierson claims that movement, migration and mobility are central to the formation of the American character. Essentially, America is perceived as a country of immigrants, of settlers who had to cross the ocean to reach the shores of the



new continent and are thus depicted as somewhat more rootless and more apt to take risks than those who stayed in Europe. Movement can thus be associated with Americans from the very start.

Also, the M-Factor can be connected with the Frontier thesis of the pioneers proceeding westward looking for adventures and chances to better their lives. Movement over the frontier to extend civilization has by now been supplanted by movement between different locations, for Americans are believed to be less wont to stay put in one place for their whole life than Europeans are. Instead, exhibiting restlessness said to have been inherited from the pioneers of the past, they are likely to change cities, states and houses in search of better jobs and opportunities (e.g. Pells 170). The motorcar has had a tremendous effect on the American psyche, symbolizing freedom of movement and facilitating easy access to different parts of the country. Shared core culture and shared language can be considered further facilitators of mobility – everywhere one reaches, it is still one nation filled with similar-minded people one can connect with. The size of America and the amount of empty space within the continent still seem overwhelming to someone not used to the proportions, hence the awe demonstrated by Baudrillard in his description of his voyage into the American desert (“America”).

The whole of American society has often been portrayed as being in a state of flux. In addition to the physical movement of people changing jobs, houses and cities, people’s status in life is not seen as fixed. Unlike Europe, the United States has a long tradition of being perceived as a classless society with opportunities for rise open to all<sup>4</sup>. It has been something of an expectation in the American society for children not to want to settle with the lot of their elders, but to aim higher, or as Pells conveys it, “all American children were taught first to reject and then to surpass their fathers” (170) and “to stay put was a sign of failure” (170). This emphasis on the equality of opportunity has a concomitant notion of the equality of treatment. Lack of a rigid social structure and optimism about one’s future prospects has been used to explain why socialism never gained ground in the United States – if the society is believed to be in a constant state of flux, one would not want to rebel against one’s superiors as one has a hope of being a superior oneself some day. Also, the existence of available land to move on to in search of better conditions and the lack of clustering and physical separation of the poor acted against the surfacing of socialism in the past (Rifkin “The European Dream” 150, Alesina et al “Why ...” 25)

The supposed openness of the class-system catalyzes competitiveness, insecurity and feelings of guilt and inadequacy in a person who does not reach the aspired-for goals. The fluid society believing in the equality of opportunity and asserting that anyone can work themselves up once they put their mind to it fosters people’s necessity to achieve and demonstrate their accomplishment. Ralph Barton Perry notes that Americans “believe

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<sup>4</sup> The fact that social mobility in the United States has, in recent times, indeed become a myth is shown, *inter alia*, by the findings of Jo Blanden, Paul Gregg and Stephen Machin, who studied intergenerational mobility in Europe and North America by comparing incomes and educational levels of fathers and sons. Blanden, Gregg and Machin report Britain and the US to have lower social mobility than Canada and the Nordic countries, where the connection between the incomes and educational levels of sons and fathers is less evident. The authors note a stronger correlation between educational attainment and income in the United States. Drawing attention to the deep-rooted myth of mobility in the US they state “the idea of the US as ‘the land of opportunity persists; and clearly seems misplaced’” (7).

they can improve their condition, and make their fortunes; and that if they fail they have only themselves to blame. There is a promise of reward, not too remote, which excites ambition and stimulates effort”, and that “the people of the United States judge, and expect to be judged, by the standard of success, meaning something made of opportunity” (39). Not being successful connotes with laziness and lack of motivation. Success is something that does not happen on its own and should actively be contributed to. Perry remarks that success is “thought of as the fruit of a marriage between circumstance and action” (39-40).

The poor are seen guilty for their unhappy condition and treated indifferently or criticised rather than pitied. Likewise, one blames oneself for one’s failures, leading to unwillingness to accept one’s poverty or other shortcomings with most people optimistically believing they belong to the middle class or the upper ranks of the society. In the words of Edward Pressen, “Americans either continue to assert that classes are almost nonexistent in this country, with what barriers are being easily breached, or they insist that they belong to the great middle class” (270). Large gaps between the rich and the poor are not thought too unjust as everyone is supposedly capable of working themselves up and the rich deserve their wealth as a reward for their greater ambition, risks and initiative – according to the widespread saying, in the land of opportunity, any boy can grow up to be president.

Not having an enduring place in the society places people in a condition of an eternal race, of constant stress and competition against fellow-citizens, a condition that can be described status-anxiety. People want to show their achievement, and achievement can be viewed in terms of the relative position in society, in terms of success at work and in terms of things amassed. One of the easiest ways of measuring up to one’s neighbours is to compare and demonstrate one’s possessions, a phenomenon condensed in the phrase “keeping up with the Joneses” referring to the wish to outshine one’s peers in order to get the satisfaction of having achieved something relevant in the competition of life. The perceived ease of social mobility can be seen as facilitating acquisitiveness and consumerism in the American society – possessions demonstrate position. This in turn has been expressed by Thorstein Veblen as ‘conspicuous consumption’ or of aiming to accumulate possessions as status symbols to have visible proof of success. Consumerism, indeed, is a major theme in the description of the American character in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the thrift of the Puritans and frugality of the self-motivated workers was supplanted by the consumer-society mentality of spend-spend-spend enabled by loans and credit cards, and encouraged by the barrage of advertisements and the wide array of consumer items ready to be bought.

A trait typical to the American sense of movement is their persistent optimism as regards the future. As expressed by Rifkin, “Americans have always been risk-takers” (“The European Dream” 28). Concomitant with the belief in the golden tomorrow is the notion of growth, of eternal improvement, of movement forward. Pells, for example, refers to a “faith in progress,” a “compulsion to experiment and innovate,” a “conviction that every problem has a solution,” “vigor,” “zestfulness” and “enthusiasm” as characterising Americans (172). Growth can be personal in terms of betterment of the individual’s character and his/her standing in the society, as well as material, viewing the accumulation of consumer items, necessities and luxuries. One manifestation of the importance of growth is the frequent use of the Gross National Product as a tangible

measurement of growth. The notion of growth can further be seen as an excuse to justify wastefulness as regards natural resources – environment has not been seen as meriting attention when compared to the prospects of human progress. Stewart explains that there has been a tendency to view resources as limitless. Opportunities to achieve and advance are likewise seen as boundless and dependent on the individuals' determination and hard work for Americans (66). A very similar explanation of the America mindset in terms of the idea of limitless resources makes up the central tenet of David Potter's seemingly timeless "The People of Plenty". More is better than less, newer surpasses the older; as a result people are drawn towards abundance, status symbols and technical innovation and pile things. Americans additionally need to believe in growth as growth could be seen as a rationale for the competitiveness and achievement-orientation of the society. Those who strive need to be prized and belief in growth compensates the sacrifices made on the way to victory.

Another feature considered part and parcel of the mythical American character is individualism – a penchant for favouring the individual with his/her free choice over bindedness to community interest. Individualism connotes self-reliance and ability to take one's own decisions and be responsible for them once effected without excessive outside influence. Americans tend to prefer self-sufficiency to excessive proximity with others, they do not want to be dependent on the rest. Everyone is essentially concerned for their personal wellbeing, and as maintained by Rifkin, most Americans are wont to believe that "each person is ultimately the captain of his or her own fate" ("The European Dream" 326). This tendency to favour the freedom of each individual can help to explain the American streak for antistatism or the prevalent mood of distrust of the government and opposition to excessive state interference with the life of the individual. The American preference for "a divided government and a weak state" ("Continental Divide" 21) has been referred to by e.g. Lipset, who sees the "American creed" summarised by the words "antistatism, individualism, populism, and egalitarianism" ("Continental Divide" 26). In Rifkin's comment, Americans have tended to curb government power to "optimize individual accumulation of wealth and ensure greater control over the disposition of one's property" ("The European Dream" 33). Help to the less fortunate is likewise up to the individual (ibid).

Further, American individualism finds expression in achievement-orientation i.e. in the traits of competitiveness, ambition, love of winning and the importance of ascent among one's contemporaries. As indicated by Slater, individualism can be treated as one of the factors that encourages consumerism, seeing that instead of sharing with others, people prefer to have their separate things, be it their separate television set, car or computer (205). Everyone desires to show their uniqueness, worth and good fortune in life by a display of signs of conspicuous consumption and an abundance of consumer items, but as this becomes a general tendency in the society, the accumulation also drives towards uniformity, for even though everyone wants to be free to pursue their own goals without depending much on the rest of the society, people need someone to notice their success (Slater 206). Moreover, good fortune in the achievement-oriented US should preferably be highly visible, or as Ralph Barton Perry has expressed it, "American success must be recognized success" and "success must be not only measurable, but observed, recorded, applauded and envied" (39-40). Cristopher Lasch perceives the American way of thinking as veering towards what he calls a narcissistic culture that

urges people to yearn for admiration and envy, and notes that “what a man does matters less than the fact that he has ‘made it’” (251). Pells, further, perceives a need to be “well liked and ‘well-adjusted’” among Americans (175). Though individualist, because of the pressures posed by anxiety over the opinion of one’s peers, Americans tend to be less favourable towards eccentricity, or visible difference from the rest than Europeans are (e.g. Pells 21).

A fundamental break with the past as well as the absence of major destruction and bloodshed through the use of technology on the American soil can be seen as an element contributing to America’s love of technology. America has continued to be associated with newness, with modernity and with abundance, cheering the scientific exploration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, springing images of plumbing and kitchen appliances of the consumer culture in the deprived post Second World War West Europe and promoting cutting edge technology and advanced scientific solutions at modern times (e.g. Pells 11, 94). This tendency to welcome innovation in addition to the “practical, problem-solving cast of mind” of the Americans (Pells 179), has been noted to have kept them in prominence as showing the rest of the world the direction of things to come. Baudrillard, for example, found that it is “in America and nowhere else that modernity is original” or even “radical,” and that Europeans were unable to copy the American modernity as it “refuses to cross the ocean” just as history refuses to cross the ocean to the other side (“America” 79-80). The perception of Americans as the ambassadors of modernity also fits well with the theory of manifest destiny, or of the sense of chosenness inherited from the Puritans.

### **2.2.2. European Cultural Character**

Europe with its various nation states shares fewer similar attitude-and-value-shaping myths common to all nationalities. Each nationality has its own traditions and nationalities can differ a great deal. Even defining the concept of Europe continues to pose difficulties. Delanty and Rumford state Europe to be “a term that cannot be reduced to a geographical, civilizational or a political form, for it is all three together” (34) and view Europe rather as a “civilizational constellation” with no fixed borders comprising various religions, traditions and cultures and extending the area of old or Western Europe to reach Asia in the East (35-40). However, Anthony D. Smith states that although “Europeans differ among themselves as much as from non-Europeans in respect of language (...), territory (...), law (...), religion (...), and economic and political systems (...), as well as in terms of ethnicity and culture”, together they form a ‘family of cultures’ “made up of a syndrome of partially shared historical traditions and cultural heritages” (Gowan and Anderson 334). Despite the fact that there is no common agreed-upon Europeanness, certain characteristics and traits are thought to be common to Europeans more than they are common to Americans. Hereafter some important representations of West Europeanness will be commented on. Representations concerning East Europeans differ to some extent and are not touched upon here.

The old continent is often thought of as being more in tune with its history, more rooted in traditionalism and treasuring the ways and customs of previous generations to a greater extent than the more modern future-oriented America. When describing their sentiments upon arriving in France, Jean Benoît Nadeau and Julie Barlow, a couple from Canada, refer to what they call a “time-warp sensation” (3) of seeing the old and the new

coexist side by side. They perceive the French as if living “in the past and the present at the same time” (4) and label the inhabitants the “aborigines of France” (6). While “for North Americans, the past and the present are two categories,” they assert that “there was no definite break with the past” in France and despite numerous occasions of tumult and turmoil vestiges of forebears can be noticed on the street-scene as well as in the habits and minds of the people (7).

Older representations highlight the role of classes in Europe. The post-feudal society that evolved into a class-system of factory-workers and bourgeois capitalists was concerned rather with maintaining stability than with promoting entrepreneurialism and rise in the society. Nowadays the situation has changed and Lipset, for example, notes a “remaking of Europe’s economic and class structures along American lines” (“Still the Exceptional Nation?”). Though the post Second World War establishment of consumer society and the concomitant expansion of the middle class have changed (not to say largely done away with) the traditional class structure, some traces of the old system remain, e.g. in the form of working-class pride in Great Britain (though this is also diminishing by the day). Europeans have thus been depicted as being more secure in their position with less anxiety to constantly strive forward as for them, according to the Italian observer Luigi Barzini, life has commonly been seen as “a relay race” in which “each man received the rod from his father or teachers and passed it on to his sons or followers” allowing them to take a more leisurely approach to life than the competitive, status-conscious, anxious, busy Americans expecting to outperform their parents (241). The assurance found in knowing there is nothing inherently wrong in not attempting to constantly push higher may be considered comforting. At modern times also the lesser gap between the richer and poorer members of the society and the greater willingness to let the state organize life can be considered factors reflecting deeper values and lessening the need for anxious striving in Europe.

Thinking of Europe’s past, great wars and bloodshed that left a sense of collective trauma and victimhood in their wake are often recalled. Indeed, one of the principles behind the founding of the European Union was fostering peace and preventing major hostilities from ever surfacing again in the form of the utter destruction and carnage of the Second World War. For centuries wars have broken out between factions of people, armies of kings, and the leaders of nation-states, and unlike in America, geographical compression has not allowed people to move on to unpopulated areas in case of disagreements.

Europeans are viewed as still bearing the imprint of war as regards their caution towards and distrust of technology. Though one cannot claim that European factories lack modern high-tech technology and European scientists do not work hard to extend the limits of science, Europeans are often felt to be more suspicious of innovation, as can be seen for example in the smaller defence budgets of the European states and their reluctance to accept the sale of genetically modified products. The aversion towards modernity can be seen, for instance, in the case of agriculture, where cost-effective, highly productive, well-equipped modern farms exist together with farmers preferring more traditional methods inherited from their forebears. Returning to the theme of war Europeans are more likely to engage in negotiations with the aim of avoiding direct confrontation than are Americans, who have preferred the demonstration of military prowess and direct force. The lingering memories of war and the attendant calamities can

additionally be seen as fostering compassion and the urge to assure that no one be in misery – traits considered characteristic of Europeans.

While America has been believed to be in a constant state of flux, West European society is often portrayed as a more static and stable one. To begin with, the concept of frontier is different – for Europeans a frontier necessarily involves limits and borders and not the almost infinitely extendable unknown where one can make or break one's fortunes in life (Pells 169). For the European, behind a border lies another country with a distinct language and cultural heritage. The lack of roaming space characteristic of Western Europe is visibly present in the measured-out fields of the countryside, narrow winding streets of the old towns and in the typically smaller cars of the inhabitants. Also, although it is impossible to deny migration between different locations, especially in the more recent times of the European Union that facilitates inter-state mobility, people have tended to change their abode with lesser frequency, exhibiting a greater sense of rootedness in the community than has been the case in the United States. To illustrate the difference between West Europeans and Americans, Pells points out that “to Europeans, who normally went to school, married, and spent their adult years living in the same house and working at the same job, all within a few miles from where they were born, America appeared to be a nation of nomads” (170) – up until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mobility was not too important a part of the customary way of life for West-Europeans, a situation that now is changing as the world has become compressed due to the effects of globalization and the developments towards post-modernity, as well as the fact that movement has become easier within the EU. With a greater degree of assurance in their position drawn from what has remained from the disappearing class system and the presence of the community, the society can be viewed as being less competitive and more caring than that of the United States. Rifkin, for example, sees (perhaps somewhat idealistically) the compassion, the embeddedness into community life and the attention turned to maintaining relationships with others as an important factor in terms of which Europeans differ from Americans, who can be viewed as being more in tune with their private needs and concerned about their performance in a society based on the glory of winning and the fear associated with losing.

One image that follows Europe in popular imagination is its greater concern towards the welfare of weaker members of society, greater levels of compassion, social consciousness and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. West Europeans on the whole, even in individualistic countries, are considered more caring and socially responsible than the liberally and individually minded Americans. The legacy of *noblesse oblige* from older times as well as the inheritance of the post-war socialist orientation favouring care for the needy, have aided in forming attitudes that call for people to view the weaker/poorer/needier members of society with sympathy. In contrast to the antistatist streak in the American society, the state in Europe is seen as a guarantor for greater social equality, making sure that no-one be in excessive need (e.g. Rifkin “The European Dream” 33, Lipset “Still the Exceptional Nation?”, Garton Ash 74). Though one can certainly witness the presence of poverty, and though the existence of millionaires cannot be denied, the overall polarization of the society between the haves and have-nots has not been to a degree comparable to the US. In accordance with the idea of the equality of outcome, Europeans have been readier to admit that the society does not offer everyone equal opportunities and that weaker members of society need to be

supported and helped. Perceiving the society as a whole and understanding the connectedness of its members fosters the wish for extended co-operation. Unlike in the US, money in itself is often not a matter to be proud about and riches tend not to be flaunted for fear of being considered vulgar.

### **2.2.3. The American Dream as Compared to the European Dream**

Although both America and Western Europe are diverse in terms of the spectrum of values and attitudes people there hold, and when speaking about either American or West European cultural characters (as has been done in the previous paragraphs) a number of stereotypes crop up, some broad tendencies can be drawn out that point to enduring differences in the mentalities prevailing on the two continents. Jeremy Rifkin has concentrated on various dualities when describing the US and the EU in his book *The European Dream*. In the volume the author explains the reasons for which he thinks the United States is facing the demise of its ideological power whereas Europe is seen as providing a more sustainable idea for the future. While the book has been widely criticized for its sloppiness and idealization of the EU, it must be acknowledged that many of Rifkin's dualities summarise widespread images as regards the US and the EU. Presenting some of the oppositions Rifkin makes thus provides an opportunity to sum up the discussion of broad generalisations on the traits common to people in the US and traits that describe those in Western Europe.

The concept of the American Dream, first mentioned by James Truslow Adams in 1931, typically represents the freedom and opportunity of everyone to strive for a better future in America by working hard. Material wealth is a reward for work ethic and success is believed to be available for those eager and determined enough to pursue it. For Rifkin the "American Credo" is expressed in his mother's words "success in life is the result of ninety-nine percent hard work and one percent talent... and don't ever forget, no one is ever going to hand you success in life or give you something for nothing. You are on your own" (12). American mothers teach that each individual's personal efforts will lead towards achievement, thus the attitude can be seen as fostering a competitive work, action and accumulation oriented atmosphere in the society. According to Rifkin, the American Dream is concerned with "personal wealth, economic growth and independence" (13). Rifkin associates the American Dream with negative freedom, i.e. with autonomy. According to this view, security is found by amassing wealth, freedom means self-reliance, and both independence from others and exclusivity result from affluence (13).

For Rifkin the emerging "European Dream [a concept devised, perhaps somewhat idealistically?, by the author himself] is the mirror opposite of the American Dream" (13) and while the American Dream is set to sink into the past, the European Dream should lead the way to the future. In contrast to the individualist-minded, acquisitive American Dream, Rifkin shows the European Dream as more centred on caringness and appreciation of the community. Whereas Americans value negative freedom, the European Dream has to do with positive freedom, i.e. with embeddedness. Security is seen as deriving from inclusivity and inclusivity is the result of relationships. Freedom means interdependence and having access to various relationships with others. Relationships and closeness lead to a full and meaningful life of different choices and options (13). There is a sense of connectedness to others both in one's own community as

well as in the wider world. Emphasis lies on “sustainable development, quality of life, and interdependence” (14).

While “the American Dream is deeply personal and little concerned with the rest of humanity,” “the European Dream is more expansive and systemic in nature and, therefore, more bound to the welfare of the planet” (14). Further dualities or diametrically opposed pairs of characteristics concerning American and West European values and goals include religiosity on the part of the Americans and secularity on the part of the Europeans; the emphasis placed on work ethic among the Americans and valuing leisure and deep play among the Europeans; the assimilation of discerning traits and adopting Americanness in America and the greater worth placed on preserving one’s “cultural heritage in a multicultural world” in Europe; American patriotism in contrast to European cosmopolitanism; American wastefulness as opposed to European environmental consciousness; greater willingness to use military power in the world by the American governments in comparison with the European preference for diplomacy, economic assistance and peace-keeping operations to mention some. Additionally, Rifkin sees the purpose-driven American Dream as projecting a modernist view of the world, while the European Dream is more in tune with post-modernist values (6). For him the European Dream “creates history” by rejecting modernity, propagating a “global consciousness”, and turning attention to “quality of life, sustainability, and peace and harmony” instead of “unfettered individual accumulation of wealth in a democratically governed society” considered the essence of the American Dream (7). What Rifkin sees as threatening the rise of the new dream, is the ingrained sense of pessimism and cynicism among Europeans, a mood that contrasts the common American optimism and hopefulness (384).

To sum up, Americans are conventionally thought of as energetic, individualist, optimistic, hard-working, acquisitive, ambitious, status-conscious, enterprising and risk-tolerant to name but a few characteristics, while Europeans are attributed the traits of compassion, caring, nurturing, stability, tradition-mindedness, social consciousness and environmentalism. From early childhood people on the opposing sides of the Atlantic are taught the importance of somewhat varying values, the minds or mental programmes of children born into different societies are shaped in accordance with the values that are important in their respective environments, or, echoing Hofstede, one learns “from previous generations” and then teaches “a future generation what one has learned oneself” (“Cultures and Organizations” 6).

Cultural differences summarised above present one explanation often referred to when trying to make sense of the varying attitudes to work and leisure on the opposite sides of the Atlantic. The competitiveness, achievement orientation, work-ethic, status-consciousness and the like are linked to what is often seen as the American proclivity to work hard, while the European sense of security, compassion and solidarity among other traits are used to explain their wish to dedicate more time to leisure. Still, there are those who dismiss the lasting influence of cultural factors as determining time-use. Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote, for example, state that “While it may seem today that differences in work patterns are eternal aspects of European and American lifestyles, these differences are modern in vintage” (“Work and Leisure” 27). For them contemporary



conditions and circumstances that emanate from recent history matter more than cultural backgrounds of societies in shaping current realities.

Indeed, historically, leisure has been rare and drudgery the rule in Europe, too, perhaps even more so than in the US. Naomi Klein makes a cogent point in this connection, referring to the massive aid provided to post-war Europe in the framework of the Marshall plan as the watershed in the European socio-economic system. She also claims that Keynesianism in general and its embodiments in the New Deal in the US and the much more radical one in the creation of European welfare states – with substantial, indeed crucial help from the Marshall plan – was a result of what she, somewhat metaphorically, terms “competition in the market” (250).

“When the Cold War was in full swing and the Soviet Union was intact, the people of the world could choose (at least theoretically) which ideology they wanted to consume; there were two poles, and there was much in between. That meant capitalism had to win customers; it needed to offer incentives; it needed a good product. Keynesianism was always an expression of that need of capitalism to compete. /.../ The edges of the market needed to be softened /.../ the very future of capitalism was at stake. During the Cold War, no country in the free world was immune to this pressure. /.../ In fact, what Sachs calls ‘normal’ capitalism – workers’ protections, pensions, public health care and state support for the poorest citizens in North America – all grew out from the same pragmatic need to make major concessions in the face of the powerful left. /.../ The Marshall plan was the ultimate weapon deployed on this economic front. /.../ By 1949, this meant tolerating from the West German government all kinds of policies that were positively uncaptalist: direct job creation by the state, huge investments in the public sector, subsidies for German firms and strong labour unions” (ibid).

The same analysis goes for other European countries in the Cold War conditions – and accounts for the pressure (see below), applied until the current crisis, to reduce the “positively uncaptalist” measures there and turn to neoliberalism once the Cold War was over. Perhaps the most perceptive observation by Klein is that (unlike what Jeffrey Sachs believed) “there was never going to be a Marshall plan for Russia because there was only ever a Marshall plan *because* of Russia” (252).

### **3. Economic and Societal Factors as Influencing Work-Leisure Patterns in the United States and in Western Europe**

Thus, in addition to cultural factors discussed to above, socioeconomic arrangement and institutional setting have been found to influence the use of time of the members of a society. Legislation concerning work as well as social regulation that affects the degree of security people feel will lead to differences in work-leisure patterns. Importantly, it has been argued that the level of taxation and the activity of the unions account for the differences in time-use across the Atlantic. Comparing and contrasting divergences in the socioeconomic organisation of societies poses a topic rife with possible political controversy and before embarking on the venture it should be stated that different systems all have both strengths and weaknesses.

#### **3.1. Basic Characteristics of the Liberal Tradition in the United States and of State-Coordination in Western Europe**

The economic system in both the United States and the European Union is capitalism, an arrangement characterised by the exchange of goods and services with the intent of gaining profit. Using Max Weber's definition, capitalism is "the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise" (17). Depending on various characteristics, importantly the role the state plays in the society, capitalism can appear in different forms. Whereas the Anglo-Saxon world (especially the United States) can be considered to foster liberal market economy, relying on competitive relationships and transactions on the impersonal free market, following the Second World War, Central and Northern European countries have been referred to as state-coordinated economies, with the state playing a more active role in mediating the economic functioning of the society. It should be noted that European countries are not uniform in their approach, with the Anglo-Saxon Ireland and the United Kingdom exhibiting more liberal tendencies than other West European countries. Also, liberal tendencies have been strengthening in more recent times throughout the continent (as pointed out by e.g. Lipset in "Still the Exceptional Nation?").

While Europe has embraced numerous ideas connected to the socialist movement, the US remains markedly liberal in its approach. Indeed, Cheryl Greenberg has indicated that "our [American] society has been liberal by consensus; there was no other American political tradition," and traces the liberality back to "the absence of a feudal or aristocratic system, the hardiness of our [American] small producers and yeoman farmers, the proliferation of voluntary societies, the openness of our [American] frontier, our [American] rag-to-riches meritocracy, and our [American] melting pot pluralism" (Sitkoff 66) – thus to cultural and historical factors. John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge further note the "differing underlying values, many of which date back centuries," to be part and parcel of "American Exceptionalism" and state that "America's default position on most subjects is somewhat to the right of the default positions of other rich countries," including and especially to the right of the West European nations, with even American left-wingers sounding right-wing to European ears (291). Similarly, Luigi Barzini states that "Americans, whether they know it or not, are eighteenth-century philosophers at heart" (225), and Jean Baudrillard remarks that "in their collective consciousness they [Americans] are closer to the models of thought of the eighteenth century, which are utopian and pragmatic, than to those that were imposed by the French

Revolution, which were ideological and revolutionary” (“America” 90). The 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas connected to Marx and socialism had a negligent impact in the United States, compared to the impact they effected in Europe, and the United States has continued on its course of liberalism.

A key feature of the American brand of capitalism lies in the influence of laissez-faire philosophy of letting the market take its course without the government intervening much. John Kenneth Galbraith sums up laissez-faire as the “belief that economic life has within itself the capacity to solve its own problems and for all to work out the best in the end” (79) referring to the attitudes prevalent among the so-called ‘contented majority’ among Americans, who believe that “government intervention, specifically government regulation, is unnecessary and normally damaging to the beneficent processes of nature” (82). Corresponding with the value placed on individualism and the antistatist bent prevalent in the United States, the market is seen as the best guarantor of unbiased freedom and equality to act for each individual. The state is necessary for maintaining the legal framework for the providers of services and products to operate in, and state institutions are not seen as patrons of social equality in charge of a support system that would protect individuals against possible inequalities emanating from the marketplace. According to Zeitlin, liberal market economies are characterized by strategies such as “deregulation, privatization and welfare retrenchment” (11), meaning that Americans remain suspicious of big government and the prevailing ideology encourages individuals to be left to their own devices as regards their welfare and security.

The American anti-statist mentality can be seen as different from the West European reliance on the government to regulate economic life and provide security to its citizens. Beck has pointed out that “The central task of the state in Europe – the closing of inequalities due to the unfettered market represents a principle exactly opposite to Isaiah Berlin’s classical definition of the American concept of liberty ‘freedom from state interference’ and ‘freedom to do our own thing’” (112) – Americans are considered to value their freedom and oppose the state to have too much control over their lives or too big an influence in the community life. Correspondingly, Micklethwait and Wooldridge affirm that for (conservative) Americans “power rests first with individuals, then with local communities and then with states; the federal government comes last in pecking order” (304) showing the potential harmfulness of government agency, particularly on the level of federal government. Timothy Garton Ash further points out that “Americans in aggregate think it more important that the government should leave them free to pursue their own goals, whereas Europeans think it more important that governments should guarantee that no one is in need” (74). The difference is illustrated on the example of France by the comments of Nadeau and Barlow, who have observed that “social rights are as important to the French, as individual liberties are to Americans” (248), “the French are blunt in affirming the role of the state, whereas other countries understate it,” “Americans who value community life and civil society have always underplayed the role of their government and championed their business-sector” (275), and “in the Anglo-Saxon value system, the state is like a backup. [...] It’s the skeleton of French society” (126). Ferrera and Hemerijck further contend that “one of the most distinctive elements of the European welfare *state* [italics original] has been its public nature: the responsibility for ensuring social solidarity & cohesion lies with the government – ultimately national (i.e. central government)” and “public funds, public schemes and

public bureaucracies have traditionally been the main pillars of the welfare edifice” (93) demonstrating the commonplace West European thought pattern diametrically opposing antistatism. Americans and West Europeans thus view state activity differently and their considering the state as either unnecessary or beneficial doubtless has ramifications on a number of important areas in those societies.

West European states tend to be more community-oriented, looking out for the wellbeing of the weaker members of society and regulating the system more actively. The North and Central European brand of capitalism or that of coordinated market economies can thus be characterized by a larger public sector and a higher level of public services, stricter regulation of business practices and labour laws, but also by higher taxes than that of the United States. Active European states intend to reduce unfairness in the society, limit poverty as well as foster an overall sense of security in the citizens, or using the words of Delanty and Rumford, “the tradition that is most distinctly European is the aspiration for social justice” that includes “solidarity, welfare state, social care, equality, vision of a fair society” (67). The aim to counter the adverse effects of the market by a safety cushion provided by the state has been referred to as the European social model. According to Trubek and Mosher the concept of the ‘European social model’ can be summed up as a “three-fold commitment” to “extensive benefits, relative wage and income equality, and coordinated bargaining by organized interest groups” (34). The term may disregard the diversity that exists among West European nations, but denotes the phenomenon of “a desire to maintain protection in those countries that have advanced welfare states and expand it in those that don’t” (ibid).

(Western) Europe seen as an entity can be characterized by its greater orientation towards solidarity, but the approaches of individual states have their individual traits. On the whole, European welfare systems can be divided into four: the Nordic model (of universal welfare coverage funded by high taxation), the Anglo-Saxon model (of more deregulation, means-testing in welfare and higher levels of inequality), the Continental model (of rigid labour-market regulation, high taxation and spending), and the Mediterranean model (similar to the Continental model but with greater emphasis on state pensions) (Ferrera and Hemerijck 94-119), each system showing a different approach towards achieving a more just society. Though the European welfare states are currently (or at least were up to the present crisis) undergoing change as a result of aging population, tensions related to immigration, the spread of neoliberal ideology and criticism as to the high costs of maintaining social programmes, Timothy Garton Ash asserts that “the legacy of Europe’s labour movements and its Christian-Social tradition is an ethos of solidarity, an insistent demand for ‘social justice’ against ‘an individualist performance ethos which accepts crass social inequalities’” (55), and that differences prevalent in the European mentality prevent Europe from becoming too similar to the liberal economy of the United States. Göran Therborn further contends that “economically, its [Europe’s] overriding concern is stability, not competitiveness or growth (Gowan and Anderson 373)”, demonstrating the creation of a secure, liveable, supportive environment to be the common goal of the West European brand of socially aware economy characterised by attention to social protection, solidarity, worker rights, poverty alleviation and prevention, redistribution of wealth, improvement of living conditions, public healthcare, education programmes, old-age pensions and other benefits.

### 3.2. Social Protection and the Level of Uncertainty

With different economic views in place on either continent, various socioeconomic issues to do with welfare are treated differently on the opposite sides of the Atlantic. Among the examples typically alluded to are the provision of welfare, attitudes to poverty, taxation, unionisation and laws concerning the regulation of business and the protection of employees.

The concept of state-provision of welfare can be considered contradicting some of the basic values held by Americans – it rewards failure, fosters reliance and increases the role of the state in the individual's life. Americans on the whole demonstrate greater tolerance of difference between the rich and the poor members of society, with Micklethwait and Wooldridge pointing out that “the gap between the top 10 percent and the bottom 10 percent in terms of income /is/ greater in America than in any other country” (307). In line with the widespread views in America, the rich deserve their wealth, while poverty is a sign of an individual's laziness and lack of ambition. Welfare for the poor is thus widely criticised as, in the words of Moore and Roberts, an “economic burden on the rest” (282), that makes successful members of the society pay for those with less initiative. Welfare-recipients themselves are often stigmatized and depicted as abusing the benefits they are allotted, a tendency captured, for instance, in the images of Reagan's ‘welfare queens’. According to Micklethwait and Wooldridge, “Americans worry that state welfare rewards people for self-destructive behaviour and reduces their incentive to get back onto their own feet” (305). Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote explain the differences in attitudes as stemming from the racism inherent in the US. They maintain that the lack of sympathy is due to large numbers of members of visible minorities among the poor, which causes the poor to be seen as “the other” (“Why Doesn't the US Have a European-Style Welfare State” 29). Further, because of geographical factors, such as low population density that historically prevented the poor from clustering together, minimised the threat of riots, and prevented the creation of a strong socialist movement, the poor in the US have lacked power and a chance to stand out in the society (“Why ...” 25). Additionally, ethnic separation leads people from different background to live in different environments, and causes the middle classes to live away from the poor and not to see their daily reality (“Why ...” 30). Thus Americans tend to lack significant compassion for their poor and do not see the state as obligated to assist them escape their plight.

Europeans tend to be described as more compassionate towards the poor – a view expressed in Micklethwait and Wooldridge's words “Europeans are much keener on using the state to fight poverty than Americans, and much less inclined to draw a line between the deserving and the undeserving poor” (304). Europeans have lived in closer proximity with the poor and treated the poor as less fortunate members of their own group. Instead of blaming the poor for being lazy and lacking initiative, Europeans have tended to see them as victims of an unjust society and less personally responsible for their sorry condition. Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote report that “Seventy percent of West Germans believe that people are poor because of society, not laziness. However, 70 percent of Americans in response to the same question said that people are poor because of laziness” (“Why ...” 34). Fewer Europeans believe work is all that is needed to escape poverty and while Americans are apt to see effort as leading to success, more Europeans view luck as causative of success (“Why ...” 37).

Paradoxically, as pointed out by, for example, Galbraith, as well as Moore and Roberts, welfare for the wealthier members of society in the form of tax-cuts tends to be more palatable for the American taste, with Micklethwait and Wooldridge explaining the rationale behind the Bush tax-cuts to have been “people should be able to decide what they want to do with their own money” (246). Additionally, Galbraith shows government action like the bailing out of banks and loan associations to be in the interests of the contented electoral majority (127). The essence of the ‘trickle down’ model favoured over redistribution in the US has been sarcastically summed up by Galbraith as “if one feeds the horse enough oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows” (108), and by Gershuny, equally ironically, as claiming that “a society can best care for its worse-off members by making the best off yet better off” (38). Trickle down has for a long time legitimised and solidifying economic stratification and the large gap between the rich and the poor. Recent events have, of course, thoroughly discredited the view as well as the whole of the theory of Milton Friedman (with Barack Obama, among others, pointing out that instead of Wall Street wealth “trickling down” to Main Street, Main Street woes have finally “trickled up” to Wall Street). Yet it is perhaps telling that European leaders have been far more resolute in acknowledging the sea-change. Thus, President Sarkozy, in a speech to French business leaders in the town of Annecy, put it starkly: “The ideology of the dictatorship of the market /. . ./ is dead,” following this by an announcement that France would set up a sovereign wealth fund to “intervene massively” in companies of national strategic importance (Heraldsun.com.au). In comparison, Alan Greenspan’s admission of a “flaw” in his economic world view and his comparison of the present financial crisis with “once-in-a-century credit tsunami” (ibid), while radical in the American context, still sounds relatively mild.

While it remains open to debate whether the Friedman-based Reaganomics, however discredited for the moment, is fundamentally representative of mainstream American mentality (in which case the New Deal as well as the current stimulus measures would be an aberration), or simply a swing of the pendulum, it can still be claimed that views with respect to redistribution differ across the Atlantic<sup>5</sup>. High progressive taxes that fund the functioning of the costly European welfare state and lessen the income differences between the rich and the poor are in the States seen as inhibiting private initiative and curbing the motivation to work— more work would not pay off if higher taxes were collected from it<sup>6</sup>.

In accordance with the stress placed on independence, hard work and effort, Americans are likelier to favour the advancement of education, rather than welfare, as education would enable the poor to rise for themselves while actively contributing to the society. To cite a case in point, both in his books and the central narrative of his presidential campaign, Barack Obama presents his own story as echoing the infinite opportunities America has to offer and finds it vital that the educational system be improved so as to provide poorer, including inner-city, students chances to work on the

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<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps instructive that a minimal – from the European point of view – rise in taxes for the wealthy proposed by Barack Obama (which actually restores the US taxation situation of the 1990s) was at all susceptible of being used by the Republicans during the campaign as a talking point and as a means of labelling Obama as a redistribution-obsessed “socialist”.

<sup>6</sup> What Michael Moore calls “hidden taxes” – costs such as higher education, health-care, etc, that are covered by taxes in Western Europe and left for the *individual* to pay from his/her “after-tax” income in the US – are fully in accord with this mentality.

betterment of their situation. The narrative is constant in its emphasis of the basic American tenet of *equality of opportunity*, with the caveat that it is “slipping away”<sup>7</sup>. Equality of results is never explicitly negated, rather, it is conspicuous by its absence, and is indeed implicitly rejected by the *leitmotif* of personal responsibility.

Also, as indicated by Olivier Zunz, “in contrast to the situation in Europe, consumption, not welfare, was the American means of social cohesion,” (90) yet again emphasising the American fixation with each person’s responsibility over their fate, as a functioning consumer society is seen as offering possibilities of progress for everyone. European efforts at restraining the gap between the well-off and the not-so-well-off from reaching extreme proportions, at supporting those in need and at acknowledging that the society has its part in keeping some of its members from succeeding to higher positions seem contrary to the American acceptance of the poverty gap.

Whereas in Europe countries act to provide their citizens with security, the American society is characterised by a larger degree of insecurity and uncertainty. On the one hand, every American is free to be active, take control over his/her life and rise in the society, on the other, the state is less eager to help should an individual run into difficulties. Examples of greater European regulation and the resultant alleviation of uncertainty abound. For instance, while unions still draw significant numbers of members and carry a remarkable clout in many West European countries, American workers tend to be less unionised with Boyle marking the percentage of unionised American workforce as the lowest in the industrial world (Sitkoff 120) and Zunz reporting American Employers to view unions as “a criminal conspiracy” intent on restraining trade (139). A workforce lacking representation and the power of collective bargaining can be seen as a factor strengthening the position of the employers vis-à-vis the employees, a view suited to the business-mindedness of the American culture. Also, most European countries have elaborate healthcare and pension schemes that reassure citizens as to their prospects in case of accidents, illnesses and old age, while the system of private plans set in place in America fails to inject a comparable degree of a sense of security into the ordinary American – it is up to each individual to worry about their state of health and invest into their level of comfort in old age. Due to the intricacies of the messy and expensive system, millions of Americans are left without functioning health insurance. Galbraith’s assertion that “accident or illness is an expensive and worrisome contingency even for the well rewarded” (122) illustrates the situation. Further, the European labour market, while criticised for its rigidity, heavy regulation, and tough conditions on employers (factors that have been seen as boosting unemployment), provides Europeans with more secure jobs, while Americans tend towards switching jobs with greater frequency, their model favouring the ease of hiring and firing. Additionally, many European states care for a number of other issues such as state provision of higher education, subsidisation of the road network, the upkeep of public transport, and the availability of daycare centres for families with young children, aiming to provide service and improve the functioning of the society. Thus on various accounts, the greater state involvement in the regulation of business and the lives of the citizens can be seen as looking out for the interests of the

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<sup>7</sup> The latter motif is, in itself, a variation of the constant structure of the “American jeremiad” (Sacvan Berkovitch) where lament about falling short of the American ideal is joined with a celebration of the American mission and eternal optimism about its ultimate triumph.

community in Europe, while in America the state leaves citizens more independence for them to be able to provide for their own welfare.

Indeed, it is “security and orthodoxy” that Europeans want, “not risk and uncertainty,” Pells asserts describing the Europeans’ feelings as to their welfare states (293). He further notes that “Accordingly they [Europeans] are readier to pay higher income and sales taxes than Americans would ever put up with” (ibid). These sentiments differ substantially from American feelings towards the US healthcare system, as observed, e.g., by Micklethwait and Wooldridge’. They state that “most Americans like the country’s system of private provision – and they are willing to tolerate expensive care and millions of uninsured in order to keep it” (305)<sup>8</sup>. Although Micklethwait and Wooldridge’s comment shows Americans to be satisfied with the liberality, Beck seems concerned that “such individual responsibility lifts a burden from the public and corporate coffers and makes the individual the ‘architect’ of her own future” (105). Beck further worries that the insecurity inherent in the American system erodes quality of life causes stress and pushes people to over-emphasise the importance of work, for loss of job means loss of security. To quote,

“Lacking the formal safeguards of European employment protection laws or prolonged post-employment benefits, lacking the functioning families on which most of the rest of humanity still relies to survive hard times, lacking the substantial liquid savings of their counterparts in all other developed countries, most working Americans must rely wholly on their jobs for economic security – and must therefore now live in conditions of chronic acute insecurity” (114).

The opposition thus seems to be between personal freedom and societal solidarity, whereby the liberal Americans have opted more for the neutrality of the state and the personal uncertainty that ensues, and West Europeans seem to favour a greater degree of equality and accept government intervention that offers a promise of more stability and certainty as regards the future and possible accidents. Such tendencies are evidenced in a Pew survey referred to by Micklethwait and Wooldridge, the results of which show that most Europeans favour the government overseeing that no one be in need, while most Americans rate personal freedom over government safety nets (304).

### **3.3. Socioeconomic Factors as Influencing Time-Use in the United States and in Western Europe**

As seen in the previous discussion, the US is a liberal country with Americans demonstrating anti-statist tendencies, while the bulk of West European nations share a predilection for letting their governments act on behalf of the welfare of the citizens. The question of how the issue of the socioeconomic arrangement of a society influences its citizens’ time-use can be answered in various ways. However, the essential difference seems to lie in the different incentives to work.

First, greater state regulation can be said to offer a degree of security to the members of society, while anxiety as to one’s physical survival is a factor driving people towards emphasising work as a means to ensure their continued existence. With schemes of public

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<sup>8</sup> Note that even the plans for health-care reform Americans supported in the last elections (both Barack Obama’s and Hillary Clinton’s) keep insurance companies as part of the system, which would be unthinkable in Europe where healthcare is regarded on a par with, e.g., public services such as police or fire-fighting.



welfare whether in the form of free healthcare provision, family allowances, pensions or unemployment benefits, European states have thus far tried to take care of their citizens, especially of those in need. Additionally, more specific labour legislation has led to higher minimum wages, more vacations, stricter regulation of weekly hours and overtime work, and other benefits for the Europeans that have reduced their concerns and enabled them to devote more time to leisure.

Second, differences in taxation could explain different work-leisure patterns on the opposite shores of the Atlantic. Economist Edward C. Prescott has argued in support of tax rates as causing differences across countries, seeing that “when European and U.S. tax rates were comparable, European and U.S. labor supplies were comparable” (8). Greater taxation on extra earnings curbs the motivation of individuals to put in extra hours, consequently Europeans are not overly enthusiastic to work more in a situation where extra work will not render much additional income. Prescott contends that “the low labor supplies in Germany, France, and Italy are due to high tax rates,” and “if someone in these countries works more and produces 100 additional euros of output, that individual gets to consume only 40 euros of additional consumption and pays directly or indirectly 60 euros in taxes” (7). In the title of an article for the Wall Street Journal he asks “Are Europeans lazy?” and answers “No, just overtaxed.” He thus seems to ignore differences in cultures, so people for him are basically the same world over and differences in labour supply originate from their responses to the systems of taxing. Still, in line with Hofstede’s assertion that tax systems “do not just happen: they are created by politicians as a consequence of pre-existing value judgements” (“Cultures and Organizations” 97), it can be concluded that Americans tend to reward the ambitious for their achievement through taxation too, while Europeans emphasise the need to look after basic equality of the members of society and prevent the gap between the poor and the rich from stretching to excessive proportions. The American mentality would rather increase incentives for individual effort than seek to guarantee more equal incomes, thus redistribution is less prominent in their system than in the highly progressive systems of Western Europe. America tolerates higher income disparity, encouraging extra work to earn more, while the corrective taxes in place in Europe make wages more similar over the whole society and limit the drive for more work.

Further, it should be noted that levels of taxation can also be linked to levels of happiness and quality of life. Richard Layard, a scholar researching happiness, believes that the constant comparison to others invoked by the consumer society is a source of unhappiness for the less well-off members of the society. He sees consumerism as causing a rat race for income that will lead people to work more to earn more and so bringing about loss of happiness for others. As the richer members of society “pollute” the overall happiness, he calls for the social democrats to adopt “a happiness-based approach to public policy” whereby the incentive to work more to acquire more consumer-items would be taxed additionally (6). Income for Layard “is earned by the sacrifice of time with your family and friends” and “taxation is one of the most important institutions we have for preserving a sensible balance between work and leisure” (ibid). Layard even goes as far as to recommend: “Don’t apologise for taxes; foster the sense of security; fight glaring evils like depression; and discourage social comparison” (10) as a way to evolve towards a happier society. Thus, as shown by Prescott and indicated by

Layard, state interference in the lives of citizens in the form of larger taxation relaxes the desire of the citizens to work beyond their normal hours.

Third, trade unions are considered to have played an important part in bringing down work hours in Western Europe. As mentioned before, trade unions in the US have historically been weaker than those in Western Europe, leaving employers in the US with more power over their employees' lives. In the paper "Work and Leisure in the U.S. and Europe: Why So Different?," Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote state differences in current work hours between the US and Europe to originate from the greater power of unions in Europe. In the 1970s unions protected workers of declining European industries with slogans like "work less work all," thus achieving shorter working weeks for a number of people. For the rest of the society the social multiplier effect started to function, with people wanting more leisure on the example of the unionised workers who remained in workforce with reduced schedules (and higher hourly wages). On account of the power of the trade unions the European society in aggregate started to value long vacations, and the increased time these allowed for friends, family and various leisure activities over long working hours. Even a small drop in living conditions was tolerated for the increase in overall life satisfaction.

Further, the quality of leisure can be seen as dependent on the socioeconomic layout of the society. Jonathan Gershuny links consumerism, leisure, work and the socioeconomic organizations in a theory that argues for the benefits of Nordic style social democracy over the liberal economic model. Gershuny asserts there to be an "existence of a systematic connection between the mix of consumption activities, the mix of occupations in the society, and the overall level of wealth in the society" (38) with social democratic states tending to be richer and less stratified. In his explanation, in a liberal economy a minority of skilled high-earning professionals can afford high-value consumption while the number of those engaged in low-value added deskilled professions is growing. Meeting the demand for cheap services for the low-paid will prevail and some more expensive services for the richer members will be performed (37). A social democratic society where the state participates in the advancement of human capital and in the provision of social guarantees will tend to be more homogeneous and richer as a whole. Gershuny claims that "modern high-value-added society must provide for mass consumption, not elite consumption" (32). In a liberal model the rich employ the poor and the society is polarized between the smaller wealthier group and a greater number of the poor (38). In a social democratic society the poor employ the rich, since "the majority of all economic activity is in the provision of services which are ultimately consumed by other service providers" (41).

State intervention, the socioeconomic make-up of the society and people's consumption patterns will have implications for the time-use of a society. In Gershuny's words,

"the liberal market economy, over time, develops a leisure consumption pattern which might be characterized by lowbrow television and fast food, providing relatively few good jobs, and many low-value unstimulating ones. The social democratic state, by contrast, has diversifying consumption of services which also provide stimulating and well-paid jobs for their producers. Such societies have growth in time spent in music and theatre, visual arts and education, time devoted to consumption of good food and drink, with a growing participation in active sports and games to compensate these" (42).

Proceeding from Gershuny, the United States, the prime example of a liberal market economy, can be depicted as tending towards the lowbrow end of leisure consumption while Western Europe could be seen as consisting of more egalitarian societies with people devoting time to various forms of leisure. These generalisations should be approached with reserve, as there are no purely liberal or social democratic states, though certain states manifest certain tendencies to a greater degree. Thus according to Gershuny's theory, the society wherein an individual lives will have an important role in determining the leisure-options available for the individual.

### **3.4. Criticism and Change**

With the United States and West European countries subscribing to different approaches to capitalism, either variety has been criticised as well as defended on multiple occasions. Moore and Roberts point out the widespread view according to which capitalism "begins with the premise that human beings are naturally acquisitive and competitive creatures, fundamentally motivated by self-interest" (264). Critics have seen the system as leading to injustice and inequality as well as motivating greed and selfishness in members of society. Jacqueline Jones for one conveys a position that emphasises the system's callousness by stating that "industrial capitalism exists to produce goods and satisfy shareholders, not to right the wrongs that might or might not flow from this system" (141).

West European countries in their community-orientation can be seen as having tried to mitigate the harsh realities in the form of the welfare state that in Moore and Roberts's understanding represents a "mixture of most desirable features of both capitalism and socialism" (270) and in Rifkin's words stands for a "humane" approach to capitalism ("The European Dream" 55). Micklethwait and Wooldridge further contend that "European politicians have tried to shackle capitalism, and to civilize it, by imposing high minimum wages, by making it difficult to fire people, by making business look after the environment, by making bankruptcy a painful process and by forcing companies to be accountable to all their stakeholders, not just their shareholders" (306).

Still, (liberal) commentators have found that life in the overprotective nanny states with cradle-to-grave security can get oppressive (Pells 259). Referring to the issue of taxation that could be seen as punitive of wealth, Moore and Roberts claim that Americans tend to think that life in a welfare society becomes "drab, boring and colorless because the incentive of people to work hard and make more money has been destroyed" (272). On the other hand, the American way is often found to venerate the individual too much and turn the "economic side of life" into "a war best conducted under the rule of every man for himself" (O'Toole 295) with the result of economic insecurity for the less fortunate and a tolerance for the gap between richer and poorer members of the society. While Americans champion little regulation and small government, Eric Schlosser, in his critique of the industrial meatpacking and fast food industry, clearly states that "many of America's greatest accomplishments stand in complete defiance of the free market" and points out the need faced by every country in the world "to find a proper balance between the efficiencies and the amorality of the market" (261). Thus Gordon Brown's comment "the US has enterprise but not fairness. Europe has fairness but not enterprise" (qtd in Garton Ash 205) could be seen as broadly summing up the basic arguments between the

proponents of either approach to statesmanship as well as hint at the need to combine the two strands for a more balanced, enterprising, yet fair society.

Though now largely discredited due to the effects of the global economic crisis, in more recent times, neo-liberal views gained the support of many politicians and economists around the globe, while the European social model has increasingly come to be seen as outmoded. Borrowing the words of Van Dijk, “after the demise of state socialism and communism around 1990, which also affected the Left in general, Leftist ideologies entered a state of transition as well, whereas neo-liberal market ideologies have become not only more dominant but virtually hegemonic” (94). Paul Grainge further describes the concept of ‘neo-liberal globalization’ as “a powerful ideological formation where the well-being of democracy and culture is associated with the maintenance and extension of free-market principles” noting the central role of the United States in encouraging “deregulation and free international trade” (215). Zeitlin observes that concurring with the aforementioned developments, British politicians have tended to look towards the United States and other liberal countries for guidance in economic and policy matters, rather than to continental Europe during the past decades (11). In Therborn’s view, with the onslaught of the neo-liberal ideology, global financial markets and economists have become increasingly critical of European welfare states. At the same time there has been a tendency of losing support of the progressively more assertive and selfish European upper-middle class. The way Therborn sees the change, “the notion of more options for the prosperous and more concentration to the basic minimum for the ‘really needy’ are in the ascendant, while social rights, solidarity and social integration are being correspondingly demoted” (Gowan and Anderson 366). In a similar vein, Beck regrets “the erosion of labour rights, living standards and social security” in Europe (96). Advocating change, Streeck, for his part, has devised the concept of ‘competitive solidarity’ that Delanty and Rumford summarise as conveying that “equality is to be achieved through access to opportunity rather than redistribution, and social cohesion through competitiveness rather than compensatory mechanisms” – an approach that for them “reinforces the logic that ‘social policy is economic policy’ and invites the conclusion that for many EU policy-makers and politicians, markets are the new welfare state” (113). While reform of employment policies, pension plans, poverty alleviation, health-care provision and other measures of state involvement in the society can be said to be in need of revision, there still exist those who believe the welfare state, though increasingly depicted as in trouble, remains feasible.

To sum up the discussion of societal organisation, it can be said that with different views in place on either continent, various socioeconomic issues are treated differently on the opposite sides of the Atlantic. Typical examples of variance between the continents include differences in the provision of state-support and benefits, in attitudes to poverty, taxation and unionisation, and in the laws concerning the regulation of business and the social protection of employees. Whereas the United States can be considered a bastion of liberalism advocating individual responsibility and small government, West European nations, following the Second World War, have veered towards providing their citizens more security, emphasising collective solidarity and affirming the need to restrain the negative effects of capitalism. The way a society chooses to be organised provides information about the values inherent in that society and has an influence on work-leisure patterns found there.

#### **4. Use of Time, Work and Leisure in the United States and in Western Europe**

Both the system of underlying values and historical circumstances, as well as the physical environment (in the form of societal atmosphere, institutional setting and socioeconomic arrangement) that surround individuals, can be seen as structuring and influencing the everyday dealings, the quality of life and the use of time of the members of a society. In the following section the issues of modern work and leisure with respect to the US and Western Europe and the topics of consumerism and work-life balance will be addressed.

##### **4.1. Working Time in the United States and in Western Europe**

Statistics demonstrate West Europeans to work less than Americans. Americans put in more hours a week, they have shorter vacations and as unemployment is smaller, a larger proportion of Americans work. According to OECD data the number of actual annual hours worked in the US in 2006 was 1797. The number exceeds many West European countries by several hundred hours. The inhabitants of the Netherlands had the shortest workweek with an average of 1391 hours, Norwegians spent 1407 hours working and Germans 14376. In the OECD chart, Greeks and Italians were the two West European nations to surpass the US in terms of working hours, toiling 2052 and 1800 hours per year respectively. Average East European working hours are longer as compared to Western Europe and in many cases also the US. OECD graphs indicate the Poles to have worked 1985 hours, Hungarians to have spent 1989 hours working and the Czechs to have put in 1997 hours in 2006.

Overall, a decrease in annual working hours in Western Europe and in the US can be observed in comparison with working hours in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when leisure was not attributed much importance and annual hours reached their top exceeding 3000 for factory workers. Together with social legislation work hours have progressively decreased in the US and Western Europe. In the 1960s when still recovering from the destruction wrought by the Second World War, Europeans worked more than Americans. The decline of the working hours in Europe can be observed in e.g. Hannu Tanninen's publication that as one example brings out the change in the Netherlands, where the annual hours came down from 2110 in 1964 to 1441 in 1994. In the US the change was from 1997 to 1983 in 4 decades – hardly noticeable as compared to the European decline (10). Ever since the 1970s, European workers on the whole have enjoyed more leisure than their American counterparts, be it then for the effects of taxation or union action.

As regards the work week, again regulations differ in different countries, but Americans tend to work more hours than Europeans. The standard work week in the US is 40 hours but overtime is common in certain lines of work. According to a study by the Families and Work Institute (FWI), the average American man actually puts in 46 hours per week due to the mounting unscheduled work (27). The work week American men themselves report desirable is much shorter – 38.5 hours (27). This is similar to the collectively agreed work week in Western Europe, where it averages at 37.9 hours for the Euro15 countries (Carley "Working Time Developments"). Likewise overtime is possible, but more strictly regulated, placing a limit of 48 weekly hours (with the option of opting out available). The famous 35 hour work week initiative of France that has by now been repealed shows the existence of a desire to curb overwork among the French.

A further difference between the US and West European countries can be observed as regards vacations. European countries have clearly stipulated the workers' right for a vacation. Workers in the EU in general are accorded four weeks of paid vacation time with Sweden and France giving their workers five weeks of rest. In the US however, employers are not legally bound to give their employees any paid vacation time and vacations are a matter of negotiations between the employer and the employee. Due to the influence of the free market, workers usually get ten to twenty annual days off work and can stay home at national holidays. FWI report that "79% of U.S. employees have access to paid vacations," "the average number of paid vacation days employees have is 16.6 days" and "more than 1/3 of employees (36%) do not plan to use their full vacations" ("Overwork in America" 7) – in addition to the fact that some Americans have no vacations at all, vacations in the US in general are shorter than they are in the EU.

#### **4.2. A Few Observations on the Nature of Current Work and the Workplace as Fostering Work in the United States**

Statistically Americans work more than Europeans, a condition encoded into the labour laws of the two regions. Changes in modern jobs and working conditions have increased stress on both sides of the ocean in view of technological advancements and organisational innovations, but the American competitive free market system, legislation and the socioeconomic situation place more stress on the individual, increase the level of anxiety, and lead to a busier, more work-filled society. The following section will first discuss changes in the nature of work and then proceed by looking at the realities of the contemporary workplace that can be seen as driving Americans to work.

Much of modern work both in the US as well as the EU differs from what has traditionally been considered work. With the continual spread of automation, more people have moved from completing difficult or dull manual tasks into the service sector, and a growing number of workers deal with knowledge-intensive information work. The new jobs can be said to be cleaner and physically less demanding than the factory jobs of the past, but that does not necessarily imply that they are inherently more gratifying. Indeed, Galbraith has noted that still, "much work is repetitive, tedious, painfully fatiguing, mentally boring or socially demeaning" (32). For Galbraith, it is usually at the upper echelons of the occupational ladder that work becomes enjoyable for the individuals, and nicer jobs tend to be the better rewarded ones (32). Much of white-collar work now resembles the assembly line and the rank-and-file white-collar worker has to face rising pace of work, a wider range of tasks, a more strenuous work environment, and increased insecurity as to the prospects of maintaining the job.

Many authors associate a different, mental form of stress with the new work environment. Catherine Casey points out the rise of "multi-activity jobs" that merge tasks that before belonged to the job-descriptions of several people (36). Attentiveness, decision-making and analysis skills are increasingly expected of employees (Casey 37) and the pace of work has considerably risen, furthered by the onslaught of various forms of information-technology. Better jobs require education and continual refreshment of knowledge, and are restricted in number. Many of the information-intense jobs can be considered to occupy a considerable degree of concentration, making it difficult to get mind off work at free time. Additionally, communication technology, such as mobile phones and laptop computers have greatly facilitated the availability of employees,

making it possible for people to be contacted outside their regular working hours and keeping individuals on call twenty four hours a day. Constant accessibility and the inability to keep work matters off one's mind can be considered to increase the levels of tension and the sentiment of work taking over leisure felt by the ordinary modern office worker. Also, interruptions and distractions workers have to put up with on a daily basis transform the working environment into a more arduous one.

Due to changes in the economic structure of society, job insecurity has become an important source of worry for the average worker, increasingly so also in Europe. Beck states that whereas modernity was characterised by a secure job for life, this is no longer the case for most contemporary workers in a post-fordist society bound for the Second Modernity. The gains in productivity have not translated into a leisure society as was hopefully predicted in the fifties, but rather into a starker vision of a future with possibly more work for those who work and unemployment for vast numbers of others (Beck; Rifkin "The end of Work"). International corporations that act on the sole purpose of gaining profit for their shareholders have significantly gained in sway. Nation states have little power in influencing corporations' business decisions as regards merging, separating, downsizing or restructuring that have an effect on workers-citizens. Individuals thus lack security as to their future, a fact that can be used by the employers to pressure employees into working more, or as expressed by Casey, with fewer jobs around, "employees can be controlled and disciplined better" (45).

Though people both in America and in Europe have faced similar changes in work conditions in view of the modernisation process, Europeans have, up until now, enjoyed a greater level of protection by labour legislation and by trade unions. For American workers, living in a more pro-business enterprise culture, the imperative to work has been more influential due to lack of guarantees, the employers' persistence at keeping and increasing existing hours and the desires to consume (with attendant need to pay for the things and services consumed), but possibly also due to the drive of personal ambitions, as the more ardent workers are believed to have greater chances of progressing towards higher positions and greater riches.

Getting more from less people is in accordance with sound business logic as it provides a way of saving on fringe benefits and schooling costs. Many employers thus can be seen as encouraging the trend of longer hours. As explained by Schor, when presenting the case of the 'Overworked American,' "rather than hire new people, and pay extra benefits they would entail, many firms have just demanded more from their existing workforces. They have sped up the pace of work and lengthened time on the job" (40). Working with less people, a trend furthered by increasing automation, keeps some people out of employment, generating the existence of a pool of ready applicants and fostering the feelings of a need to hang on to work by those already employed, who are more willing to cede to the demands of the employer. Even paying more for overtime work performed pays off over employing new workers. Schor, commenting on Americans, further notes "in an atmosphere of high unemployment and weak unions, workers have found it difficult to refuse [working longer hours]" (40). The overall mood of anxiety can be seen as pushing people towards dedicating more of their time to work, as they perceive the competition of those out of employment or underemployed.

One reason to keep working hours up could be the purpose of keeping productivity possibly high. Although overall EU productivity has lagged behind that of the US, the

productivity level of individual European countries e.g. that of France can be higher than that of the US. The lower GDP in France is a result of lower working hours and higher unemployment figures and thus partly a lifestyle choice. In contrast to France, where working hours have been reduced with increases in productivity, American employees, according to Schor, have tended to have productivity gains paid by increased salary and not by time (76). It can be argued that while Americans work longer hours and produce more, the French produce efficiently per hour but the total time spent on work in the society is lower with the ensuing lower GDP. The issue of productivity opens up a facet in the discussion of a society's preference for leisure or for growth. It seems that while Americans emphasise the importance of the GDP as proving economic success, for Europeans the endless increase of the GDP and of the work hours does not merit a similar degree of emphasis.

The increasing insecurity and the wish to avoid poverty urge people to take on several jobs at a time if a single full-time job is unavailable or if the salary earned by working full-time at one post proves inadequate. In the US, the situation is especially difficult for the low-skilled workers, as the labour market is more flexible there, and hiring and firing easier for the employers. Though the US governments have had a habit of periodically boasting the creation of thousands of new jobs, many of these posts provide small salaries and few benefits, at times even presupposing that the employee work at several places. Beck summarizes the situation in the comment "the 'job miracle' itself forces many Americans to take on more than one job to maintain their family's living standards, instead of the single one that used to be sufficient. As a result millions are practically never at home anymore: they live on the job" (116). Though filling their lives with work, "the working poor" have little chance of escaping poverty (Beck 89). These low-skill jobs are also easily sacrificed in the more unfavourable economic circumstances. In this regard Europe with its typically tougher employment policies gives more security to the average worker. Support European welfare states provide their poorer members cannot be said to enable the deprived to live comfortably off the benefits without a care in the world (a perspective often depicted with reference to immigrant groups seen as abusing the welfare system), but it does assist those in need and signals that the society will help.

Another factor increasing the total of work time on both sides of the Atlantic is the entry of women onto the labour market. The trend has been necessary for the maintenance of the middle-class lifestyle that in modern times increasingly needs two incomes to be kept up. With more consumer goods around, more people are needed to work and consume. Working women lack time for traditional house-chores and though aided by various time-saving appliances and increasingly by their spouses, work outside home can be seen as contributing to the overall sense of harriedness. It has been pointed out that while European women often work shorter schedules or part-time and have more time to take care of household tasks, many American women prefer to spend more time on work and pay for household services providing an income (though one of low value) for others (Mees). Americans are thus more likely to hire nannies and eat in restaurants, as they are said to have bigger incomes and less time.

The business culture of the US with its emphasis on hard work, long hours and a competitive atmosphere, places a strain on the workers to devote much time and effort to the company, often at the expense of their private life. The concentration on work can be seen as leading some to an obsessive relationship with work, a condition known as



workaholism. Schor sees the American “cultural disposition to hard work” as a factor promoting workaholism in the United States and additionally views the phenomenon as a “creation of the system,” criticising employers for encouraging people to work excessively (70). Referring to the American penchant for competitiveness, the author argues that workaholics turn workaholism into a norm by setting standards that others might feel obliged to comply (70). FWI data shows 1/3 of all US employees as “chronically overworked” (“Overwork in America” 2). Although laziness is largely scorned upon all over contemporary Western society, disproportionate commitment to work cannot be considered sustainable either. Wanting to support their family and lifestyle, and afraid of losing their job, people can feel trapped to drudge away out of a sense of obligation and an inability to resist the demands. Schor thinks that “excessive hours are unhealthy and unsocial, and ultimately erode the quality of life” (141). A shortage of free time and a constant pursuit of success in one’s career or a desperate desire to hold on to work can lead to estrangement from friends, family and loved ones and thus to feelings of loneliness. Negative physical aspects of overload and lack of unwinding include stress, burnout, moodiness, irritation, indifference, fatigue and a feeling of being drained by work. An increasing number of people realise that balance is needed, but find it difficult to compete against the system that reveres dedicated workers and expects tasks to be completed. While many reluctantly toil away, dreaming of shorter hours, many others feel proud about working long hours as for them the extra time spent on work signals commitment, especially so in America.

Work thus can be seen as consuming modern societies for various reasons. A large number of people in both the United States and the West European countries work under high pressure and face increasing insecurity, but Americans are often perceived as leading busier lives. This tendency is corroborated by contemporary working time statistics. Additionally, Americans’ “winner takes all” approach and high competitiveness motivate people to dedicate themselves to work, as does the liberality of their socioeconomic system that fosters workplace flexibility and leaves people largely to their own devices within the society. Beck further sees America as “one of the world’s emerging post-Western countries” with a “become a life artist or go under” (118) mentality implying that social guarantees are deficient and in the atmosphere of prevailing uncertainty it is up to the individuals to create their present and future, which can be seen as a factor leading to increased dedication to work. As another illustration for the work-centeredness of the contemporary American society, a quote by an American worker saying “either I can spend time with my family, or support them – not both” (Schor 21) befits. The coordinating economic approach that characterises many countries in Western Europe, with its job/employee-protection laws and its system of benefits, can be seen as relieving the pressure to dedicate one’s life to work and as curbing the motivation for excessive toil. Stereotypically too, Europeans are often depicted as having more free time and leading more leisurely lives.

#### **4.3. Consumerism as Linked with Leisure**

As mentioned above, leisure is conventionally thought of as the time for relaxation and enjoyment and has become largely equated with consumption nowadays. The individual in a consumer society works to cover his or her basic survival needs and to have money to spend when he/she is not working. As emphasised by Gershuny, one’s

own work is enabled by others' consumption habits and one's consumption habits keep others in employment (1). The more one works, the more money one has to spend at leisure. The increasing "commoditization" (Burns 62) of leisure contributes to the feelings that the tempo of life has got faster. The following section will address issues related to the topic of consumerism as an activity ingrained into modern society and interlinked with work and leisure.

People consume for various reasons. Importantly, consumerism is fundamental to the notion of capitalism. In a system that is concentrated on continually fabricating products and offering services, these products need to be bought and services used. As automation has exponentially increased the quantity of commodities available, the number of consumers has had to rise along with that of the commodities. The 20<sup>th</sup> century transformed all citizens into consumers and set in place the importance of advertisements to play on people's desires and create ever more sophisticated wants. Companies constantly develop new technologies and consumer items that though hitherto unknown, become essential in short periods of time. In accordance with the spread of consumer mentality, things can be bought on the spur of the moment without an objective need, and when an item breaks down, in many cases no time is wasted on fixing it, as it is easier, more time-efficient, as well as more appealing to buy a new model instead. Certain products age fast and need to be periodically replaced despite the old item still working if one does not want to be left with an out-of-date model. Also, time-efficiency has become a significant factor in deciding what to buy. Lee Burns's book *Busy Bodies* has been written with the objective of laying out that with time having become a scarce resource, people look for things that give them the maximum amount of pleasure in the minimum amount of time.

Importantly, consumption has long been thought to confer status. Items consumed bear codes of social relevance that give others clues as to the user's social standing, personality and attitudes, or as expressed by Ritzer, "we do not consume objects for their intrinsic worth, but because these objects are socially meaningful (211)." People habitually, be it consciously or subconsciously, compare their belongings with those of others, and in hopes of showing their worth, engage in what Thorstein Veblen called "conspicuous consumption," i.e. consumption for prestige rather than objective need. According to Veblen, "members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal" (70). But, as noted by Baudrillard, the higher classes adopt different codes to air their distinction, and the lower classes can never truly expect to catch up ("Consumer Society" 63). Additionally, if someone has succeeded in rising in status, they will accustom to the improved living standards and set their sights even higher, still participating in the life-long vicious circle of conspicuousness. Consumption thus has the tendency of drawing people into the cycle of constant comparison of one's wealth as against that of other members of society so becoming a source of anxiety and stress, when judgements are made against the possessions of the classes above.

Consumerism can also be linked with happiness in the sense that people expect the acquisition of goods to yield them a sense of gratification, but many observers have noted the satisfaction gained through amassing consumer items to be short-lived. Schor's characterization of Americans as believing "the next purchase will yield happiness and then the next" (122) neatly describes the situation where one will never be completely

content with the possessions one has attained due to new desires that emerge once old wants have been met. In a similar vein Baudrillard mentions “psychological pauperization” and a “chronic, latent state of crisis” (“Consumer Society” 64) evident in the society, while Veblen calls attention to “chronic dissatisfaction” (39) to point to happiness that fails to arrive because of the constant upgrading of one’s wishes. In a consumer society, the intended function of an object is thus often accompanied by a further, symbolical function that serves as marking the status of the user, and in the words of Zunz “people tend to buy things that symbolize their aspirations” (104).

The ubiquity of credit cards and instalment-plan purchasing that enable one to consume at any time necessitates work and fosters consumption. Credit cards are an important source of debt as cards allow people to spend money they do not have, or in Schor’s terms, “seduce” “many people beyond their means” (108). Ritzer notes that in America the number of cards and the total limit a person is allowed to spend can be seen as signalling social standing in its own right, and concludes that “the modern status symbol is debt, not savings” (83). He further comments on the individualism of the system that places blame on individuals when they run into monetary problems and not on the society that motivates consumption and makes it possible for people to spend (72). Credit cards on the one hand make spending easier and contribute to making leisure more pleasurable, on the other pull people into debt forcing them to work harder and possibly worry about their future payments.

While modern work and societal ambience can be considered demanding and stressful, several aspects of modern life have made leisure less leisurely. Leisure time, or time not absorbed by work and activities necessary for basic functioning, can be filled with various undertakings or states of being. Listening to music, watching television, , getting exercise, visiting the theatre, reading books or magazines, meeting friends, travelling, cooking, engaging in DIY projects or handicraft, having a night out at the bar, surfing the internet, learning or developing new skills, dedicating oneself to hobbies, getting pampered at a spa – all these belong amongst possible leisure time activities. With the development of the consumer society, economy and technology, leisure activities as well as the nature of leisure have changed. Leisure has become more consumption-based. Many leisure activities require the purchase of equipment, buying a service, or paying for the use of certain facilities. People have become to sense their lives pass by at an ever-faster tempo. The mounting busyness can be explained by the more intense workplace, the intrusion of work-related thoughts and activities into spare time, the increasingly commoditized leisure, the growth in possible options of spending one’s leisure and the rising number of possessions that can be seen as a factor robbing the individual of some of their time. At the same time, leisure for some signifies moments of passivity and nothingness left after the job when one does not (have to) do anything due to overly absorbing work.

The interrelatedness of leisure and consumption has increased the importance of the issue of individual’s time-allocation – on the one hand one would like to work as long as possible to gain more money, and on the other, one would like to have more time with the things obtained or using the services paid for by the money earned. Burns sums the modern dilemma up as “we want to spend less time working so that we have more time to enjoy leisure-time goods bought with the fruits of our work, yet we also want to spend more time working in order to earn more” (59), and Gershuny refers to those advocating

the notion of life becoming ever busier as believing that “by working longer we can earn more money, which we can spend to make our leisure time more intensely enjoyable. We work more and have less leisure, but the shorter leisure time, when combined with the extra money we can spend on it, could provide us with more satisfaction in total than we might alternatively have gained by taking more leisure with less money” (52). This goes in line with the perception that much of modern leisure has become packaged with more highly rewarding and more interesting options available for those who have money to pay for the products and services. Having time available does not automatically mean access to the most highly regarded leisure activities, as low income might set certain boundaries thus confining the poorer members of society to cheaper forms of leisure such as the ubiquitous television or the internet.

Modern leisure does not necessarily mean plain relaxation, unwinding and engaging in simple things. Increasingly, people pay for having their leisure filled with pre-planned, often intense activities and lacking resources to purchase leisure might cause feelings of inferiority (as the consumer ladder syndrome with its constant comparisons sets in). Ritzer has pointed out that leisure activities are now neatly packaged and marketed similarly to products as “fully-equipped blocks of time” to be bought and consumed (186). For Ritzer, “the consumption of leisure is no longer easily separable from the consumption of goods. Both goods and leisure can be seen as commodities” (217). Shopping also, has become a veritable leisure time activity, but to be able to go shopping in a pleasurable way that includes the actual purchasing of items on sale, one needs disposable money or available credit to spend. Consumption in its turn requires and presumes work.

Ironically, and as implied by Gershuny, people who have large incomes that enable them to spend, often tend not to have enough time to enjoy much leisure as the ever-present consumer society work-leisure conundrum comes to play (149). Those who earn the most have the most motivation to work more seeing that the value of time rises with the wage; additionally, many of the highest-earning individuals have challenging jobs that demand much attention. Accordingly, for André Gorz, “the more people earn, the more attached they are to their work” (34), and for Burns “greater busy-ness goes with greater prosperity” (58). Gershuny on his part has noted that “once leisure signified high status, but no longer, now the most important people are the busiest, so, runs the argument, we demonstrate our status by our lack of leisure” (9). As leisure has become to be measured in terms of monetary value, and products as well as periods of time and various pre-planned activities are consumed as part of leisure, there arises the already mentioned question of whether to work more to have better means of enjoying leisure, or to have more time and possibly less commodified leisure. For those who choose more work (or feel compelled to work long), understandably the result is a sensing of faster life with less leisure.

Another cause for the perceived acceleration of modern life is the cluttering up brought about by increasing amounts of commodities procured through shopping. Though consumer items have become increasingly time-efficient and extravagant, yielding more satisfaction in less time (as shown by Burns), possessions still need time, and as there are more things around, time is thought to run by faster. Objects bought fill people’s time in a variety of ways. Time is spent on buying them (including possible research before the purchase), learning to use them, using them and taking care of them (e.g. maintenance,

arranging or cleaning). Additionally, as more commodities are obtained, less time will be left for the use of each of them, causing the feeling of there being less time in general and possibly an attendant feeling of regret for not being able to use all the things one has acquired for one's efforts at work.

The expanding choice of objects to buy and use, and of activities to pursue, presents a further explanation for the clogging up of time. The quantity of total time is fixed, with a certain number of hours that need to be devoted to work, and certain periods that are necessary for sleep and self-care. In the remaining free leisure hours the modern individual is confronted with an overwhelming variety from which to choose various things to do and use. It is as Burns has said it: "the scarcity of time comes from the ever enriched menu of options from which we choose, not from the fact that any of the options takes longer than it did before" (331). With many possible alternatives for filling time, one might experience inability to do all one wants due to temporary or monetary constraints. At the same time one might feel frustration at lack the energy to do all one has the option of doing, as work at the job takes its toll and its share of energy. Indeed, with overwork or long work weeks, a number of people are left with too little time or feel too drained for enjoying meaningful leisure during the hours they have left from their occupation.

In addition to the Protestant work-ethic that is often mentioned as part of the American psyche and also when discussing North European, including Estonian mentalities, commentators have noted the existence of a Protestant leisure-ethic. For Clarke and Critcher, leisure ethic connotes a need to spend leisure productively (5). People living in societies that have internalised the leisure ethic feel averseness towards and guilt because of laziness and an obligation to be efficient even at periods off from work. Anu Valtonen points to the "cultural expectation of doing something during free time" imposed by the prevailing market system that prescribes efficient time-use also at one's leisure (114). Because of this norm of being active, people often do not take leisure as it comes, but make plans and arrangements beforehand, in effect sensing greater busyness, as leisure acquires work-like characteristics and little time is left for just being. This may lead to a situation, where according to Gershuny, many of our leisure activities "may actually be more strenuous and constrained and less pleasant than work" as plans are made and fully organised intense leisure activities bought (28). On the opposite side, as already alluded to, the challenges of worklife may be so tiring for an individual that s/he lacks energy to engage in productive activity outside work preferring to dissolve into blissful oblivion in front of the television set. The passivity approach though may be accompanied by feelings of guilt for laziness.

The situation that results from an ever-busier worklife coupled with hectic leisure has been dubbed "time scarcity", "time poverty", "time crunch", "time bind", "time squeeze" and "time famine" by various, mainly American, commentators. As distinctions between work and leisure become blurred, and the opportunities for filling available free time increase, people feel ever more harried. Many feel pressured to work because of the need to consume, or even the need to survive economically and not to let the living-standard drop. Many people choose to work long hours because of credit cards debts, insecurity, or to have more money to spend. As one has little time for the family, especially so in the US, it follows that not much is left for maintaining close relationships with friends or

other members of the community either, ultimately leaving the individual alone, to recuperate from and for work.

#### **4.4. Some Lifestyle Issues in the United States and in Western Europe**

The paragraphs above have discussed the issues of work, leisure and consumption in modern consumer societies in general. Both The United States and Western Europe have advanced consumer societies in place with a high number of people working in white-collar and blue-collar service jobs. Both continents have an impressive array of consumer-goods and modern appliances for sale with a wealth of advertisements to promote them. On both continents people work and have some time set aside for leisure and consumption. Although highly similar in many aspects, there still remain subtle differences in the way time, leisure and consumerism are treated. To quote Pells, “for all the anxieties about Americanization, the work habits, and vacation customs of ordinary Europeans, their forms of evening and weekend recreation, their shopping patterns, their choice of cars, their tastes in food and entertainment, and their attitudes towards high technology and the role of government continued to diverge in significant ways from those of Americans throughout the last half of the twentieth century” (292).

Time-use, workload, consumption patterns and the amount of leisure are also bound up with the notions of personal happiness and quality of life. Encarta dictionary defines ‘quality of life’ as “the degree of enjoyment and satisfaction experienced in everyday life as opposed to financial or material well-being.” Quality of life indicates the level of satisfaction that people feel as to their lives and combines a subjective emotional level with objective physical factors such as health, economic comfort and political freedom. People can feel busy, relaxed, happy, anxious, content or harried among other things. Although many emotions derive from personal circumstances, the general atmosphere of the environment they inhabit will have an effect on their well-being and state of mind. Individual responses to societal stimuli will add up affecting the prevalent mentality in the society in a circular way. The sensing of busyness by many individuals will raise the total awareness of busyness on the level of the society, in turn contributing to and reinforcing the perception of the general speed of life and lack of time in the mind of the individuals within the society. Small differences taken together will have a role to play in the shaping of the face of the entire society. In the following paragraphs a few aspects related to the way Americans and Europeans use their time and possessions will be commented on.

Seeing that yearly and weekly hours of work are shorter in Europe and Europeans additionally have access to longer vacations than is common in the United States, the general ambience can be considered more relaxed and leisurely in Europe. Titles like ‘While Europeans Holiday, Americans Toil,’ ‘Reluctant Vacationers: Why Americans Work More, Relax Less, than Europeans,’ ‘Love of Leisure, and Europe’s Reasons’ and ‘Labor and Leisure: Should Europe work more, or America less?’ given to articles in various newspapers and magazines reflect the perception of a difference between the two continents. The divergence can be explained as based in regulation, the general atmosphere and custom. As indicated above, Europeans have more free time mandated by various legislative acts. The more competitive environment at the American workplace and the greater insecurity evident in the liberally oriented economy contribute to increased anxiety and dedication to work there. The materialist bent with the fixation on

accumulation and consumerism additionally foster work in America. At the same time, over the past few decades, Europeans have become accustomed to their greater availability of leisure and value the fact they have more time off to engage in activities they enjoy. They can afford to take out full vacations as it is customary for the people in the society in aggregate to devote time for relaxation. The availability of leisure has become a habit and that August means a month-long collective break when everything shuts down in France is treated as inevitability.

Numerous commentators (e.g. Schor 10, 82, 107, 138) indicate that Europeans tend to value time over money, while Americans appreciate the material side of life. Accordingly, Knowledge@Wharton mentions Witold Rybczynski when laying out that “Americans on average own bigger cars, bigger houses and more vacation homes,” Schor highlights the importance of materialism for Americans, the most purchase-happy customers in the world, and refers to shopping as the American “national passion” (107), while Zukin sees the American mass culture as “based on the belief that shopping is a patriotic duty” (14). William Petersen, in his turn, points to the dissatisfaction perpetually evident in the common American in terms of their “standard of living,” as “the aspirations are always higher.” For Petersen it is characteristic of Americans, that “instead of enjoying their ample possessions, they strive for higher positions, or gather more gadgets, as new symbols of higher status. The pattern is both to own more and to belittle what one has as hardly comparable to what one will have” (274). Acquisitiveness presupposes work. Europeans, on the other hand, are credited as being less materialistically orientated and showing greater appreciation for time to enjoy their leisure. In Mauro Guillen’s words, “Money is not everything in Europe; status is not only conferred by money. Having fun, or being able to have fun, also is a sign of success and a source of social esteem” (Knowledge@Wharton). While Americans tend to take less time for vacation and remain in contact with the office when not working, Christian Schneider points out “a tendency to really relax in Europe, to disengage from work” (Knowledge@Wharton).

To provide a further example of life-style difference, American and West European attitudes to food and cooking vary. While the Americans’ penchant for efficiency and speed is evident in many aspects of their relation to food, Europeans are generally more willing to spend time to achieve a better-tasting result. This is not to say that Europeans do not use canned, frozen or processed food, and Americans never spend time on the preparation of elaborate meals, but it is more common for Americans to choose food ready to be microwaved from the store. The fact that the United States spawned the highly regulated, efficient and uniform fast food restaurant chains, while the Slow Food movement that treasures gastronomic culture, promotes the preservation of regional predilections and protects old agricultural practices originates from Europe, can be considered meaningful in its own right. Time-efficient fast food might have gained popularity in Europe as well, but national eating habits persist. Ritzer states that in the United States the kitchen has largely become to be seen as a “filling station” (39). Accordingly Americans on average spend less time in the kitchen than Europeans on average, as shown by Burns (67). The lesser time spent on cooking in America can be seen as a result of greater appreciation of efficiency that goes with longer working hours. Also, Americans eat out more.

The lesser extent of consumerism in Western Europe can additionally be seen in case of cars that tend to be smaller and less ostentatious on the Old Continent. Big gas-guzzlers ubiquitous on the streets of the American suburbia would seem vulgar and overly attention-grabbing in Europe. Also, it would be significantly more difficult to manoeuvre a SUV on the narrow winding streets of an old European town centre than it is in the States, where cars are irreplaceable for getting around and provisions have been made for car-owners in the form of wide well-kept roads. This does not necessarily imply that Europeans would not like to own big cars, but peer-pressure and the scorn towards those, who flaunt their possessions motivate Europeans to generally purchase smaller cars. Smaller, more economical cars are additionally better suited to a more environmentalist frame of mind as they use less petrol and pollute less. Moreover, public mass transit systems tend to be better cared for in many West European countries, and cycling is a popular means for getting around.

The effect of cultural background and of socioeconomic conditions on free time has been commented upon as steering Americans towards work, and, although also increasingly busy, letting Europeans to emphasise the importance of leisure in their lives in addition to work. Compared to the images of 'harried Americans', Europeans are often depicted as treasuring the maintaining of friendships over toiling for extra gadgets, and as valuing time off work. More free time presents them the opportunity to engage in meaningful leisure and what Rifkin terms "deep play." Although also living in advanced consumer societies, Europeans tend to have a more relaxed stance towards life. Europeans work less hours than Americans and have longer vacations. They are seen as finding pleasure in simple things, as keeping worklife separate from personal life and as according importance to life outside the realm of work. A widespread stereotype depicts Europeans as enjoying reading, strolling in parks, practicing hobbies, cultivating themselves and taking time for social gatherings with friends – simple thing that according to another widespread stereotype Americans have neither the time nor the energy to do. The aforementioned clichés are likely to emanate from the fact that the pace of life and people's priorities on the opposite shore of the Atlantic do differ to some degree meaning that due to the greater availability of time Europeans have more chances to engage in pleasurable leisure activities than the 'overworked Americans' do.



## **5. Values, the Socioeconomic Condition, Work, Leisure and Pace of Life in Estonia**

Above some of the differences between American and European values and cultures with regard to work, leisure and the pace of contemporary life were discussed. Also, the socioeconomic situations in the United States and Western Europe were compared. It was shown that Americans tend to work more for various reasons, cultural background, the socioeconomic setting and the drive for consumerism among them. The following part of the thesis will observe values and the change of values and life in post-communist Estonia, taking under special consideration the situation as regards work and leisure. Values, characteristics and features common to the daily life in Estonia will be compared to those found in Western Europe and in the United States. First, cultural factors are commented upon, followed by an overview of the socioeconomic realities that also influence work and leisure patterns. After the discussion and comparison of the cultural and socioeconomic traits, the topics of relevant societal issues that influence lifestyle, work, leisure and the quality of life in Estonia will be addressed. In the end the findings of a survey on values, daily life and time-use conducted amongst Estonian respondents will be presented. The aim is to bring out various aspects of the situation in Estonia and compare them to the United States and Western Europe.

Before embarking on the discussion on the Estonian society, it must be noted that Estonians currently lead more work-centred lives than most West-Europeans do. According to several Eurobarometer reports, working hours are consistently longer in East European countries, including in Estonia. Median collectively agreed hours are higher in the new member-states of the EU, and annual hours worked in Eastern Europe also exceed those in Western Europe. To refer to statistics, whereas those in the new member states of the EU had an average collectively agreed working week of 39.6 hours in 2007, people living in the EU15 countries had their collectively agreed working week set at 37.9 hours, having to work 1.7 hours or 4.5 % less a week (Carley "Working Time Developments"). Actual weekly hours in 2007 in Estonia stood at 40.7, the EU27 average was 40 weekly hours, while the citizens of EU15 and Norway toiled 39.4 hour a week. Annual working hours in the EU15 in 2007 were 1695.7. In the 12 new member states the hours were 1802.4. Estonia alongside Romania was the EU country with the longest hours in 2007 with Estonians putting in 1856 annual hours. In comparison the French toiled 1568 hours and the Swedes 1620 hours in 2007. The difference of 288 hours worked more annually in Estonia than in France amounts to 7.2 working weeks (ibid). At the same time East Europeans, Estonians included, have access to legally mandated paid vacations absent in the US. Still, the length of vacations is longer in Western Europe than it is in the East. The average duration of vacation was 36.1 days in the EU15 and 32.3 days in the new member states in 2007. Estonia with its annual leave and public holidays of 28 days lagged behind Sweden's 44 days by more than three weeks (ibid).

Statistical disparity between Western and Eastern Europe as regards working time is thus clear. Also, significantly, in terms of attitudes and the general atmosphere in the society material concerns prevail and the emphasis in life tends to shift more towards work as the provider of income, position and stability, rather than towards softer issues related to quality of life or towards the self-expression accompanying a post-materialist orientation in the eastern part of Europe. Longer working hours in the East point to a willingness and/or an obligation by the individuals to dedicate more of their lives to their jobs and less to leisure.

## 5.1. Cultural Background and National Character

Adjectives often used when describing Estonians both by foreigners and by themselves include reserved, silent, calm, introverted, closed, serious, home-centred, envious, pragmatic, patient, stubborn, resilient, proud, and, importantly, hard-working (e.g. in the essays in Valk and Realo or Kala). In the following section an overview is given of the basic characteristics demonstrated by Estonians with a special interest in how these characteristics might contribute to a mindset highlighting work or urging people towards work.

It can be argued that there exist traits in the Estonian mindset that favour hard work and that Estonians themselves are wont to stress their hard-working nature. To begin with, Estonians associate their past with a great deal of work. Common images that spring up for Estonians when they think about history have to do with their ancestors as serfs, toiling away under and submitting to the orders of foreign rulers. Additionally, the myth of victimisation and historical injustice reverberates strongly in the Estonian consciousness. Following Christianisation in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the past is a one predominantly seen in dark colours, full of work and joyless drudging, and of being kept back from fulfilling one's dreams although the peasant reality may have been somewhat merrier than it is seen at hindsight. As shown by Ea Jansen, during centuries of submission Estonian serfs did not mix much with the mostly German lords (e.g. 490), and the past can be seen as having injected a degree of stubbornness and resilience needed to put up with adverse circumstances into the Estonian psyche. In addition to surviving the long 'night of serfdom,' patience and silent resistance were necessary to weather through the Soviet occupation. Referring to history and the influence of various rulers, Barbi Pilvre, has suggested that Estonians represent "a good mix of the hardened East European power and of the Protestant spirit with its positive cult of toil emanating from German cultural influences" ("Hobujõuga Euroopasse"). The past can be considered to have taught Estonians to work hard and endure difficulties, and do so silently and for the most part without much active opposition, but with the occasional grumble here and there. Only as a last resort, having endured and endured do Estonians explode according to the self-image described by Roy Strider in his essay *Leiged Eestlased* (Lukewarm Estonians) (112). The traits of rationality, interest in self-gain and calculation can additionally be seen as stemming from the need to tolerate adverse circumstances.

A significant formative feature to bring out in connection with Estonians is Protestantism. Though stories of the violent enforcement of Christianity upon the pagan Estonian ancestors continue to be retold and at current times Estonia belongs among countries with the highest rates of secularity in the world, vestiges of Protestant sobriety are believed to linger on. As with Americans and with other North European nations, the myth of the work ethic as leading to diligence and reliability is among the first to be associated with Protestantism. Seeing that Protestantism originates from northern Europe, from areas located in a colder climate, a link could be drawn between the need to guarantee one's survival by conscientious toil, rationality, the efficient gathering of stocks and the development and emergence of the religious orientation. Both the religious orientation and climatic factors could thus be seen as pushing the Estonian character towards industriousness. Although the credibility of the work ethic myth can be said to have been undermined at modern times, with some researchers claiming there to be no substantial differences in work-patterns on grounds of (past) religious orientation in

Europe (e.g. Halman et al 55), the notion is often referred to as having contributed to the Estonian proclivity for hard work and the existence of an inner obligation to work. Protestantism continues to be associated with diligence.

Self-images and characterisations state that Estonians are not put off by hard work to meet their objectives and fulfil their goals. Work and toil are seen as leading towards the attainment of one's aims and diligence is lauded. Every Estonian is familiar with the sentence "Tee tööd ja näe vaeva, siis tuleb ka armastus" (Work hard and toil away, then love will come) from the literary classic *Tõde ja Õigus* that portrays the work-filled lives of Estonian peasants of the past. Work in the commonly used sentence is seen as instrumental to love. Although the original context of the utterance is negative, most people use it nowadays to refer to the positive quality of work as a precondition of love or of anything else desired. Work comes before pleasure and is necessary for the acquisition of what one wants. Work, though often seen as mundane drudging and toiling, is also a source of pride and regarded as valuable in itself.

Indeed, sense of duty is an important trait often attributed to Estonians. Once something has been started it needs to be completed, the Estonian mindset seems to insist. Idleness and laziness go against the internalised norm of efficiency (as well as the Protestant work ethic), and being without doing is accompanied by feelings of guilt. Describing Estonians, one ethnic Russian living in Estonia notes the existence of what is called "ma pean" or "I must" for Estonians – an internal feeling of an overwhelming sense of obligation and responsibility that does not allow one to rest (Soon 117). This constant need to toil towards the completion of various tasks and the need to keep busy might be seen as the expression of one's mind as one's most demanding slave-driver, ever present and ever-active. Adherence to "I must" can be viewed as contributing to the general sense of reliability in connection with the Estonians.

A further significance of "I must" lies in the word "I" or in working alone – instead of cooperating to meet collective goals and better the situation for all, many Estonians prefer to drudge alone for individual purposes without asking for help from others. Vlad, a person of Romanian origin living in Estonia, has observed the tendency for Estonians to take on a large quantity of tasks and then try and silently cope with the workload without helping others or asking for help from others (Puur 74). Another reference to the Estonian inclination to work hard and work alone has been made by Raivo Vetik who notes that "as a rule the Estonian is proud and somewhat self-important, and does not want to settle for a place in the middle-ground or among those lagging behind. The Estonian wants to think for him/herself and do things in his/her way even when readymade solutions are handed out to him/her" (68). Vetik sees this trait of stubborn diligence and pride as part of the Estonian sense of dignity.

A certain detachment is thought of in connection with Estonians. As hypothesised already by Montesquieu, the inhabitants of northern areas are characteristically considered to have colder temperaments than those living in the south. Correspondingly, Estonians are not seen as emotional. Rather, they tend to be portrayed as reserved, cold, self-centred, and off-standish, keeping to themselves and not making friends too easily. Indeed, foreigners have described the way it takes time to get close to Estonians using the images of an ice-cube necessary to melt, and of Estonians being surrounded by a bubble or by a wall. Examples of such descriptions may be encountered in the volume *Eesti ja eestlased teiste rahvuste peeglis* (Estonia and Estonians as Reflected by Other

Nationalities) compiled by Aune Valk and Anu Realo. Relatively greater seriousness, larger bodily distance, slower movement and less gesticulation than common in some other cultures have also merited comments. Further, a degree of pessimism and gloom evident in the tendency to dwell on problems, blame oneself for things that go wrong and look upon the world in negative shades have been referred to as regards Estonians. Vlad even points out the Estonian inclination to think excessively about their life, to constantly look out for mistakes and to cause problems for oneself (Puur 74) – Estonians tend to be critical about themselves as well as criticise the others.

The traits of keeping to oneself and maintaining a detachment from others form an important part of what Estonians associate with individualism, and Estonians tend to consider themselves individualist. The lay Estonian associates individualism with independence to do as one chooses without considering others. People act separately to advance their private goals as opposed to working in groups, and prefer not to share their possessions. Scholars researching individualism and collectivism might have placed Estonia among collectivist cultures in the early nineties, but as demonstrated by Realo, this stems from using different concepts as basis for classification, possibly from the choice of respondents (teachers in the case of Schwartz) and of considering Estonians as having collectivist traits due to the influence of their belonging to the Soviet Union (“Comparison of Public and Academic Discourses” 51). Valk and Realo see the existence of both collectivistic and individualistic traits within Estonian culture (16), while the Estonian auto-stereotype firmly maintains Estonians to be individualist, opposing the Estonian individualism to the Russian collectivism.

The Estonian brand of individualism with people relying on themselves, of acting on their own and of not showing much concern for the welfare of others can in some sense be set into contrast with the solidarity of helping those in need linked with Western Europe. Estonians might notice the plight of others, and feel compassion, but as each member of society is ultimately considered responsible for their own fate, it is not customary to help (e.g. Tanel Veenre, Mari Klein). Life is hard for everyone and one should concentrate on bettering one’s own standing instead of worrying about that of others. Vlad from Romania has noted a certain suspicion that keeps Estonians from offering their help (Puur 75). Also, the poor feel a degree of responsibility for their condition, and together with their inherent pride, feel ashamed of asking for handouts. Vlad, again, has regretted the tendency to discard those who lag behind evident in the Estonian society which can be seen as motivating people to work to get by and improve their situation themselves (Puur 75). Also, several foreigners have noted the Estonian penchant for setting goals for communication and being motivated by self-gain when interacting (e.g Heinsoo 217).

The characteristically Estonian sense of pride can be seen as leading people to want to demonstrate the best possible sides of themselves. At modern times with the ubiquitous material accumulation, work is further necessary for the show-off factor that the consumption of various goods and services entails. In a society ruled by the veneration of achievement, emitting the right impression is highly important. Vlad has observed the existence of a sort of “constant invisible competition” between member of the Estonian society making it near-compulsory for people to prove their worth and strive at all times (Puur 75). As stratification is relatively new due to historical reasons (for though there were several classifications of peasant farmers as demonstrated by Jansen, the Soviet

Union distracted classes from existing in a meaningful way) it has been up to each individual him/herself to prove their worth and work their way up the society. Andres Tarand has even noted that the absence of an Estonian aristocracy has made people follow their fellow-citizens' attempts at demonstrating their success "with a watchful and critical eye" (142) – a feature that could be likened to the equality of opportunity to rise in the society praised by the Americans. The existence of a yardstick to measure up to and proceeding from which to try and surpass their peers has been noted by several observers (e.g. N. Raud 96, Maigre 218, Maimik "Elamise kunst" 224). The desire to look good in public and put up the right facade of one's life is a considerable factor facilitating work, as is the trait of envy that urges towards competitiveness to surpass other members of society.

Following the restoration of independence, liberalist values stressing individualism, freedom of choice, and effort have gained in popularity in Estonia. Emphasis lies on competitiveness and an individual's personal responsibility for making the most out of their life. According to this mentality, failure signifies lack of effort, lack of enterprise and lack of determination, and everyone should have the freedom to aim higher and pursue their personal dreams without other members of the society with different dreams, keeping them back. Says Milton Friedman: "each man has an equal right to his freedom" (195). This view of the world places great importance on effort, independence, and a willingness to work hard to achieve one's goals, and as such can be seen as fitting well with traits characteristically Estonian.

To sum up the brief review of some traits considered typically Estonian, it can be said that Estonians tend to be reserved and keep to themselves, individualistically letting everyone follow their own course of life and staying out of others' business, meaning that the degree of solidarity and co-operation in the society is lower than that in the western part of Europe. Hard work and effort are seen as praise-worthy and as leading towards the achievement of goals; determination and perseverance are likewise considered important. The past is often associated with relentless toil, and working hard is a positive attribute that testifies to the diligence of the individual. At present times work is further needed to aid in the accumulation of things so as to project an image of achievement and success considering the competitiveness prevalent in the society.

## **5.2. The Socioeconomic Situation in Estonia**

Some basic traits common to the Estonian cultural character having been treated, socioeconomic factors influencing the way of life will be discussed. Values, attitudes and cultural traits prevalent among members of a society have their effect on life in the society. Likewise daily circumstances in the form of the institutional setting, economic situation and the ideologies dominating the media that surround people are bound shape values, behaviour and use of time in their turn.

Estonia has chosen the liberal market economy, and additionally has needed to make efforts to reconstruct the state in order to catch up with the richer and better developed West European countries. Economic growth has been emphasized during the independence years, while various social issues have not received an equal amount of attention. As pointed out above, societal factors have a profound impact on the work-leisure patterns existent in a society. The level of wealth, labour legislation and the socio-

political orientation influence the amount of time allocated to work. The subsequent paragraphs aim to describe the situation in Estonia.

### **5.2.1. Neoliberalism as Prevailing in the Contemporary Estonian Society**

Estonian society went through monumental changes as a result of the restoration of independence in 1991. The transition was from totalitarianism to democracy as well as from planned economy to free market economy. Notable has been the shift from communist ideology to the currently prevailing (neo)liberalism in terms of emphasising the importance of personal liberty as well as the benefits of free enterprise. The turn towards liberalism can be seen as a reaction to the coerciveness of the overly paternalistic and repressive Soviet Union. As there was no clear social democratic tradition in the past to return to, liberalism, the opposite of communism, was opted. In Piotr Sztompka's comment, post-independence Eastern Europe went back towards "the traditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalistic west, with the idea of laissez faire economy and the concept of liberal parliamentary democracy" "treated as iron guidelines of reform" (67). Significantly, Estonia seems to have followed America as a model and espoused the neoliberal teachings of Milton Friedman, emphasising privatisation and liberalisation as the keywords leading towards success.

The domination of right-wing parties and right-wing ideas on the political scene of post-communist Estonia has been noted. Leftist politicians have habitually been associated with the Soviet take on socialism and West European brand of socialism derided as dated, in need of change, uncompetitive and unsustainable as a model for Estonia by the consensus on the Right. In the words of Anna Marie Smith, neo-conservatism was shown as the 'good' choice while socialism represented the 'bad' choice for the countries of the Eastern Bloc in the Western media in the nineteen nineties, so much so that "a socialist theory of democracy became oxymoronic" (qtd in Powell 5). Correspondingly, parties on the Left have had relatively few opportunities to effect their influence in Estonia going along with rightist thinking even when in coalition. Socialism is commonly seen as connected to high taxes, low work morale and lack of initiative, and state involvement in economy depicted as leading to stagnation and the stalling of economic success. Success and economic growth, the ideals set for the country to strive towards, tend to be portrayed as menaced by any significant adoption of socialist policies. As noted in "Säästev Eesti 21," a document adopted to outline strategies for Estonia's future development, "in actual fact there was no choice – it was the approach of little interference that made the society work, opened individual resources and took Estonia to a satisfactory state at least in terms of the economy in comparison with other East and Central European countries" (37). Former minister of finance Taavi Veskimägi epitomizes the neoliberal frame of mind in a 2005 article by warning that a turn to the Left would entail greater state-involvement, more bureaucracy and less attention to the "creation of new actual substance". Similar reassurances as to the course the country has chosen and warnings about the imminent threats of leftist thinking can be encountered frequently in the media, while criticism of neoliberalism and the spreading social problems can also be seen. Still, as alluded by Iivi Masso, "certain choices such as the ultraliberal economic policies have stabilized as the Estonian way and proved successful until now" – once a mode of thinking and behaving has gained ground, it is difficult to start implementing change.

In line with neoliberal thinking, personal freedom has been treasured among Estonians after the ending of the occupation by the totalitarian Soviet Union. Instead of the state constantly meddling in its citizens' lives, emphasis has been put on creating a lean efficient government that would trust individuals to be responsible for themselves and their choices. Friedman, the neoliberal ideologue, essentially called for the limitation of government powers. For him the government's "major function must be to protect our freedom both from the enemies outside our gates and from our fellow-citizens: to preserve law and order, to enforce private contracts, to foster competitive markets" (2). The government should act as a "rule-maker and umpire" (25) to ensure the functioning of the impersonal market-place that would be the best guarantor of social fairness in the sense that it leaves each individual the chance to pursue their dreams and rise in the ranks of the society. In accordance with the neoliberal ideology, private initiative and enterprise are to be encouraged and each person is to be in charge of the way their life evolves. Instead of the state demonstrating control, the invisible hand of the impersonal and just market place supposedly moulds social processes. State is not there to service the people and several functions performed by the public sector in West European countries have been handed to the private sector for the sake of supposed greater efficiency (e.g. Laar as quoted in Frontier Centre).

Developing the economy became the prime concern for Estonian politicians. In the beginning of the nineties rapid reforms were carried out and what amounts to a 'neoliberal shock therapy' was applied. Estonia opted for an essentially liberal economy with moderate welfarist elements. The majority of state-owned industries were privatised, a system of low taxes was set in place, foreign investment was encouraged, efforts have been made at keeping balanced budgets and state regulation has been low. The state has endeavoured to encourage business and entrepreneurship to ensure growth of the economy. In their emphasis on GDP and growth, Estonian governments can be seen as having typified East European politicians who in Powell's description "pragmatically embraced the market as the road to El Dorado" (150).

At the same time the successive pro-business governments have been criticized for paying little attention to social problems and the society rearranged along American lines cannot be said to be pampering its needier members. As pointed out by Masso, benefits exist for the young, the old and the sick, but not for a working-aged able-bodied citizen facing difficulties. Shortages in funding the welfare system have been common and coverage is limited. A smaller portion of the GDP is spent on welfare in Estonia than in West European countries. While social spending in the EU27 countries averaged 27.2% of the GDP in 2005, Estonia spent 12.5% on social protection, almost the same as Latvia (12.4%), the meanest social spender in the EU (Europa). A number of people experience insecurity and anxiety as regards their economic welfare in the future and feel anxious about the unfortunate event of possible sickness. Middle class too can be depicted as not being overly secure in its standings (e.g. Lauristin "Eesti ühiskonna kihistumine" 265).

Transition to a liberal free market society brought with it greater stratification and contributed to insecurity and uncertainty felt in the society. Restraints on opportunities were removed and those with a more enterprising spirit could maximise their possibilities and rise through the society by working hard and/or using their connections. At the same time others did not cope as well with the change. The society became more stratified with some people advancing as winners and some staying behind as losers of the

transformation. Seeing that the post-soviet starting position was considered similar for most people, personal traits, risk-tolerance and initiative were thought of as important and everyone could be viewed as masters of their personal fate (Lauristin "Contexts of Transition" 39-40). Thus the poor could be regarded as partially responsible for their misfortune. Also, the existence of both the rich and the poor was to be expected in a free market economy. In the words of Marju Lauristin, "the social representation of stratification based on the ideology of success common to a transition culture legitimises poverty and inequality as 'natural' co-occurrences of market society, not treating them as unbefitting for a wealthy and democratic society and degrading to human dignity" ("Eesti ühiskonna kihistumine" 284). Further, as pointed out by Masso, even though more absolute poverty can be found in Estonia than in West European countries, the lessening of poverty cannot be considered as high on the agenda of the Estonian politicians.

Growth and GDP have been constant preoccupations for the business and political circles, but not so without social costs. A striving to leave a good impression internationally and the importance of various worldwide ratings have been noted. Keeping an eye on several charts to do with statistics that have testified to Estonia's success in various domains has provided encouragement to continue with hard work and liberal economy. Some argue that economic success has come through favouring the economy at the expense of a number of social issues. Among these are the problems with alcohol abuse, HIV, high numbers of prison population, low median life-expectancy for men, low birth-rate and the shortcomings in integrating inhabitants of Russian origin into the mainstream of Estonian life. While economic development has been noteworthy during the years of independence contributing to Estonia's advancement in various comparative lists, social scientists now agree that more attention needs to be paid to issues outside the domain of economics to better the quality and enjoyment of life of the people, for economy alone does not make for a happy functioning society. The authors of "Säästev Eesti 21" (Sustainable Estonia 21), for example, denounce the continuation of market-liberalism as unfeasible and emphasise the need to increase solidarity in the society. Eesti Inimarengu Aruanne 2006 or Human Development Report of 2006 (hereafter referred to as HDR 2006) also indicates the majority of people, even those who favour right-wing parties, wish the state to be more active in regulating the market to protect public interests and help weaker members of the society get by. In a curious paradox common to a transition ideology, though expecting more state-involvement, people do not demonstrate much willingness to pay for public services by having their tax-load increased (58)

### **5.2.2. Socioeconomic Factors as Fostering Work in Contemporary Estonia**

Several characteristics stemming from the social, economic and political backgrounds can be seen as fostering work in Estonia. The two main socioeconomic areas that have been mentioned as having an important influence on the time spent working are taxation and labour market regulation, especially the degree of unionisation. Additionally, the prevalent material insecurity and the neoliberal ideological bent on hard work as the guarantor of a comfortable future can be treated as heightening the importance of work.

Taxation has been of notable concern for Estonian governments. The country pioneered the flat income tax, advocated by Friedman, for its simplicity and fairness in the sense that it allegedly helps to reduce tax fraud and those with higher earnings pay



proportionally more in taxes without being “punished” for earning more (cf., e.g., Laar as quoted in Frontier Centre). To an extent, it could thus be argued that flat tax fosters people’s desire to work more, since they get to keep more of their earnings. At the same time the system, can be criticised since the relationship between actual work and earnings – let alone income deriving from other sources than earnings – is exponential rather than linear. Flat tax, therefore, does nothing to diminish the increasingly disproportionate gap between members of society with different incomes and can thus be seen as leading to greater stratification than is the case with progressive taxation.

In addition,, the level of unionisation and the various labour protection measures a country has adopted affect the time spent on working. Estonia has essentially followed the US model of labour market flexibility<sup>9</sup>, aiming to avoid perceived European rigidity. The existing unions lack clout, strikes are relatively infrequent and the membership of unions has tumbled following the collapse of communism. Membership of the largest union (EAKL), for example, decreased by 86 percent between 1993 and 2003 (Carley “Trade Union Membership 1993-2003” Table 1). Psychologically, the unpopularity of unions can, to a great extent, be accounted for by the negative experience of the compulsory unionisation during Soviet times, though, particularly of late, other factors may be at work here, not least intimidation by the powerful employers’ lobby that often, on the discourse level, cites the US as the successful model to be followed. While much of the workforce lacks effective representation, employers stand at a better position, favoured by the state as providers of employment, and able to interpret laws in ways advantageous for them. Employers in general have been criticised as not having been overly eager to invest in the continuing education and working conditions of the employees, and as expecting “slavish submission” from them (Lauristin “Teistsuguse”). Employers, with the power they have been accorded cannot be seen as too motivated to lessen working hours. A Eurofound report on working time in Europe refers to Estonia as belonging among the countries where “collective bargaining plays a relatively minor role in setting normal weekly working hours” and “collective agreements either do not tend to deviate from the statutory norm of 40 hours or do not deal with the issue at all” (Carley “Working Time Developments”). Thus, due to the low level of unionisation and collective representation, there is no trend towards shortening working hours..

In addition to the effects of taxation and lack of union representation facilitating long working hours, it must be noted that an important part of the neoliberal ideology is its emphasis on the work of an individual as leading to material wellbeing. Instead of society guaranteeing a level of welfare for all its members, liberalism stresses the active role of each person himself/herself in what happens in their lives. In a neoliberalist vein Taavi Veskimägi, for example, maintains that each individual “should be able to manage his/her own life without burdening anyone or feeling the need to be grateful to anyone, be it the state, a party or a politician”. The role of the individuals should thus lie in “honest work, caring for their enterprises, schooling their children and saving up for their retirement” (Veskimägi). This is fully in tune with the Chicago school ideology according to which it is each individual’s personal responsibility to decide how they live their lives and whether they secure a level of wellbeing for old age. “If a man knowingly prefers to live for today, to use his resources for current enjoyment, deliberately choosing a penurious old age, by what right do we prevent him from doing so?” Friedman asks,

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<sup>9</sup> This will be even more true as the new Labor Contract Law enters into force in July 2009.

himself favouring someone who diligently works for his material advancement and disparaging those less inclined to toil away and relying on the rest of the society's help (188). Neoliberalist ideology idealizes a hard-working self-sufficient enterprising individual able to care for his/her needs without interference from society (the crucial element here being the equation between "hard-working" and "self-sufficient" or successful).

Further, in the case of Estonia, work bordering on self-sacrifice has been called for to ensure the growth of prosperity of the nation placed at a considerable economical distance from the wealthier West-European countries by the historical misfortune of a forced absence from the world markets during Soviet years. Politicians and opinion leaders have continually been repeating the message that catching up with the highly developed countries takes great amounts of effort, work and postponement of gratification, and that success has come with the nation's acceptance that fruits of their labour need to be patiently awaited. Continuing the shaping of a favourable international reputation and toiling to increase the level of economic wealth have been treated as something of a duty with the consensus being that today's actions will lead to a brighter future. Mart Laar, the first prime minister of the newly independent Estonia, has claimed that "the economic miracle was made possible by the efforts of the entire nation and their capability to take painful but necessary decisions" ("Eesti taasiseseisvumine"). In this the post-independence situation can in some regards be compared to that of the post-war Western Europe, where consistent toil was needed to restore the countries' levels of wealth<sup>10</sup>. In a speech delivered at economically advantageous times Andrus Ansip too stresses that Estonia's success is not to be taken for granted. He sees it as resting on two important pillars – on the efforts and toil of the Estonian people and on the sensible policies of the post-independence governments. Still, the current prime minister has affirmed that years of work are needed for Estonia to advance even further in its task of catching up with and surpassing countries belonging to Western Europe economically. Rebuilding the state is understood to be a gradual process and people are exhorted to concentrate on work. Anu Merila reflects the widespread view by stating that "We have to work ourselves up. We have the freedom to shape our identity and reputation" (46) thus pointing to the duty of work for every citizen and the opportunities opened by work for the advancement of the society.

### **5.3. The Daily Environment as Fostering Work in Contemporary Estonia**

Work in contemporary Estonia seems abundant. The cultural importance placed on hard work, the need to catch up with the West as well as the liberal economic policies that with low degrees of taxation, the lack of significant union representation and the lack of social guarantees that encourage work have been commented upon above. There exist further reasons for contemporary Estonians to want to emphasise work in their lives. The general atmosphere seems to be shaped by a sense of uncertainty, materialist value-orientations, a wish to consume and the consequent loans, the high cost of living, the significance of outward impression, the cult of success, the need to keep busy and the

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<sup>10</sup> However, Laar here omits to mention the Marshall plan that was instrumental in triggering the "toil" of post-war West-European peoples. Paradoxically, in Estonia, the closest equivalent of such massive influx of foreign aid has come from not from the US but from the "lazy" Western Europe itself, taking the form of EU aid, both pre- and post-accession.

societal multiplier effect. The following section will deal with the pivotal role of work in the contemporary Estonian society, taking into account factors urging Estonians to prioritise work in their daily lives.

### **5.3.1. Materialist Orientation**

Many Estonians lead work-centred lives as material security is widely believed to be found in dedication to work. The relative materialism of the Estonians can be compared to other nations using the results of the World Values Survey, an extensive survey that monitors values and value change, conducted at certain intervals in a number of countries around the world.

Two value dimensions have been derived on the basis of the outlook on life and the economic level of wellbeing in different countries. First, traditional orientation towards authority is set against secular orientation, and second, survival values are opposed to self-expression values. Halman et al note that in terms of values held by Europeans “it seems the Iron Curtain did not disappear, the curtains only raised a little bit” (76). Values in the Western part of Europe differ from those in the East, and on the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map of the world, Estonians’ values firmly cluster together with those of the inhabitants of other post-communist countries.

According to Inglehart and Baker, the survival/self-expression dimension is related to the level of wealth in a society and the spread of materialism versus postmaterialism. Data show that people in economically insecure societies tend to worry about their physical existence, concentrate on goals that further material safety and comfort, and have low tolerance for difference. In the case of economic wellbeing, survival is no longer a key concern and people can turn to issues dealing with self-expression, such as, to name but a few the environment, women’s rights and the overall quality of life. As societies get richer, values are predicted to change towards postmaterialism, or in the words of Inglehart and Abramson, “an emphasis on economic security gradually fades, and universal, but often latent needs of belonging, esteem, and the realization of individual intellectual potential become increasingly prominent” (9). Estonia, together with other post-soviet countries has been grouped among materialistically oriented countries while Scandinavians have the most postmaterialist outlook on life.

Traditional orientation is demonstrated by high levels of religiosity and adherence to community norms. Traditionalism tends to decline as societies move away from agrarianism towards industrialization and people become more independent of the real or perceived influence of God, nation or family on the course of their life. Estonia, similarly to most other other post-soviet nations, is among the countries with the highest scores for secularity: religion plays but a modest role in the society. Estonia’s position as a survivalist and secular nation thus indicates that Estonia is advanced industrially but lacks in wealth and social guarantees which has caused people to feel insecurity towards their personal future and turn to materialist values.

With the rise in insecurity and instability, Estonia’s values moved towards materialism in the 1990s. Relying on the data provided by the longitudinal surveys of high school graduates conducted by Saarniit, while the 1960s the young appreciated altruism and self-improvement, and did not think much of social position and status, a decline in the importance of altruism and self-improvement with a concomitant rise in the importance placed on material and status-related values can be noted in case of the young in the

1980s. The young in the beginning of the 1990s in their turn regarded material wellbeing and career opportunities as highly significant, Saarniit has termed this the process of the self-centred pragmatization of the value consciousness of the youth ('noorsoo väärtusteadvuse enesekeskse pragmatiseerumise protsess') ("Eesti noorte..." 13). The move from 'socialist values' (cultural self-improvement, altruism<sup>11</sup>) to 'post socialist values' (material comfort, social standing) as termed by Saarniit ("Postsotsialistlike ..." 191) can be explained by the diminished levels of relative material security felt in the society and the strengthened values of individualist competitiveness and achievement orientation that accompanied the transition from socialism to liberal market economy. Juurak further corroborates the trend and refers to contemporary Estonian youth as appreciating hard values. In a paradox pointed out by Tuuli Toomere, West-Europeans of the 1960s might have had more materialist values than the Soviet citizens whose basic survival needs were covered for by the state and who did not have much motivation to strive further as there were no considerable perspectives of advancing career-wise outside the Communist Party or of amassing wealth in the future (2549). By the time Estonia regained its independence Western Europe was already on the course towards greater postmaterialism, while Estonians had to struggle to cover their basic survival needs. In the sixties neither physical survival nor the need to advance were issues too grave for the average Estonian, while in the nineties everyone needed to make efforts to find work that would ensure income, the more the better.

In line with Inglehart's theory, and as demonstrated by the results of the European Social Survey, inhabitants of poorer societies are motivated to work longer hours and emphasise the importance of high income and job security more than those living in richer countries. According to Inglehart's 'scarcity hypothesis' people tend to value what they do not have, and although the overall trend in values points to the increase of postmaterialism, periods of scarcity result in the rise of materialist values (Abramson and Inglehart 4). Thus scarcity tends to highlight practical concerns over those of self-expression and can be seen as having influenced people to dedicate more of their lives to work in post-independence Estonia. Still, the rise in materialist values Estonia experienced in the nineties could be seen as a temporary deviation from the prevalent trend towards postmaterialisation and is set to be reversed seeing that, in the words of Inglehart and Baker, "the collapse of Communism was a onetime historical event" (42). As the society gradually gains in affluence, and the young replace the old, postmaterialist issues will become more important, and probably already have by now in comparison with the turbulent 1990s. However, as shown by the results of the RISC study, the direction seems to have been one towards placing greater importance on individual pleasures and showing less regard for collective responsibility, and the material side of life continues to be highly valued in comparison with other areas like charity (HDR 2006, 61-62). Cooperation and trust do not seem to appear as high on the list of priorities of the average Estonian as the striving towards individual gratification and self-fulfilment.

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<sup>11</sup> In view of the fact that socialism as practised in the Soviet Union, was, at least in many parts of the empire, not hegemonic (Lagerspaetz, *A Constructivist Approach*, 14), it is a moot point whether these values can be described as "socialist". In an effort to distinguish them from official (non-hegemonic) ideology of "real socialism" and yet acknowledge their genuine existence in society, Vogelberg has suggested the term "pre-materialist" (as a Second-World correlate to Inglehart's "materialism" and "post-materialism"). This view tallies with the one expressed by Tuuli Toomere below.

### 5.3.2. Lack of Cooperation and Stratification

While West Europeans are characterised by the emphasis they place on solidarity, Estonians demonstrate an inclination towards individualism. As pointed out above, for Estonians the trait of individualism means acting alone without depending on or considering other members of society. Influenced by the neoliberal mindset that declares everything to be possible with enough toil, determination and courage on the part of the individual, the rich do not identify with the poor and people are reluctant to show their lack of success. With everyone individually concerned with their personal progress, society has been perceived as having started to drift apart in the post-independence years with greater levels of prosperity for some and less for others instead of the ‘equality in poverty’ mentality characteristic of the Soviet times.

With possessions has come the need to guard those possessions and the positioning of people in terms of their success relative to other members of the society in procuring goods and attaining status. Disproportionate looking out for one’s own interest and advancement goes against the notion of solidarity that presupposes the traits of unity and cooperation. Estonians seem to be veering towards negative freedom, the freedom from other members of society, with Andrus Maimik pointing out the tendency for people to “hide from apartment buildings to private houses” and “from public transport behind the protective steel-layer of a jeep”. Perhaps exaggerating in degree, he additionally claims that people surround their property with electrified barbed wire and stop-signs, buy guns and start protecting their possessions from fellow-citizens (“Solidaarsus ja elitism”) – a description exemplifying Estonian materialism and Estonians’ proclivity to want to be left alone with their belongings.

Change in the way people regard things and also change in relations between people after the collapse of state-socialism has been noted by various commentators. In Marc Morjé Howard’s view the differences manifest themselves in a greater concentration of people on their own lives, in the growth of the importance of money in interpersonal relationships, in the rise of the gap between the rich and the poor and in the changed workplace (130). According to his Russian and East German respondents, friendships used to be more genuine before and people have turned colder and more aggressive in the capitalist surroundings. Money, not a network of connections, is needed to acquire goods in the impersonal free market, a phenomenon also referred to by Keller and Vihalemm (3)<sup>12</sup>. As access to goods depends on money, and money is earned through work, people have less time to be together, they have become more competitive, and may have stopped communicating on account of belonging to different materially based status groups. Personal welfare and work are highlighted and less time is left for (former) friends.

Another explanation for the relative self-centeredness as opposed to commitment to society is that subjection to a totalitarian order destroyed the trust in the community. As one cannot trust one’s fellow-citizens, one feels it to be wiser to act on one’s own. In Marková’s view communism effectively wiped out trust by erasing memories and fostering a sense of fear. As a result, unlike for West-Europeans ‘community’ represents a negative or a meaningless concept for East Europeans (Wagner et al 117). The totalitarian state made people suspicious of each other thus inhibiting their cooperation

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<sup>12</sup> Though it might be argued that networking (admittedly, of a more pragmatic kind, see below) is still necessary, perhaps even more so, as a means of acquiring social capital in the Bourdieuan sense – and in many cases ultimately as a means of acquiring money.

and eroding a sense of togetherness. For Marková, the destruction of communities in communist countries “was carefully planned and strategically managed” (13). Margit Sutrop too finds that “Estonian society favours individualist values because it has a wrong understanding of the meaning of unions”, believing Estonians to have been estranged from collectivist values as a result of the Soviet occupation (“Kas Eesti jagab Euroopa väärtusi?”).

Howard, too, puts the lack of a viable civil society in Eastern Europe down to the inheritance of the communist past that destroyed interpersonal bonds of trust. This view may seem somewhat at odds with the feelings reported by Howard above (“friendships used to be more genuine”) yet the two are actually not contradictory given the private nature and relatively small size of circles of friendship in the Soviet era, as well as their severely limited fields of activity, which make them different from “community” in the Western sense. Indeed, Howard emphasises that homogenization also encouraged individuals within socialist systems to divide their personalities into a public and conformist self, on the one hand, and a private and more rebellious self on the other. Public and formal activities aroused mistrust while private relations, in contrast, became even more vibrant and meaningful, because people could speak openly only in front of others they knew and trusted and, also, people relied on their family, friends, and acquaintances to get things done rather than go through official channels. He thus accounts for the weakness of organized communities in post-socialist countries by a) mistrust of communist organizations (p 26 “most people belonged to multiple organizations, but their membership was often mandatory, coerced, or used for instrumental purposes”), b) the persistence of *friendship networks* (emphasis mine – K.K.) (p 27 “relationships in the private sphere were extremely meaningful and genuine”, p.28 “people socialized and / . . . / spent their free time with family and a small number of trusted friends” and/or used connections to acquire goods and services and to get ahead in general. This, according to Howard, continues in post-communist societies, where many people are still “highly interested in their own private circles and simply feel no need, much less any desire, to join and participate in organizations, when they feel that, socially, they already have everything that they could need or want”. Howard also points out the role of what he aptly terms “post-communist disappointment/disillusionment” that ensued the enthusiasm and high expectations of the years 1989 to 1991. Thus, membership in voluntary organizations is significantly lower in post-communist countries than in both the older democracies and the post-authoritarian countries (while, one might add, friendship circles, though still persisting, tend to crumble in the conditions of new individualism).

Most West European states actively provide for their disadvantaged, while in the United States the third sector and private philanthropists will partly step in to bridge the gap left by the state, in Estonia both state help is meagre and the third sector weak. There may have been a habit of helping the needy at earlier, peasant times (as shown by Ea Jansen), but the network of help has since been eroded, and not been replaced by a functioning system of community assistance to the poor. The deprived in Estonia thus find themselves in a difficult situation with scant help from either the state or the surrounding community. The situation has improved and charity has become increasingly popular with time, with various philanthropic organizations springing up as the general population has gained in wealth and some people become more socially active. Still, the

Dutch benefactor Piet Boerefijn notes that aid in Estonia tends to be accompanied by self-interested calculations over the relative gains and publicity that assistance might bring. According to Boerefijn, unlike in the Netherlands where the handicapped, the old, the unemployed and the homeless receive help from private benefactors, Estonians prefer to support events, (sports)stars and those involved in show-business. Also, Estonians are likelier to contribute via one-time public campaigns and fund-raising events rather than dedicate their own time or effort to a cause during a longer period of time. As noted by Krister Paris, time and people are in greater deficit for the third sector as compared to money that can be assembled. Boerefijn remarks that the amount of private contributions remains scant and volunteers are few. Additionally he points out the gruesome situation in which those inhabiting retirement homes and other institutions of social care find themselves as forming a stark contrast to the image of the bulk of successful Estonians living removed from and ignoring the plight of the destitute and concentrating on the pleasures of a consumerist life. In Jaanus Rooba's view, even those working with people with special needs regrettably demonstrate little understanding or compassion towards their wards.

Instances of individualism, atomization, lack of solidarity and plain indifference that pass on to daily life abound. In the case of witnessing an accident or of finding someone in a condition of misery, the first reaction for a great many people would be not to interfere or get involved oneself but wait for someone else to take charge as described in the media by e.g. Mari Klein or Tanel Veenre. Rather than help, people feel gratitude for not finding themselves in a similar situation. Blatant rudeness and lack of concern as further manifestations of excessive individualism have been noted by various commentators. Likewise, politicians have repeatedly been described as having become estranged from the will of the people and following their private concerns, general business interests or the priorities of their party rather than the benefit of their electors and of the society at large in making decisions. The concept of JOKK (Juriidiliselt on kõik korras – all the dealings – however questionable ethically – are legal) demonstrates the attitude of disregard towards the public among the political and business elite in their profitable but morally dubious dealings. MP Ott Lumi for example believes the mentality of 'whoever breaks the rules more inventively gets the prize' to be common among Estonians, Marju Lauristin refers to "cynicism" prevalent in the Estonian society and to the roadroll tactics used in politics ("Teistsuguse"), while Margit Sutrop calls attention to the "daily struggle for one's privileges" in Estonian society ("Kas Eesti"). Additionally, ample references have been made as to the clique mentality among the leaders and the concept of "rehapplus" or overly pragmatic interest in self-gain has been described as characteristic of contemporary Estonia. All of these manifestations of egotism work against the existence of meaningful solidarity in the society. Cunning, initiative and callousness, not cooperation will help one to rise and seem more successful, or, in the words of Martin Ehala, "on a quest for mammon Estonia has forgotten what matters most – humanity, kindness and affection".

The Estonian poor stand in a difficult situation. As alluded before, attitudes emphasising personal responsibility for one's life foster the "winner takes all" mindset and reduce compassion for those less well off. The neoliberally oriented state offers little alleviation and support. Transition from the Soviet Union to free market economy has increased stratification and caused a greater gap between the incomes of the rich and the

poor than is the case in any West European country. The Gini coefficient of inequality places Estonia among the more stratified European nations, and extremely close to the US: according to the UN Human Development Report 2007/2008, the value of the coefficient for the majority of EU countries is in the range of 25 to 34, while Estonia is in the smaller group (including, e.g., Great Britain, Spain, Poland) where the range is 35 to 39 which is only slightly lower than that for the US (40.8)<sup>13</sup>. HDR 2006 shows Estonians themselves to regard a small group of rich people as contrasting to large numbers of those lacking material security (43). Middle class is perceived as weak and relatively small. People sense insecurity and unfairness to be part of the fabric of society. Inequality can be seen for example in healthcare, where differences in health have started to appear on the basis of the level of wealth (Toots). Also, differentiation between the wealthier area surrounding the capital and the less affluent backwaters has been criticised as the interregional level of inequality has risen and rural areas are subject to greater poverty and less opportunity.

People have accepted the existence of inequality as a natural side-effect of capitalism and though admitting meagre means, few are willing to expressively declare themselves to be poor. Not particularly attracted by the possibility of being considered lazy or unsuccessful, people prefer to think and show they get by. In this light, stories of mothers of large families stating that although they need to carefully monitor their spending, overall the family fares well become understandable. In an article on child poverty in large families in the Estonian society, a mother of nine admits it being psychologically taxing for her to ask for economic assistance (Luik). Getting by independently is a matter of pride and the fear of rejection or of condemnation further often prevents the poor from requesting aid on their own although they would accept it when offered. Nevertheless, while at more recent times various non-profit associations have started to aid the poor, the mainstream of society seem too busy worrying about their own individual fortune or the welfare of their close ones to lend much attention to those who for some reason stay behind. As neither the community nor the state can be relied on for much help, the importance of work as the guarantor of subsistence and survival becomes intensified.

### **5.3.3. The Cult of Visible Success and the Resultant Emphasis on Consumerism**

Being successful is often linked with having money and being able to consume. The American-like cult of success venerates achievement, and while one's job and societal status are important, one's possessions, too, indicate one's standing. The desire to look successful and to surpass or fit in with the rest can be seen as highlighting consumerism and also the role of work in people's lives. Acquiring status markers and keeping up with one's peers can get stressful and add to the sense of busyness felt in the society.

The current situation of abundance on super-market shelves stands in stark contrast to the scarcity that ruled in stores a few decades ago. During the Soviet era consumer options were limited with goods homogeneous and not always available. Western commodities were rare and connections were frequently necessary to obtain items absent from the conventional trade network. The yearning to consume can even be linked with the overall longing for freedom. Margit Keller, for example, has pointed out that the

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<sup>13</sup> Gini index (as indeed any statistical coefficient) is not, of course, flawless. Since wealth is not taken into account, the value tends to be underestimated for, e.g., Scandinavian countries, where inherited wealth of a small number of families actually means less egalitarianism than that indicated by Gini.



“desire for consumer liberty was a mundane, ‘soft’ form of resistance” for the people tired of the grey standardised wares (197)<sup>14</sup> and Baudrillard, in an ironic manner, observed in the eighties when the Soviet Union was still a major power that “people in ‘totalitarian’ countries know very well that this is true freedom and dream of nothing but fashion, the latest styles, idols, the play of images, travel for its own sake, advertising, the deluge of advertising. In short, the orgy” (“America” 96) referring to the orgy of consumerism and the freedom to consume prevalent in America and other advanced democratic countries. Restoration of independence made it possible for Estonians, thus far kept away from material affluence, to enter the world of shopping malls and start amassing material possessions.

For the successful, leaving the right impression through consuming the correct objects has become important for self-esteem as well as for gaining the admiration of others. As Mati Hint finds, Estonians make efforts to show off rather than to just live. For example, some have noted that the clothes people wear in Tallinn are excessively lavish and leave the impression that Estonians are wealthier than they are in fact (e.g. Marje Josing in Henrik Ilves). While the consumption of a brand in Western Europe might allude to the actual status of the consumer, in Estonia the case may be that people save on other things in order to be able to afford a certain expensive item that would catch the onlookers’ attention. In Airi-Alina Allaste’s view, the outer appearance of things is emphasised and the facade of success is in many cases believed to lead to success in actual life. Thus money is to be spent on acquiring the right brands and right items, on grooming one’s physical appearance, on wearing the correct clothes, on attempts at refurbishing or remodelling one’s living quarters, or buying/building a new abode, on travelling to exotic locations, on the accumulation of various consumer items that portray accomplishment, and generally on transmitting the image of success. Though a place to live, clothes and even a car (for those who live in the new housing developments in the countryside) are necessities in the rough Estonian climate, a number of people have tried to take care that their possessions would explicitly show the owner’s wealth thus prompting some like Jaano-Martin Ots to ask why one always has to be better than one’s neighbour. Still, the “Greed is good” mentality referred to by Maimik seems to characterise numerous contemporary Estonians (“Solidaarsus ja elitism”).

The importance of appearance and the show-off factor can be discussed with reference to cars. In the pre-crisis years, for many, a car had to be not just a car, but a car of a special brand or make. The abundance of SUVs or luxurious cars on the streets of Tallinn, the capital and the richest area of the country, has sparked comments by surprised foreigners. Estonians themselves have similarly noticed the great number of expensive and/or big vehicles that stand out when comparing the nation’s roads with those in West European countries. In 2006 Estonia was jokingly dubbed “the most hummerised country in the world” with users of the massive and expensive car justifying their choice with the level of comfort and relative security a Hummer is perceived to offer on the Estonian roads (Soe). Whilst West Europeans are seen as being guided by factors such as practicality and environmental friendliness and opting for smaller vehicles when buying their cars, the Estonian street-scene points to a predilection of bigger cars among a number of Estonians. One could argue that West Europeans prefer smaller cars because of lack of space on their compressed streets, whereas Estonians can obtain bigger cars

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<sup>14</sup> In a way, abundance became *the* symbol of freedom.

due to the abundance of available room to roam around, but for Estonians there tends to be an added symbolical importance placed on their means of transportation<sup>15</sup>. While many Europeans actively use public transport to commute between work and home, Estonians tend to prefer private cars to get about in their daily business highlighting their individual comfort and the stigma of lack of success associated with those who travel by bus. Vahur Afanasjev for instance, has noticed a sense of humility and lack of worth with which those in a bus in Estonia regard a passing convertible. As a contrast to Estonia, Urmas Väljaots points out that for Parisians the demonstration of wealth by the ownership of a Jaguar or a Hummer shows lack of taste or plain vulgarity. Further, as noted by Mati Hint, while even construction workers in Estonia may drive luxury vehicles, university professors in Germany settle for simpler Volkswagens. A car thus tends to be treated as a status symbol in Estonia with the quantity of expensive cars to be seen on streets relatively larger than in Western Europe.

This preoccupation with consumerism, the purchase and decoration of new houses, cars, household appliances, technological gadgets (e.g. mobile phones, laptop computers, photo cameras), eating out, travelling, etc needs money. Though yearning to consume, many Estonians have found their consumption options limited as the cost of living has been high relative to the wages earned. In comparison with West Europeans, an Estonian needs to spend more time at work in order to acquire an item he/she wants. As work alone does not render the income necessary to be able to consume, a large proportion of the population has had to take out loans. Up until recently, mortgages have been common to buy/renovate a living space, and cars have often been bought on lease. To finance their life during studies students have habitually taken out student loans and various instalment plans are used to acquire technological equipment. Also, special consumption loans and express loans have been offered for the people to be able to spend. By logic, loans need to be repaid, so by taking out a loan to acquire something desirable or necessary, a person takes on the obligation to work and pay for the things/services obtained. In this sense the life of a current Estonian toiling away to pay for the home and living expenses resembles that of his/her ancestor in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when long-term loans at demanding if not exploitative interest rates were likewise customary to buy out one's farmstead (Ea Jansen 490).

The propensity to take out loans can be seen as yet another feature in which Estonians have resembled Americans in more recent times. As Nicola Clark indicates in the article "The Struggle to Get Europeans To Do Their Duty and Spend" published in New York Times in 2004, loans have been much more common and widespread in the US than in Western Europe. West Europeans have been less prone to consume on credit due to stricter regulation of banks and a "lack of a borrowing culture". Indeed, the article refers to a "cultural predisposition to save" in continental Europe whereby people demonstrate the trait of prudence and refrain from purchasing an item rather than obtain it on credit. The logic of "if I can't afford something today, I can't see how I will later" can be seen as opposing the consumer mentality prevailing in the US where people have tended to prefer short term purchase power to sustain a lifestyle of abundant spending and worry less over

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<sup>15</sup> The "lack of space" hypothesis is also seriously contested by the Finnish experience where space is fairly abundant yet SUVs and luxury cars continue to be frowned upon, based on a general social ethos that dates back to post-war years. The egalitarian ethos has been attributed to two consecutive wars where bankers and janitors fought side by side.

the need to pay in the future. Clark points out the existence of widespread schemes of second mortgages and home-equity loans that have enabled Americans to keep spending. Many Estonians, too, have succumbed to the temptations of a consumerist way of life and opted for loans to be able to afford items necessary for comfort or their showing-off value without postponing their purchase to a more distant future of having saved enough through work to acquire them. This is not to say Estonians have a spending culture as such, but in a combination of banks generously distributing easy money until 2007 and the comparison with others taking on loans to consume, a number of contemporary Estonians find themselves in debt.

Consumerism is essentially the basis of modern middle-class life and to comply with the expectations existing in the society one has to consume. The media of the growth period especially idealised a consumerist individual as exemplary for others to follow. The model for middle-class Estonians to aspire towards dictates a number of conditions to be met, starting with the ownership of a nice home, at best a private house in the mindset of many Estonians. Those who (have) become home-owners (usually through taking out a loan and thus selling their labour to the bank for years to come) additionally need to refurbish it while owners of older houses/apartments need to or have needed to refurbish their abodes. Interior design shown as exemplary in design magazines promotes a lifestyle out of reach in terms of costs for many ordinary Estonians thus leading to anxiety and frustration at not being able to meet perceived societal norms or the norms seen as being met by others in one's reference group. Depending on the household, one or two cars are deemed necessary for getting about and recent rises in the price of petrol are proving difficult to meet for those who have acquired big gas-guzzling vehicles. Vacationing abroad is part and parcel of modern life for an increasing number of people, especially seeing that borders were closed during the Soviet era and it is only a recent phenomenon that more exotic locations have appeared and become affordable in the catalogues distributed by the numerous travel agents. Additionally one needs to consider the purchases of various further accoutrements of modern life, money spent on entertainment, communication, sports, clothes, and importantly on food.

Almost everything in contemporary times comes with a price tag, and unlike in the Soviet Union, where one could console oneself knowing that everyone was equally deprived and few had the privileges of access to more goods, it is now seen as one's personal failure if one lacks consuming opportunities, as if one earned more, one would be able to spend more – as is laid down by the modern consumer dilemma referred to earlier. Maarja Jakobson has pointed out the sense of anxiety and fear created by the examples of the “correct” life set up by the modern media decrees on “how to look, what to eat and where to live”. In Jakobson's view people want to resemble others and are willing to make great efforts to match standards (65). The perceived demands of middle-class existence can be seen as placing a considerable strain on people to work hard to make money and consume. Also, loans taken out must be serviced, and as there is a real need for money, it is hard to resist long hours or extra work. Like in the United States, keeping up of the appearance of a happy (suburban) life calls for a great deal of toil.

Orientation to achievement becomes evident in the values reportedly held by the young. Andres Maimik has pointed out that in Estonia rivalry for a future among the elite starts as early as in the kindergarten with elite schools giving entry exams to screen out successful candidates. In leading high schools that provide a network of social capital

students are further primed for competition (“Meie, kapitalistlikud noored”; “Elamise kvaliteet”). In a 2004 article, Margit Sutrop describes the young as believing that their own actions, perseverance and efforts lead them towards a better future. Also, a university degree at a field that seems lucrative in terms of prospective revenues has been seen as a must, even without deeper interest in the subject-area chosen. Education is treated as a means to ensure future material well-being and success is seen as in the hands of the individual (“Noorte väärtustes peegeldub ühiskonna edukultus”). According to Sutrop, the greatest source of concern for the young is their worry about not making it to the top. Echoing the American affinity for action-orientation, materialism and individualism, the young acknowledge that in order to have a comfortable life, they themselves need to make efforts and work hard (ibid).

Estonian youth can be seen as eager to prove their worth fast. Hedvig Maigre has observed the way it has been perfectly natural (until recent times) for the practically-minded Estonian graduates to go and get a bank-loan to finance the purchase of an apartment straight after school, a move that has given them independence from their parents but thence forward forced them to lead stable work-lives and limited their capacity to do things out of the ordinary (218). Paul, a person of German origin, has similarly spotted the Estonian hurry to live. In comparison with the young in Germany, Estonians tend to start their independent lives earlier, generally having obtained university degrees and held several jobs even before the age of thirty. By the time Germans feel ready to embark on their lives Estonians are already engrossed by their careers. In Paul’s comments it seems to be important for Estonians to get on track fast and carry on toiling until health permits (Kiitsak-Prikk 227). Also, Raivo Juurak notes that while the Swedish youth value free time, Estonian (similarly to other East European) youth strive more towards harder values, treasuring love of work, patience, self-discipline and thrift, and as a result resemble “boring puritans” with their relatively higher appreciation for status and money. Expectations of future material comfort and success translate into a readiness and acknowledgement of the necessity to work hard.

The competitive atmosphere is characterised by constant comparison of measuring up one’s personal achievement against that of others efficiency, ambition, breakthrough and continual striving towards more possessions or other criteria of success become important instead of being content with what one has achieved thus far. As noted by Urmas Espenberg, common men and women with common jobs lack pride in their trade as settling for a mundane but socially necessary profession does not confer much admiration. Instead, lawyers, businessmen and other jobs with prospects of possibly greater incomes and career-opportunities have been revered among the young. Andres Maimik points out the disappointing prospects of manual work for the young who have set their sights higher (“Meie, kapitalistlikud noored”) and Mati Hint hypothesises that those who have migrated to Ireland to pick carrots might expect to receive more respect than they would in Estonia. In a similar vein, Vahur Afanasjev states that in Estonia “it is shameful and bad to be a wage earner. For the past fifteen years Estonians have been convincing themselves that if you’re not filthy rich you’re worthless” and Kersti Kaljulaid has expressed concern that many Estonian men do not feel motivated to be good teachers or engineers and strive towards higher positions sacrificing their health and happiness in the process. Being enterprising, showing initiative and moving forward have become valued over settling for one’s lot or doing a necessary routine job in Estonia. A

lifestyle associated with success and striving can be seen as demanding considerably more energy from an individual than a stable life of being satisfied with one's position and possessions. Further, as a possible negative outcome of the competitiveness inherent in the society, people less prone to have the qualities necessary for breaking through might start to feel inferiority.

The toil necessary to give off the impression of success is tiring, but negative aspects of a life of success remain hidden. Tension, anxiety, weariness and other forms of weakness are not compatible with the prevalent cult of success, so people give their best to project the image of strength and efficiency. Liisa Kaal as an exemplary stressed young ambitious office worker states it to be neigh impossible to hear anyone successful lament about being "lonely-tired-sad-and-unhappy" for the simple reason that no time is left for all these emotions taking into account the all-consuming nature of work. Kaal humorously describes her commitment to work that leaves little time for life outside the office. She stays on call 24 hours, puts in 12-hour working days at times, holds two jobs and let her relationship break up because of lack of time. Still she prefers career to tranquillity at the moment, getting an ego-boost from her work and thinking she can always take time off to enjoy life after promotion. Kaal has even diagnosed herself as the "ordinary Estonian naarik, a sweet little workaholic" ("Tavaline Eesti naarik"). While Kaal rejoices in her work-centred life and admits to only occasional lapses of feeling things could be different, Tiina Jõgeda clearly states that "the diligent Estonian woman is depressed" and doing her best to hide the misery inside. Jõgeda points out that whereas panic attacks and excessive anxiety often go unnoticed, "one's bodily shape, income, a fashionable home, branded clothes as well as trips to the beach and to ski-resorts can be seen from afar". "Following norms is in actual fact horribly exhausting" she notes, but one's failure to live up to the expectation of success associates with lack of success, something difficult for an achievement oriented individual to accept ("Kurvad tublid tüdrukud").

Even more attention has been given to the subject of Estonian men toiling their lives away. Several newspaper articles have claimed that the excessive work by Estonian men is caused by the expectations the patriarchal society places on men to be main bread-winners and provide for the family. The image of the necessities of a middle-class Estonian household described above as compared to the wages earned sets people in a difficult position demanding work, and in many cases has led them to loans that up until recently were relatively easy to attain. Paavo Kangur has even gone so far as to have jokingly claimed there to exist only five hundred men in Estonia to match the ideal of the Estonian woman, alluding to the mismatch between wages and dreams (Muttika). Also, men are said to yearn for the prestige that accompanies the status of a winner and not feel happy to settle with a life of stability at a lower rung.

Overwork, together with alcohol and unhealthy habits of life could be considered as having a detrimental effect on life-expectancy. For Margus Punab, a doctor specialising in andrology, psychological stress caused by unrealistic expectations to life and the insecurity inherent in the society is the main cause of death for the Estonian male and the reason Estonian men on average die twelve years younger than Swedish men. Dr. Punab parallels the transition period Estonia is currently facing with a post-war period of reconstruction and states that stress wears men down. He acknowledges the society to offer individuals great opportunities for advancement, but at the same time says the worry

over how to better seize these opportunities in terms of constant changeability is a major cause of stress. Men wish to feel in control and to ooze strength, but as Dr. Punab emphasises “it is not humanly possible to work 48 hours a day” (Kerge). It is also widely perceived that the Estonian man drinks himself to death and stress can be considered one factor that causes drinking. Additionally, excessive work with the aim of earning more money is seen as a cause of death. This attitude can be inferred from titles such as “Nii nad tapsidki meie mehe” (And like that they killed our man) and “Kui kauaks veel eesti meest” (For how much longer will there be an Estonian man?) given to articles in Estonian dailies dealing with contemporary working habits. Additionally, Mati Heidmets has commented that “catching up with Europe has made Estonian men breathless” regretting the widespread tendency to prefer money over health (“Eesti enesepilt – kitsas ja roosa”) and Rein Raud has observed “chasing after money” to be of too high significance for the Estonian man (“Rein Raud: Eesti mees ajab liiga palju raha taga”).

The cult of success that spurs people to consume and rise takes its toll by causing stress, anxiety and unhappiness. Most people affected endeavour to hide the weakness and the media too have tended to bring out stories of success rather than those of failure. As pointed out by Allaste, many journalists concentrate on heroes and heroines and promote success as a model to follow while not dwelling on the downsides of depression and anxiety that might ensue. In the case of a number of ordinary citizens this results in a feeling of being left alone with their worries, as they do not want to appear weak in a society that treasures winners. Many find there is no one to turn to when feeling the need to vent problems (Allaste, Kerge). Also, admitting that not all inhabitants of Estonia are office workers, and many are not members of the middle class, it is still the middle class whose aspirations are reported with the greatest frequency in the mass media, and they set the model towards which those below can aim. Furthermore, work as the provider of the means for which to live is essential for the less well-off to get by. The numerous poor face the pitilessness of a system that cannot be considered to be excessively enthusiastic to assist those who do not get by on their own. Also, many members of the supposed middle-class are not overly secure of their standing, as people tend to lack substantial savings and earnings are spent as they come. While consumerism quickly gained popularity during the years of economic growth, the on-going financial crisis is set to decrease the ability of people to consume and make corrections to people’s expectations as to the standards of success.

#### **5.3.4 Abundant Work in Contemporary Estonia**

In the beginning of the nineties a number of people devoted themselves to work due to lack of security and ambitions to rise. Talks of 14 hour work-days were not rare. Opportunities were seen as waiting to be taken and people with greater risk-tolerance, cunning and perseverance could amass riches and emerge as winners from the confusing circumstances. Many ordinary members of society needed to put in long hours in order to alleviate hardship and improve their material position. With the transformation and the transition from Soviet Union to independence people were willing to dedicate themselves to work. By now the situation has stabilised and toiling away into the early hours of the morning is no longer a common practice. Nonetheless, work can be described as a central issue in the society with Estonians still consistently putting in longer hours than is customary in much of Western Europe. General atmosphere in the contemporary

Estonian society favours work, be it for the need to secure one's financial situation, enable consumerism, meet the demands made by employers, or keep busy.

Numerous references can be found as to the Estonian standard of keeping busy. The need to be continually active is strong enough among Estonians to merit a mention in the HDR 2006. While younger Estonians habitually engage in several activities simultaneously, older generations find it a waste of time to sit around doing nothing demonstrating the Estonian adherence to the 'leisure-ethic' (HDR 2006 61). Laziness is not valued and inactivity or just being without doing feel uncomfortable and useless in light of the internalised norm of efficiency. A person of German origin, when asked to describe Estonians, found that Estonians as if cannot be without work with people constantly working or talking about work (Kivilo 232). Estonians themselves often musingly refer to a recurrent need to escape to a country cottage to work in the garden and to the need to roam around the forests in search of berries and mushrooms as testifying to their appreciation for efficiency. These small habits of efficient spare time (that in themselves offer a pleasant contrast to daily activities and can prove relaxing) had also been picked up by the foreigner (ibid). Further, those who refuse to stay home and come to office when sick on the one hand display the Estonian undaunted conscientious worker-hero mentality but on the other hand often testify to the modesty of the Estonians' material means, insecurity and the prevalent materialist attitudes that may not allow a person to stay home as missing work means an unwelcome decrease in income. Also, people tend to value money over health. Another example that for the German observer seems indicative of the great love of work among Estonians is their tendency to keep their mobile phones connected and be available for work-related issues at all times, a practice adhered to in the United States but observed less in West European countries. At the same time he asks if people will not break down from work one day and wonders over their ability to enjoy what they have achieved (ibid).

Further, a sense of unpredictability and lack of stability can be seen as contributing to the overall sense of speed of life and lack of leisure. While West Europeans value stability and traditions, Estonians are used to greater flux and indeterminacy that have come along with the transformations the population has had to cope with in the still quite recent past. As pointed out in HDR 2006, Estonians are open to change and accustomed to living hasty and busy lives. Undefined situations pose a challenge to be tackled and people think it important to constantly acquire new experiences and develop themselves (HDR 2006 61). Referring to the neoliberalism prevalent in Estonia's economic policies, Masso has stated that "Estonia continues as Europe's little America, where social ruthlessness and even carelessness and blatant inequality go hand in hand with the positives sides of Americanness – creativity, freedom and energy". Mikko Lagerspetz, too, has commented that "what fascinates the Finns as regards Estonians is courage, initiative, dynamicity". On a negative side he notes that the environment of constant innovation and instability has a tendency of wearing people down if it is not possible to found lasting organizations and carry out long-term goals. Lagerspetz sees people dedicated to the creation of something novel as working for years near their maximum capacity without sparing themselves until out of energy. Additionally he points out that Estonians tend to work only for their personal good, ignoring the rest of the society, while concern for the society at large would turn out beneficial in the long run in the amelioration of living conditions for all. Estonians could be said to work a great deal

putting much effort into their tasks and demonstrating innovation, but ultimately the insecurity and uncertainty of the environment can be seen as tiring both mentally and physically if it is not possible to take time off from the constant flux and change. Thus it is understandable that the trend among the people has been towards valuing greater stability in recent years (HDR 2006 60).

Thus, work is important in the contemporary Estonian society and people seem to be used to the workload. HDR 2006 states that among people who work hours longer than the usual forty weekly hours, there are twice as many Estonians content with their hours than in other European countries – Estonians themselves prefer working long hours (20). Further, Estonians customarily work full working weeks of 40 hours and part-time work is not common with the choice lying rather between to work or not to work than between full-time and part-time work (21). Adherence to the standard working week can be seen as a legacy of the Soviet era, and in modern times overwork hours often have to be added to the hours worked. In addition to long hours, it has to be borne in mind that the demands and stress-inducing capacities of an average job have increased with time as more people now find they have less say over the tasks they need to perform and the number of those doing fast and intense jobs has risen (12).

The importance Estonians put on work has been criticised by a number of commentators. Some observations as to Estonian children studying to get good grades that would lead to a better future, Estonian women under the strain of leaving the image of success and Estonian men working themselves to death having lost the balance between expectations to life and normal working time have been mentioned above. Further examples of concern about excessive work being done by Estonians expressed in the Estonian media include Barbi Pilvre's article "Hobujõuga Euroopasse" (To Europe with horsepower) in which the author mocks the phenomenon she perceives as the Estonian fixation on toiling away, dying young and getting a place on the honorary plaque that lauds the high work-morale of the deceased. Pilvre recalls an instance of a Finnish journalist asking her why all Estonians feel the need to be successful, why they cannot just be and do their ordinary jobs living their ordinary lives. To the question she remembers to have replied that if one was to let life take its course, do his/her average job without taking risks and wheeling and dealing, it would be difficult to make ends meet in Estonia. Prices are relatively high when compared to the average wages earned and moreover, Estonians need to work hard to demonstrate their prosperity and gain the others' envy and admiration. Pilvre even goes as far as to hint that the Estonian culture is exceptional enough to poeticize overworking oneself to death. Rein Taagepera, in his turn, criticises the Estonian orientation to work worrying over the "lonesome busy life" many Estonians come to lead (615). For him Estonians lack trust and material security, and sense acute competitiveness instead of trying to cooperate. He thus comments that "joyless drudgery often done with feelings of embittered joy at the obstruction of the advancement of fellow-citizens is unproductive and diminishes overall satisfaction and happiness" (615). Taagepera seems to sympathise with Estonians as the envy and constant struggle erode quality of life and the pleasure achievement can bring. A number of people are thus left with abundant work that is done in order to get by and advance in the society but fails to contribute to the happiness of the busy workers.

Long hours of work can be seen as leading to tensions in people's family lives. It can happen that work-duties and material concerns drain an individual of their time and



energy so that little scope is left for attention to family. Women run into difficulties in combining full-time work and motherhood, while many men find themselves drudging away at overtime hours or weekends to secure the wellbeing of their family by earning more. Mari-Liis Eensalu from the marketing research company EMOR states that Estonians toil for the benefit of their families. In Eensalu's words, material security determines one's place in the society and Estonians tend to believe that money enables one to buy health and ensures a happy family (Paas). Aivar Kokk has expressed the view that Estonian men toil excessively as the society is still in a transition phase and work is needed to increase affluence in the society. He regrets that until a certain level of wellbeing has been reached (in ten years he ventures), Estonian men will continue to toil, sacrificing weekends and lacking time for their families. Instead of relaxing with their loved ones, many Estonians feel the need to drudge away to secure a level of material comfort for themselves and their family leading the lonely and work-filled lives Taagepera has referred to. Indrek Neivelt has further pointed out that long hours may inhibit successful singles from settling down and founding a family in the first place, a trend that in Neivelt's opinion may be seen as having negative consequences for the nation's birth rate ("Kas raha või õnn?").

A number of people find themselves worn out at the end of their work-day lacking energy to engage in much meaningful leisure in the hours that remain. After a psychologically difficult high-pressure day a person may want to drop into a lull of nothingness at home, settling for the television set, internet or gossip magazines as sources of easily approachable entertainment that ask little mental exertion. Urmas Espenberg is among those who have commented upon the onslaught of trivial media personages or people who entertain but whose actions do not offer food for thought. Books, too, have been noted to have veered towards easily absorbable best-sellers and visually pleasing compendiums with little text and plentiful illustrations in the more modern times. The demands of securing a salary can lead to one having too little strength left to read volumes of philosophy or classics of literature and mean that many settle for entertainment in some lighter form instead. Asta Trummel from the ministry of culture has supposed that "probably they demand so much more from people at work, that people lack the vigour to read a complex book" (Pesti). Though books may be bought, a number of people find themselves short of time to read the books on their shelves and the proportion of those who have not read a single book within a year has risen according to the 2006 survey on the use of culture (Pesti). Another form of sinking into oblivion from the hardships of work or of venting the stress that emanates from daily toil can be seen in the common weekend pastime of self-forgetting partying. A number of Estonians are perceived as needing to get drunk at times to switch their mind off work pressures, societal demands and material concerns with drinking seen as a free-time activity in its own right. The phenomenon of unrestrained partying especially by the younger generations has been dubbed "burning away one's life" ("elupõletamine") by several commentators in the popular media. Evi Arujärv, for example, has pointed out that reaching a higher standard of living calls for a greater workload that in its turn needs fast and effective relaxation which often comes in the form of partying and of dampening one's minds with drugs and alcohol. Increasingly intense pace at work calls for more potent means of leisure. For Arujärv it can even be said that "total partying is the deep model of contemporary life, reaching already children at school and shaping central

values in life” (Ood rõõmule”). Ülo Vooglaid on his part describes the prevalent cult of objects, legal nihilism, ignoring of basic values and excessive concentration on having fun as steering the society towards a moral crisis. Endeavours to relax can lead to self-destructive behaviour as stress and worries are drowned in alcohol or buried by efforts at having fun. HDR 2006, too, notes the tendency to value individual pleasures by Estonians – pleasures that often presuppose money (61).

In contrast to the constant hurry and concern about success and material wellbeing, members of the older generation reminisce greater availability of time during the Soviet era. As stated by Heiki Pärdi, one of the basic premises of capitalism “time is money” did not apply during the Soviet era when work was founded on discipline and fear of punishment rather than an interior drive to excel and move forward (15). Andres Tarand also notes the drop in work morale that accompanied Soviet times, as people did not feel a sense of anyone’s ownership of or responsibility towards state property (147). Motivation to work hard, earn more and rise in the society was not there in a degree comparable to modern times, as access to goods was limited and promotion often depended on Party membership. There was plenty of time when the work-day was finished and the value accorded to time was not high. As referred to by Toomere, work could be considered less stressful and basic survival was covered by the state (2550). People had more opportunities to concentrate on general self-cultivation. It was not possible to consume things, but it was possible to consume culture (though often ideologically bent and censored). Books and theatre and cinema tickets were relatively cheap when compared to modern days, when people with smaller incomes or large loan repayments may find themselves unable to afford engaging in culture to the degree they would like to. Being cultured was a norm of sorts. Martin Ehala, for example, recalls that in the end of the 1980s his American acquaintances were pleasantly surprised over the fact that Estonians found time to sit in cafés with friends and discuss literature and arts in a leisurely and stress-free manner. In his observation the situation has by now been supplanted by an atmosphere of indifference, negativity, aggressiveness and carelessness towards the rest. Similar thoughts have been expressed by Jaan Kaplinski: “Once I discovered there are four types of societies. People can have a. plenty of time, little money. b. plenty of money, little time. c. plenty of time, plenty of money. d. little time, little money. Now the ex-Jurassic, ex-Communist world is moving from a. to b., at least it hopes it is doing just that. But in any case the way to b. goes through d., it’s our present state of affairs. As to c., it is probably what they have in Saudi Arabia ...

In a capitalist society the value given to time and the scarcity of time have risen as time spent on work and the quantity of money one has can be considered to be in direct relation to each other. Also, with the fastening up of the pace of life and increase in options of things to do in one’s free hours, time has become to be felt as less available to be squandered away. There is a vast variety of goods and services to be bought provided people have the money for which to procure them. Though better equipped with material comforts, Estonians nowadays tend to complain about lacking time to devote to hobbies and culture, or as Urmas Espenberg remarks, there were more friends around at Soviet times and though poor, intellectuals could play masterminds, sceptics and nihilists as there were no perspectives to aspire towards. Now many own houses and drive jeeps and have no time to waste on activities like philosophising behind the kitchen table. Material values have gained in importance and self-expression faded to the background, as people

need to be assured of their economic and physical security before turning their interests to enriching their lives in cultural spheres. In addition to money, time is needed to take up cultural hobbies and many people find themselves too tired after their daily toil to engage in mentally challenging pastimes. Plans have to be made for get-togethers and favours that need the other party to devote some of their time to the task are no longer self-evident, as time has acquired the value of a resource, a connotation not attached to it with equal eagerness a few decades ago. Also, as HDR 2006 reports, “people are likely to be interested in short-term or instant, primarily pleasurable experiences, and not in long-term change.” Concomitantly, money is valued as a means that leads towards a pleasurable and safer life (61). Lives seem to have become busier and the supply of time at one’s disposal to have shrunk.

Excessive work or concerns about one’s physical daily existence and worries about matching up with and surpassing others can be seen as resulting in tension, depression, anxiety, exhaustion, moodiness and unhappiness. The question of proper balance in life arises. Should one’s life be devoted to work, fulfilling ambitions and worrying about material possessions or does happiness lie in some other sphere, for example in enjoying the company of friends, engaging in interesting activities and getting time to relax? While achievement is undoubtedly a source of happiness, mental strain from the impact of excessive work and existential worries inevitably brings the quality of life down. A discussion of happiness and of the related issues of lifestyle, quality of life, and life-satisfaction ensues.

### **5.3.5. Happiness and Quality of life**

Although a goal in life proclaimed by many, happiness is a subjective concept difficult to pin down. According to Ruut Veenhoven, “Happiness is defined as ‘the overall appreciation of one’s life-as-a-whole’. In other words, how much one likes the life one lives” and for Richard Layard happiness means “feeling good – enjoying life and feeling it is wonderful” (1). Happiness can be associated with affluence, job, recognition, closeness, social capital and good health among other things and can be viewed in term of the individual as well as in terms of the society. Some theoreticians emphasise the role of genetic factors and personal disposition to life as determining happiness, others point to the impact of economic and material aspects, still others refer to freedom as leading to happiness.

Inglehart, Foa, Peterson and Welzel distinguish between satisfaction and happiness linking satisfaction with the material side of life and happiness with the level of free choice the society offers an individual. According to Inglehart and his colleagues satisfaction and happiness are “closely correlated” concepts that are often used interchangeably both belonging under and pertaining to different aspects of the term ‘subjective wellbeing’ (274). ‘Quality of life’ is another related term that according to Wikipedia consists of a physical and a mental component and encompasses aspects like availability of food, protection from pain as well as emotional states. By and large ‘quality of life’ refers to the degree of satisfaction people feel towards their lives. The following paragraphs aim to look into the subjects of happiness, satisfaction, wellbeing and quality of life with regards to the situation in Estonia.

Researchers have found individuals in different societies to report differing levels of happiness. Wealth, functioning government, freedom, cultural diversity and tolerance

have been considered among factors that contribute to a societal sense of happiness. As compared to other countries, Estonia appears among the unhappy end of the charts of various cross-national happiness surveys. According to the Happy Planet Index that attends to the “relative success or failure of countries in supporting good lives for their citizens, whilst respecting the environmental resource limits upon which our lives depend,” Estonians are the unhappiest Europeans (of the nations included) and rank low in world listings too. Factors considered embrace life satisfaction (low in Estonia in the survey concerned), life expectancy (low in Estonia) and carbon footprint (high in Estonia). In a Eurobarometer survey, while 49% of the Danes report themselves being very happy, only 12% of Estonians do the same (“European Social Reality” 6). The Estonian level of happiness at 75% is also below the Euro25 level of happiness which stands at 87% and the Danish level at 97% (5). In the World Values Survey data accessible online Estonia scores low too, with 6.5 % of the respondents declaring themselves very happy and 58 % considering themselves quite happy.

Post-communist societies on the whole tend to be among the unhappier and less satisfied ones (e.g. Inglehart et al “Development” 168). In the case of Estonia several factors, importantly the legacy of communism, reduce the overall state of happiness and satisfaction in the society. As has been noted above, drop in material security led people towards emphasising materialist values. When the daily concern for physical survival or the worry over emitting an appropriate public image occupy much of one’s thoughts and work takes up a lot of one’s time, being happy or satisfied becomes harder. Also, various challenging social issues have become highlighted. Problems include low life-expectancy, lack of tolerance, lack of trust, lack of empathy, stratification and traditional views towards the roles of men and women. Further, memories of the collective trauma and the oppressiveness suffered during the decades of communist regime cannot be said to influence the aggregate sense of happiness in the society in a positive way. The changeability, uncertainty and lack of stability prevalent in the society do not contribute much to people’s sense of happiness either.

Though belonging among the reportedly unhappy and unsatisfied post-communist nations, conditions have improved in Estonia during the independence years. Estonians can contrast their country to Western or Northern Europe and see the level of wealth and the means Estonians have to be considerably more modest. On the other hand, when looking to the East Estonians can feel reassured as to their progress and level of comfort. HDR 2006 reports Inglehart’s data to show Estonians to be more satisfied than citizens in other successor states of the Soviet Union, but less so than those in the postsocialist European countries that did not belong in the Soviet Union (33). New member states of the EU in general are less satisfied than old member states. While income is one of the most important determinants of satisfaction in East European countries, inhabitants of Western Europe are more likely to appreciate professional position when deciding on their state of being satisfied (HDR 2006, 35). Estonia additionally demonstrates greater variation between the levels of satisfaction of different sociodemographic groups – a feature that refers to greater gaps between different groups in the society than is common in Western Europe. Young and wealthy Estonians tend to be more satisfied with their lives (ibid).

As claimed by Inglehart, people in poorer societies tend to be less satisfied with their lives than people in richer ones, and increase in wealth generally takes societies towards

increase in the level of subjective wellbeing. Still, gaining in wealth adds to the level of wellbeing only up to a certain degree with increase in riches failing to have a remarkable effect on those already wealthy (qtd in Inglehart et al "Development" 265-6). For example, Olivier Zunz has observed as regards Americans, "Americans as people are no longer so sure of the correlation between their ability to generate prosperity and the quality they call happiness" meaning that affluence alone does not suffice for making a happy society (188). Richer societies thus need something more than money to contribute to the wellbeing of their citizens. As referred to by Inglehart (qtd in Inglehart et al "Development" 265-6) and Realo ("Õnne valem"), while people in countries stressing the importance of survivalist values appreciate their lives already when things are not going too bad and a certain material comfort has been achieved, citizens of those countries where self-expression values dominate need positive emotions and positive stimulation to be satisfied with their lives. Poorer societies struggle for survival and guaranteeing some level of comfort; those already enjoying material ease find themselves battling against the modern disease of depression. The issue should be of importance for Estonia too. Thus far, on the level of the society, acquiring more prosperity has been the main focus of efforts, but as people gradually gain in wealth and secure their existence, they start yearning for something more to life. Researchers agree on the elusive nature of happiness and on the fact that while significant, money alone does not lead to contentment.

In addition to the societal level of wealth, people's subjective wealth is important in their sense of happiness. Seeing that people tend to compare their status in an upward direction, it can be supposed that societies with greater levels of inequality tend to be less satisfied on the whole. As put by Layard, being relatively richer than other members of society can add to an individual's sense of happiness; at the same time, witnessing the wealth of someone else will reduce the level of happiness of an individual (5). During independence years the overall level of wealth has been steadily growing in Estonia, but so too has stratification. Those who adapted well to the changes amassed more wealth than those less prone to take risks. Although, as alluded by Jaak Aaviksoo, the society as a whole has never been as rich as it is at modern times, prosperity has not reached all and not much solidarity is felt with those in need. Rather, in line with the neoliberal creed, each person's actions will determine their fate and each person is responsible for their own well-being. As stated by Margit Keller, disappointment in post-communist countries is closely related to the rapid development of the Western consumerist ideology that reminds people of their limited opportunities of acquiring desired consumer items ("Freedom calling" 18). Materialist concerns in the form of worry over making ends meet in the case of some and the pressures associated with the need to project an image of success in the case of others can be seen as eating into the sense of satisfaction and happiness in contemporary Estonia.

Though gradually improving, quality of life in Estonia at the moment can be said to fall short of West European standards on several occasions. The brunt of attention has been turned to increasing the level of wealth while many societal concerns have been largely overlooked. Anto Raukas regrets that while the goals of wholeness of the society, good health, comfortable life, democratization and reduction of crime were set in the nineties, the objectives have not been realised with state power in his view opposing the will of the people, crime, corruption and HIV rampant, the general health of the population poor, and numbers of divorce, traffic accidents and suicide among the highest

in the world. Raukas calls for people to appreciate other things in life apart from money, while Mati Heidmets has stated the quality of Europeanness not to lie in wealth only, but rather in an “enjoyable and civilized daily life”.

A number of commentators have questioned if being moneyed results in being happy. Richard Layard, for example, has stated that “a happy life is about a lot more than money can buy” and pointed to “mental health, satisfying and secure work, a secure and loving private life, a secure community, freedom, and moral values” as the six factors that have been found to play key role in happiness (7). Rein Raud is similarly sceptical about the power of money to confer people happiness, as “it is often forgotten that life juices are squeezed out of those with large salaries”. Evi Arujärv in her turn refers to Estonians as being among “the sickest and most over-worked peoples in Europe” and for Mall Hellam “economic liberalism in Estonia has produced stressed, lonely, unhappy people feeling themselves to be undervalued”. Nevertheless material values tend to dominate in Estonia. In Maarja Jakobson’s pre-crisis opinion “it seems strange that at a time when almost all people in contemporary Estonia have enough food, clothes to cover their backs and a roof over their head the societal ambience should be so negative and daunting” referring to the anxiety-inducing cult of success propagated in the media (64). Instead of being able to relax and enjoy life, people find that the stress emanating from constant toil, competition and concern over material wellbeing erodes their sense of satisfaction with their present conditions.

While Estonians can be seen as pushed towards highlighting the role of work in their lives, several commentators have found that more cooperation, empathy, solidarity and inclusivity and less competitiveness would benefit the society. For Raud, the security and the inhabitability of the living environment should be given greater priority, as should guaranteeing a good level of healthcare, moderate bureaucracy, ecologic cleanliness, functioning public transportation, the availability of information, adequate cultural life, societal solidarity and enabling older citizens to lead decent lives, while Marju Lauristin, has noted that “quality of life should be at a level that would allow people not among the young, wealthy and healthy to enjoy their lives too” (“Ka neile”) and in Margit Sutrop’s words “everyone’s war against everybody else reduces our quality of life” (“Kas Eesti jagab Euroopa väärtusi?”). In a similar vein, stressing the need for greater cooperation, Polly Toynbee shows Layard as believing that happiness “lies in the common good” and that “happiness is easier to find in collective things than in the short-lived pleasures of shopping”. A frantic individualistic race after money thus could be seen as not resulting in a happier society, but rather in an atomized, overworked, stressed and anxious one where people lack time and energy for being with others and find themselves harried trying to pursue personal gratification and consumption while paying little attention to things beyond their personal problems. Raivo Vetik has been among those disparaging excessive individualism stating that there should be a commonality of interests inherent in a society rather than the society being an aggregate of individuals who lead their lives apart from the others (163). In contrast to the widespread neoliberality of the Estonian business and political elite, Neivelt finds that “the market place is always stupid. Or it is stupid most of the time” (Lõhmus). Neivelt proposes a strong family, healthy lifestyle, exporting environmentally friendly products and innovation as the pillars on which Estonia’s sustainable future should rest rather than on the measuring GDP as an indicator of success (“Kuhu ja kuidas edasi” 175). Raud predicts with regret that it is only through

painful experience that people will realize the pursuit of money not to contribute much to their pursuit of happiness as excessive toil and material concerns erode the overall satisfaction people feel as to their lives. A satisfactory level of material comfort is thus essential for wellbeing but wealth alone does not guarantee a happy existence.

An important factor that can be seen as influencing the level of wellbeing and providing positive emotions is the amount of available time. Moments of happiness tend to be associated with the free period left over from work, housework and fulfilling unavoidable biological necessities such as eating, sleeping and bodycare. Leisure, or the time when one has the freedom to choose what to do is commonly thought of as a source of happiness. This is when a person can engage in what interests him or her and brings him/her joy. As a result of the ever-present work-leisure dilemma, one source of unhappiness can be the lack of time to enjoy one's leisure, another the lack of money that inhibits a person from enjoying their leisure to the fullest. Indrek Neivelt asks if a lonely investment banker toiling away 80-100 hours a week, earning and spending much, is a better member of society compared to someone who puts in 40 weekly hours and spends the rest of his/her time with family and friends ("Kas raha või õnn?"). The person who works a lot is supposedly valued more by the society but Neivelt doubts whether he/she is happier (ibid). Higher salaries tend to entail more time spent on work and less on life outside work. The important issue is thus whether success through hard work, ambition, competition and little time for rest or a balanced stable life with time for family, hobbies and relaxation in addition to work is preferred. The results of the RISC study summarised in HDR 2006 show Estonians as not being content with their present condition and perpetually wanting to move on and try new things. Findings indicate that "drawing away from daily activities and taking time to be on one's own are not important for the majority of the Estonian society: in Europe this is valued by nearly a third" (62).

Pointing to the central tendencies existent in the societies, Rifkin has stated that while "Americans strive for happiness by doing" and underline the importance of personal accomplishments and material success, "Europeans strive for happiness by being" finding reassurance from community bonds, close relationships and a feeling of solidarity ("The European Dream" 118). Spurred by material insecurity Estonians have tended to emphasise hard values and wealth during the independence years thus resembling Americans more in their efforts to find happiness through doing rather than being. Being active, successful and ambitious has been rated more highly than being content with one's lot. Growth and competition have been valued over the improvement of quality of life. HDR 2006, too, refers to the preference for material values over soft values in the Estonians society during the past decade (62). People have been working hard and postponing gratification in order to have a better future. Work has been necessary to secure one's wellbeing against the insecurity inherent in the individualistically minded society where winners have little regard for losers and everyone has to see to their comfort themselves. Under such circumstances Estonians can be said to have veered more towards the hard-working atmosphere present in America rather than the ambience of relatively greater solidarity and cooperation found in Western Europe.

## **6. The Findings of the Survey on Values and Time Use**

A survey was conducted as part of the thesis to look into the views Estonians hold on values, work, time-use and various social issues. Questions that were asked concern subjects tapped into all through the theoretical discussion above and results should indicate in what ways the respondents' views veer towards those considered more common in the United States and in which respects respondents demonstrate adherence to views more often associated with West Europeans. The present summary of the results brings out what can be considered the more relevant and interesting findings and will not aim to present all the findings of the survey.

The survey was conducted among 79 respondents. 15 respondents supplied their answers on printed out questionnaires while 64 replied to the same questions through the internet polling site [www.eformular.com](http://www.eformular.com). In the case of some questions the number of respondents may vary, as those who answered on printed out forms may have left some questions unanswered. 60 respondents were female and 19 male. The median age for the respondents was 31.5 (31 for women and 32 for men). Many respondents were students at the Open University (i.e. most of them both worked and studied), another large group held full-time jobs, a few were university students and 7 female respondents stayed at home some specifying they were on maternity leave. The sample may be small and not entirely representative in terms of age, professions and the balance of genders, but the results could nevertheless be considered as indicative of some widespread tendencies and views in the contemporary Estonian society.

### **6.1. Descriptions of the Estonian Character**

A number of questions are directed at determining traits characteristic of Estonians. Throughout the survey several questions ask information about the 'average Estonian' to enable respondents to view the society from a distance and provide their opinions as to what they see as the prevailing trends in the Estonian society. The third-person approach was employed on purpose, with a view to avoiding the well-known self-flattery effect (Oller and Perkins) that accompanies second-person questions even in anonymous questionnaires (an effect that could be said to have been evident in a number of sociological studies about Estonia). However, the method has its own limitations. Several respondents noted their uneasiness with the term "average Estonian", writing that "there is no such thing as the average Estonian" and "I wouldn't know; I'm not the average Estonian". Indeed, as explained above, the term 'average Estonian' is an approximation and there is no particular person who would exhibit all the traits thought characteristic of Estonians, or in the words of Scollon and Scollon, "no individual member of a group embodies all of his/her group's characteristics" (157). At the same time individuals belonging to the Estonian cultural sphere share certain values that can be seen in the actions and mindset of the majority. Questions about the 'average Estonian' thus provide insights as regards tendencies thought common to the Estonian culture.

To help and determine traits Estonians themselves associate with the Estonian character respondents were asked to supply adjectives to describe Estonians. 'Hard-working' (töökas) was the adjective mentioned most often (on 28 occasions). Related concepts include 'active/busy' (toimekas 1 mention), 'ambitious' (edasipüüdlik 3 mentions), 'persevering' (visa 2 mentions), 'conscientious' (kohusetundlik 2 mentions), 'determined' (sihikindel 1 mention) and 'focused' (keskendunud 1 mention).



The other important cluster of traits attributed to the Estonian character has to do with the relative aloofness of Estonians. 25 respondents thought Estonians to be 'closed' (kinnine 24 mentions, suletud 1 mention) while 2 respondents tagged them 'not open' (mitteavatud). 'Self-centred' (enesekeskne) received 8 mentions and 'self-opinionated' (iseteadlik) was brought out once. 10 respondents deemed Estonians 'modest' (tagasihoidlik), 2 considered them 'shy' (uje), 3 regarded Estonians as 'reserved' (vaoshoitud) and 4 as 'drawn to themselves' (endassetõmbunud). Additionally, Estonians are referred to as 'quiet' (vaikne 8 mentions, sõnakehv 1 mention, tasane 1 mention), 'calm' (rahulik 7 mentions), 'serious' (tõsine 7 mentions) 'individualist' (individualistlik 5 mentions) and 'slow' (aeglane 2 mentions, pikaldane 1 mention). Detachment can also be related to sensing Estonians as being 'cold' (külm 5 mentions) and 'emotionless' (emotsioonitu 2 mentions) or 'numb/insensitive' (tuim), 'apathetic' (apaatne) and 'drowsy' (uimane, 1 mention each). One respondent brought out that "Estonians cannot or will not express their feelings" and "need time to 'warm up'". Four respondents referred to Estonians as keeping a physical distance from others and used words like 'eemalehoidev', 'omaette', 'distanti hoidev', 'omaettehoidev' to express their view.

Further traits that received more attention include 'envious' (kade 15 mentions), 'distrustful' (umbusklik 6 mentions; but also 'cautious' – ettevaatlik 2 mentions), 'proud' (uhke 4 mentions; but also 'arrogant' – arrogantne 1 mention, ülbe 1 mention; 'conceited' – enesest heal arvamusel; 'high ego' – kõrge ego) 'stubborn' (kangekaelne 2 mentions, jonnakas 1 mention; but also 'headstrong' – põikpäine 2 mentions; 'long-winded' – pika vihaga; 'resilient' – vastupidav) 'calculating' (kaalutlev 2 mentions; but also 'avaricious' – ahne, ahnevõitu; 'selfish' – isekas; 'out for self-gain' - omakskasupüüdlik) and 'honest' (aus 3 mentions; but also 'loyal' – truu 2 mentions, ustav 1 mention). While 4 respondents see Estonians as 'polite' (viisakas) and 4 respondent see them as 'friendly' (sõbralik), 2 respondents state Estonians are 'impolite' (ebaviisakas; ei ole eriti viisakad), 2 refer to them as 'malicious' (kiuslik) and 2 believe Estonians not to be overly friendly.

On the whole respondents have been rather critical when supplying adjectives to describe the Estonian character. To quote one respondent "Tired, closed, stubborn, envious, dense at times, prone to drink. And regrettably nothing positive comes to mind for a general description :-( Rather, there exist particular individuals – friends who are cheerful, helpful, intelligent, tolerant and patriotic" (Väsinud, kinnine, kangekaelne, kade, kohati juhm, napsulembene. Ja kahjuks ei tule üldise iseloomustuse puhul pähe positiivseid vasteid :-( On pigem üksikud inimesed – sõbrad, kelles on rõõmsameelsust, abivalmidust, tarkust, tolerantust, isamaa-armastust).

The picture that emerges portrays Estonians as hard-working and further characterised as introvert, modest, quiet, proud, calm, self-centred, stubborn and envious. This self-image corresponds to Taagepera's notion of Estonians working hard but leading lonely lives at that. As one respondent noted, "Anxious, little time, stressed, too pessimistic, sceptical about everything... should loosen up" (närvilised, vähe aega, stressis, liiga pessimistlikud, iga asja suhtes skeptilised... võiksid võtta vabamalt). Another respondent sees Estonians as "petite bourgeois strivers capable of developing" (väikekodanlikud arenemisvõimelised edasipürgijad) – this view too can be seen as referring to the need to work felt by the Estonians.

## 6.2 Social Views

It can be supposed that the level of uncertainty in the Estonian society is still quite high based on the results of the survey. Issues related to coping with the hardships posed by the economic side of life were frequently mentioned. When asked about the greatest problems countered by the contemporary Estonian society, the word 'uncertainty' was mentioned on two occasions and one respondent indicated a 'fear' about wellbeing in the face of the difficult economic situation.

Altogether 21 respondents mentioned economic depression, a topic relevant and reported widely in the news at the present day. Here it must be noted that the respondents of the 40 questionnaires that were submitted in the summer of 2008 were less likely to mention the depression than were the 39 respondents who filled the questionnaires out in November by which time there had been considerably more talk of the influence of the downturn and by which time the effects of the recession had become more visible. Even when ignoring the references as to the current difficult economic situation, concern about the issue of welfare and the economy beyond the depression was evident.

Sixteen respondents in total brought out the rise in the cost of living with several respondents regretting the high price of necessities (food for example) in relation to the modest wages when asked to identify problems in the contemporary Estonian society. 75 of the 79 respondents agreed (or rather agreed) with the statements 'the correlation between prices and wages is distorted'. Also, respondents worried over unemployment, the decrease in social guarantees, poverty, stratification, inequality, homelessness, lack of concern for the weaker members of society, poor health (including several references to alcoholism and drug addiction), emigration, integration and the difference between the will of the people and the decisions made by the politicians.

HDR 2006 points out what it refers to as 'the internal controversy common to a post-communist transition ideology' evident in people being influenced by socialist views of the state as the guarantor of welfare but at the same time lacking in solidarity and shaped by the individualist values of the 'lean state' (59). The wish for greater social guarantees and a contradictory aversion towards the increase in the role of the state in people's lives can be seen in the results of the survey too. For example, while 69 respondents either believed or tended to believe the gap between the incomes of the Estonians people to be too large, 35 favoured or tended towards favouring the application of progressive taxation to alleviate the income gap, 38 were against the proposition and 6 refrained from expressing their opinion. The question of taxes was posed once more at a later stage in the questionnaire with the results of 42 respondents supporting proportional taxation, again 35 on the side of progressive taxation and 2 keeping from stating their preference.

Favouring greater security and a more prominent role for the state in social matters could be inferred from the fact that 65 respondents thought the state should be more active in helping those who cannot cope in the society on their own, 65 thought as many people as possible should be guaranteed free medical aid, 60 respondents found trade unions ought to be stronger, 50 people thought the state should effect greater control over enterprise (as compared to 21 who disagreed with the notion and 8 who did not express their opinion), and 47 respondents thought aid to the unemployed is not sufficient (as compared to 21 who thought state aid is sufficient and 11 who did not express their opinion). Still, contradictingly, when asked to choose whether it is more important that everyone can live their lives and freely aspire towards their goals or that the state plays an

active role regulating the society to make sure no one is in need, 56 respondents opted for personal freedom and 23 for greater state involvement.

A degree of weariness with the individualism, striving and competition can be detected in the replies to the survey. 77 respondents out of 79 noted that Estonians should be more caring towards other people. Also, the majority (55 respondents) felt that one can only rely on oneself in trouble. When laying out the problems of the contemporary Estonian society, several respondents mentioned undue individualism. "Excessively social darwinist attitude to others," "fragmentation," "inequality between different strata in the society," "lack of co-operation," "mutual indifference," "stratification" and "intolerance" – all were brought out as shortfalls by the respondents. Further, 4 respondents referred to the "egoism" existent in the society. A desire for greater solidarity and cooperation could be inferred from the replies, or as indicated by one respondent, "individualism and aspiring towards personal goals are nice, but on the other hand the state should support those who cannot get by more, as pure individualism does not lead anywhere" (Individualism ja oma eesmärkide poole püüdlamine on tore, teisest küljest peaks riik rohkem toetama, neid kes ikka üldse hakkama ei saa, sest ainult individualism ei vii ka kuhugi.)

Nevertheless, self-reliance, action and individual initiative seem to be valued. Respondents accept that individual effort is needed if one wants to achieve a result as shown by 69 respondents either agreeing or tending to agree with the proposition. Also, readiness to take risks is seen as prerequisite for success by 71 respondents (32 agreed completely and 39 rather agreed than not). Still, respondents seem to be somewhat disheartened as to the chances an individual has to carry out his/her dreams. While 44 agree either wholeheartedly or with reservations with the statement that 'an Estonian has every chance to carry out his/her dreams and wishes', 34 do not agree or do not entirely agree. Also, respondents are split as regards their belief in the equality of opportunity – 38 respondents (tend to) believe Estonians have equal opportunities to get by in the society while 39 respondents veer on the side of not believing Estonians have equal opportunities. This could be seen as reflecting dissatisfaction with the stratification and a sense that some members of the society stand at a better position than others. Nevertheless, as help cannot be expected from others or the state, it is up to the individual to ensure he/she fares well. While 64 respondents thought it fair that in the case of two secretaries who fulfil identical tasks in the same company the one who proves more assiduous and reliable has a greater salary, only 6 respondents disagreed. The answers could be viewed as illustrative of the importance of individual merit and personal contribution for the respondents.

In the case of giving money to beggars the respondents could roughly be divided into two camps, one consisting of those who at times give money to beggars or think Estonians in general tend to do so, and the other comprising those who themselves do not give money and do not think Estonians in general demonstrate much generosity towards beggars. Several respondents stated they choose who to give money to as they do not want to finance alcoholism as seen in the comments "No, because the beggar will buy vodka and not bread for it and who wants to waste money they have earned working hard on that" (Ei, sest kerjus läheb ostab selle eest viina mitte leiba ja kes tahab siis oma vaevaliselt teenitud raha sellele kulutada) and "I have offered them food and even bought them food but they say no. Probably they don't need it then. Don't give [them money]"

(olen pakkunud süüa ja isegi neile süüa ostnud, aga nad keelduvad. ju pole vaja. ei anna.). One person notes “I give. But the majority just walk past” (Mina annan. Kuid enamus kõnnib lihtsalt mööda) illustrating the general attitude that cannot be considered to exude compassion.

On the whole, as regards views on society and economy, the controversy between valuing individual action and a hankering for greater solidarity could be noted. Respondents seem to be tired of competition and uncertainty, yet individual action is acknowledged as the means to get by. Compassion exists, but as people are engrossed in their personal problems, little scope for attention to the weak is left.

### **6.3 Achievement Orientation and Materialism**

The survey indicates the respondents’ awareness of a cult of success, orientation to achievement and materialism existent in the society. On the basis of Inglehart’s model the respondents can be divided into the mixed type (45), materialists (20) and postmaterialists (6) indicating an emphasis on harder values and not so much on self-expression.

Respondents agree on the importance Estonians tend to put on leaving a good impression of themselves to others. 76 respondents of 79 either agree completely or rather agree with the position that impression is important for Estonians. One manifestation of success lies in the demonstration of things and indeed, “THINGS and MONEY,” (ASJAD ja RAHA) “excessive importance accorded to money” (raha ületähtsustamine) and “excessive cult of things and better-than-neighbour syndrome” (liigne asjade kultus ja naabrist-parem-sündroom) were mentioned among the problems faced by the contemporary Estonian society. Loans enable consumption and the purchase of things and have eagerly been taken out during the past years. Correspondingly, repayment of loans has been referred to as a problem by 9 respondents. Also, 71 respondents agree with the statement that the average Estonian has too many loans to repay and 7 respondents indicated they would speed up their loan repayments if they got a raise. This was the third most popular answer to the question after saving up and using the extra money for travelling.

Generally, money tends to be valued over time. The majority of respondents (55) would rather work their current hours and be paid more than work fewer hours and be paid their current salary (22). If their salary doubled, 48 would continue working their present hours, getting paid twice as much as currently, 21 would work half a year and be paid their current salary, while 9 would increase their current hours and be paid even more. 43 respondents would not be willing to trade a day’s pay for an extra day off in the week while 25 would. A number of respondents noted that while they would appreciate more free time, they could not accept such a proposition due to the decrease in income it would entail noting that they might consider the option if they earned more.

With the availability of goods, the spread of various means of consumption, the gradual increases in salaries and the exhortations of the perceived societal demands fuelled by advertisements and peer-comparisons, consumerism has gained ground. The relationship towards cars in Estonia (and other post-communist states) has been referred to as exemplary of status anxiety and the need to foreground one’s (supposed) wealth and success in visual form. Respondents were asked to give their opinion about the cars seen on Estonian streets and compare the situation to other locations if possible. Answers indicate that most respondents indeed think there is a tendency among Estonians to use

cars as status symbols. New (uus 15 mentions), big (suur 11 mentions) and expensive (kallis 17 mentions), were among the more popular adjectives as were luxurious (luksuslikud/luksus- 5 mentions) and lavish (uhke, uhkeldav 14 mentions). Other adjectives used to describe cars in Estonia included powerful (võimas), impractical (ebapraktiline), uneconomical (ebaökoonoomne, mitte ökonoomne, väheökoonoomne), presentable (esinduslik), massive (massiivne), boastful (kiitlev), over the top (ülepakutud) and racy (vinge). Though several respondents refer to a variety of cars stating that there exist all kinds of cars, old and new, big and small, and some respondents point out a trend of cars becoming increasingly smaller and more practical, the majority share a view of there being a disproportionate amount of big, new and expensive vehicles driven on Estonian roads.

A number of respondents refer to sports utility vehicles (maastur) as being popular and some admit these come in handy in snowy weather or overtakings on narrow roads. Further, several respondents associate the new expensive cars they see with bank loans and leases. To quote, “In most cases cars reflect how big a lot of forest someone has sold or how big a bank loan they have taken on” (autod peegeldavad enamasti seda, kui suur lahmakas metsa on ära müüdnud või kui suur pangalaen selga võetud), “[there are ] a lot of sport utility vehicles, that people try to boast with despite the fact that they have often bought the car on lease and have to scrimp and save on other things to pay for it” (hästi palju maastureid, millega püütakse uhkeldada. olgugi, et tihtipeale on autod liisinguga ostetud ja selle maksmiseks hoitakse teiste asjade pealt kokku) and “top notch models etc. that for a second seem to show that the Estonian people are rich and then you start to think that no, they take cars on lease. In a word they don’t think. In other countries they do think” (viimase peal mudelid jne. mis hetkeks nagu näitaks et eesti rahvas [sic] rikas ja siis hakkad mõtlema ei nad liisivad. ühesõnaga ei mõelda. mujal riikides mõeldakse).

Further comments on cars in Estonia indicate that in the respondents’ view Estonians tend to regard cars as status symbols to be flaunted. For example, one respondent wrote “Some Estonians don’t have anything but a lavish car – new and red” (Mõnel eestlasel ei olegi muud kui uhke auto - uus ja punane) and another one noted in a similar vein “there are people without a proper place to live but who nonetheless have swanky expensive cars” (On ju inimesi, kellel pole õiget elukohta, aga auto on see-eest ülisheff ja kallis). One respondent remarked, “what concerns cars, we’re dealing with a rampant “car pedantry” and “upstart boorishness”. The more lavish, expensive and bigger, the more “prestigious”” (Autode kohalt on meil lohkav “autopedendus” ja “tõusikmatslus.” Mida uhkem, kallim ja suurem, seda “prestiižikam”) stating that many people have opted for cars to be displayed that surpass their actual needs. It seems that for the respondents the cars Estonians tend to choose suggests the attitude that a person’s vehicle should allude to the owner’s riches and status. One respondent remembers a foreigner to have asked how anyone can call Estonians poor if they drive cars like the ones they do while another one states that “elsewhere in Europe one doesn’t encounter a similar parade of new and expensive cars” (mujal Euroopas ei kohta sellist uute ja kalliste autode paraadi).

The Estonian affinity for big, new and expensive cars is seen by a number of respondents as contrasting the West European preference for smaller, more economical cars bought for their utility rather than for flaunting riches. To bring out but a few assessments by the respondents “In comparison with the average European there are more big and expensive cars on our city streets” (keskmise eurooplasega võrreldes on

linnapildis suuri ja kalleid autosid rohkem), “In Great Britain the average person tends to use a practical car” (Suurbritannias kasutab keskmine inimene pigem praktilist autot), “On the streets of Rome cars are small and economical. New and lavish ones hardly catch your eye” (Rooma linnapildis on autod väikesed ja ökonoomsed. Uued ja uhked silma ei hakka), and “In Sweden a lot of small cars, good to park, economical, the same in Southern Europe. A car is used until it rusts through” (Rootsis, palju väikseid autosid, hea parkida, ökonoomne, sama Lõuna-Euroopas. Autoga sõidetakse seni kuni läbi roostetab). Cars then could be regarded as representative of the achievement orientation, status anxiety and the desire to visibly demonstrate one’s superiority and ambition encountered in the Estonian society. Though it cannot be said that all vehicles in Estonia are expensive, shiny and new as small economical cars are also to be encountered and are gaining in popularity, the concentration of luxurious cars on the streets has been noted to exceed that in Western Europe by both locals and foreigner, though West Europeans on average are wealthier than Estonians on average.

#### **6.4. Work and Leisure**

Respondents seem to live ordinary busy working lives. The average working week for those who had supplied numerical data was 41 hours per week. 31 respondents noted the official working week of 40 hours per week, one wrote up to 40 hours, one put down “40+”, one marked “40 officially, but more in reality,” while two stated their working week to be at least 40 hours, alluding they probably worked more. Seven respondents were not working. Fourteen respondents worked fewer than 40 weekly hours, ranging from 12 to 36 with one respondent putting down her working hours as 35 but adding that she was available for work-related phone calls at her time off the job. The longest reported working week stood at 60 to 70 weekly hours. Additionally, three respondents work 60-hour weeks, five work 50 hours per week (one of them at least 50), three people state their weeks to vary between 50 and 60 hours, and one person works 40 to 60 weekly hours. Additionally, overtime work seems to be quite common among the 39 respondents who were asked. Five respondents did not have to work overtime hours, two generally had no overtime work and six used the word ‘seldom’ when describing their relationship to overtime work. At the same time 1 person puts in 2 hours of overtime on daily basis, another puts in one daily hour of extra toil while still another respondent regularly works on lunch breaks. Two respondents often have overwork, one ‘constantly’ has overwork and one habitually takes work-tasks home with her. Five respondents deal with overwork every week and further respondents have overwork every month or every few months.

The length of vacation varies between nothing and two months for the respondents. The most common length is the legally mandated 28 days reported by 26 respondents; additionally, five respondents get one month off every year. Eight respondents receive a generous 56 free days a year and nine receive 35 days. At the same time one respondent reported to having no vacations and one stated having only the weekends off work. 5 respondents receive two weeks. Although the majority of respondents receive time for relaxation, the survey shows there to be people who are less advantaged in terms of vacation time. Also, being on vacation does not necessarily mean not working as noted by several respondents (e.g. “I have also worked on vacation time”). 26 respondents report themselves as often feeling they would like their lives to run by at a slower pace. 36 respondents admit to having such feelings sometimes, while 16 respondents only

seldom wish their lives to slow down. 34 respondents are contacted on work-related issues in their off-hours at least once a week, 5 among them are contacted at leisure time every day.

Work means more than just money for many respondents and they would not give up working even if they had enough material means to spend their lives in comfort doing nothing. While 33 respondents would stop working were they guaranteed a decent existence without work, 40 prefer work to a life of leisure. Respondents note that they like their job, that life would get boring without work, that work provides chances for self-fulfilment and avenues for ambition, and a person needs work to feel part of the community. Some respondents would continue work on reduced schedule, some would change the area of their work for a more pleasant trade while some would dedicate themselves to charity if they knew they would not have to worry over securing an income. Some respondents would take a while for a break-period from work and then continue.

To enquire as to the perception of the balance between work and leisure in contemporary Estonia, the question “Journalists often report Estonians to work a lot. Do you think Estonians tend to lead very work-centred lives or do they have enough time for leisure in addition to work?” was posed to the respondents. Replies show the majority of respondents to think life in Estonia veers towards work. 45 respondents rather see contemporary Estonian life as concentrated on work, 11 think it depends on the individual, whether his/her life is overly busy, and 16 respondents feel Estonians have enough time for leisure. Remarks that testify to the domination of work in daily life include “Estonians toil away crazily” (Eestlased on hullud töörabajad) and “You can’t say Estonians think much or know how to relax” (Ega eestlane väga ei mõtle ja puhata ei oska). Some note that life is busy as this particular period in time is a one of reconstruction and work is necessary to strengthen the economy and catch up with the wealthier countries. In the future a promise of more leisure is seen as revealed by statements such as “No time is left for leisure yet. We have to make up for the 50-year long occupation and stagnation” (Veel ei jää aega puhkuseks. 50-aastane okupatsioon ja paigalseis tuleb tasa teha) and “The change is in the future. At the moment most Estonians are slaving away” (Muutused on tulevikus. Hetkel on Eestis enamik inimesi tööloomad). Indeed, other respondents, too, observe that difficult economic circumstances cause work. Relevant comments include “those who wish to survive on their salary alone without taking a loan must really work a lot (and even hold several jobs)” (need, kes soovivad ainult palgaga ära elada laenu võtmata peavad tõesti väga palju (ja isegi mitmel kohal) töötama) “[Life tends to be] too busy, but what can you do... a car lease, a student loan and a mortgage need to be paid”( liiga tõine, kuid mis teha... autoliising, õppelaen ja kodulaen tahavad maksmist) and “the average Estonian toils away, has debt, and often cannot even afford to take a sick-leave” (keskmine eestlane rabab tööd, on võlgades ja tihti ei saa endale haiguslehtegi lubada). Moreover, remarks were made as to the way Estonians relax or do not relax, or as put by one respondent, “there isn’t enough time left for real relaxation, often also leisure becomes a duty (e.g. a number of trips abroad are taken to gain societal recognition) or efficient but ultimately destructive stress-relief (e.g. drinking) is treated as leisure” (Ei jää piisavalt aega tõeliseks puhkuseks, tihti muutub ka puhkus kohustuseks (nt nii mõnedki välireisid, mis võetakse

ette ühiskondliku tunnustuse pärast) või peetakse puhkuseks kiiret, kuid lõppkokkuvõttes hävitavat, stressimaandamist (nt joomine)).

The fact that overwork, lack of leisure and stress are mentioned among the problems faced by the contemporary Estonian society further testifies to the spread of the view that Estonians on average tend to lead busy and demanding lives. Also, 66 respondents have “workaholics” in their circle of acquaintances, 12 respondents do not personally know any workaholics and one is not sure. Four respondents admit to belonging among workaholics themselves. On the basis of their descriptions of the term people seem to be well-aware of what the word means.

Several respondents stated that Estonians do not know how to take time off and relax. When asked if Estonians have time left over for simple things like watching sunsets, 50 respondents thought Estonians do not find time for watching sunsets while 26 respondents thought they do and 37 respondents did not think Estonians have enough time to go for walks in the park while 28 thought Estonians find time for strolling around. At the same time 40 respondents believed Estonians have time to go and enjoy being in the nature while 23 believed Estonians to be too busy for spending time outdoors. Less respondents thought Estonians find time for engaging in creative activities than those who thought Estonians do not find time for creativity (22 as against 43). Also, less people thought Estonians can dedicate time to reading books than those who thought Estonians lack time for reading books (28 as against 36). While 55 respondents thought Estonians are interested in culture and would like to engage in cultural activities, only 33 respondents were of the opinion that Estonians indeed have time to devote to cultural matters. More respondents (39) thought people have time for practicing sports than for engaging in culture (33). Also, while 46 respondents indicated Estonians to be interested in socially associating with friends and acquaintances, 34 thought they actually have time for social gatherings. Similarly, respondents thought it more likely than not that Estonians lack time for their families with 23 respondents feeling Estonians have time for their families and 50 respondents finding Estonians have too little time to be with their close ones. Though one respondent notes that “at times it seems Estonians feel spending time with their own children is work” (vahel tundub, et eestlastele tundub, nagu oleks omaenda lastegagi ajaviitmine töö), there were more respondents who thought Estonians have enough time to take care of and be with their children than those who thought Estonians to be too busy to be with their offspring (36 as against 29).

By far the most popular answer for the question “How does the average Estonian relax?” was ‘by drinking alcohol’ expressed in various wordings. All in all 40 respondents mentioned getting drunk as the favourite pastime for Estonians. Additionally, 12 respondents mentioned partying as a popular leisure activity. 7 among the 12 did not make reference to alcohol, but as partying is a concept that often includes the consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially when expressed by the phrase ‘paneb pidu’, it can be supposed that the total number of those who think the average Estonians drink through their leisure is 47. Another cluster that was referred to more frequently was spending time with other people, a common answer being ‘with family and friends’. All in all 17 people mentioned family, friends, both family and friends, or the company of others but the activities engaged in could be rather different with some having a quiet night at home in mind and others possibly referring to social gatherings. Travelling, sightseeing or going for outings (16 mentions), watching television (14 mentions) and



going to sauna or a spa (12 mentions) were also seen as popular among Estonians. Significantly, cultural activities merited surprisingly little attention from the respondents with only 6 mentions of either concerts or theatres. Reading was not mentioned once. For the respondents unwinding is associated with getting drunk rather than with engaging in more meaningful activities. To bring a few examples of representative answers: “sauna, beer, good company and a lot of other things” (saun, õlle, hea seltskond ja palju muud) and “behind the television set, holding on to a bottle of beer” (televiisori taga, õllepudel käes) and “parties away, toils in the garden or goes to Egypt” (paneb pidu, rassib koduaias või sõidab Egiptusse).

## 6.5 Happiness

Most respondents consider themselves happy. 10 respondents report to feeling very happy, 57 respondents are fairly happy, 10 respondents are not especially happy and one respondent is not happy at all. While feeling considerably happy themselves, respondents do not see the average Estonian as being very satisfied. While 8 respondents answer ‘yes’ to the question “Is the average Estonian happy?” and further 14 answer in various ways that allow one to conclude that the average Estonian is happy, 13 respondents answer ‘no’ and an additional 19 respondents think Estonians are not happy. Also, a number of respondents are not sure. Several respondents referred to what can be considered the pessimistic, cautious, critical Estonian mind and wrote for example “The average Estonian complains even when he/she is happy, therefore it is impossible to prove whether the average Estonian is happy” (Keskmine eestlane viriseb ka siis kui ta on õnnelik, seega pole võimalik tõestada, kas keskmine eestlane on õnnelik) and “I’d rather say the average Estonian is content. The feeling of happiness is suppressed by the same cynicism and closedness that do not allow one to perceive one’s surroundings in a positive light and inhibit self-fulfillment” (Ütleks, et keskmine eestlane on pigem rahul. Õnnetunnet pärsib seesama küünilisus ning ka suletus, mis ei lase tajuda end ümbritsevat positiivses valguses ning mis pärsib eneseteostust). Some respondents noted the existence of unfulfilled material aims as keeping Estonians from reaching the state of happiness, evidenced in e.g. the following comments “It’s rather that they always want something more and think that if I had this and that and that, then I’d be happy” (Pigem tahetakse midagi aina enam ja mõeldakse, et kui mul oleks veel see ja see ja see, vat siis oleksin ma õnnelik) and “Probably not, they emphasise the material side of life too much” (Vist mitte, rõhutakse liiga palju materiaalsele aspektile). Further respondents pointed out the stress and hardships of daily life as eating into the sense of happiness. This view was manifested in remarks such as “rather not, because too many worries pile up, there is a lot of tension, little time for just being” (pigem ei ole, sest muresid kuhjub liiga palju, pinget on suur, aega vähe lihtsalt olemiseks), “no, [the Estonian is] more stressed and worried” (ei, rohkem stressis ja murelik), “no, [the Estonian is] very depressed, but puts on a brave face” (ei, väga masendunud, aga teeb vaprat nägu) and “I don’t think so, the average Estonian has too many loans (bankloans etc)” (Ei usu, keskmisel eestlasel on liiga palju maksukoormust (pangalaenud jne)).

When asked to name three things that make them happy, family, friends and relationships with people in general were overwhelmingly the biggest source of happiness. 34 respondents referred to the word ‘family’ and there were multiple mentions of friends, children, spouses, and loved ones. Further, ‘nice colleagues,’ ‘caring and

loving people,' 'having people I treasure around me' and so on were mentioned as bringing happiness. Also, work is a cause of happiness for at least 21 respondents. While some appreciate the existence of a secure job and some find their job inherently pleasurable, others rejoice in a job well done, and yet others value the prospects of advancement and the opportunities of self-fulfillment that accompany their job. Money, material security, a secure income, a good salary, payday, decreasing loan repayments and paid bills are mentioned among factors that lead to happiness. Also related to work is the aspect of professional self-actualization, challenge and development referred to by at least ten respondents. Health, mentioned by 15 respondents, was the third most popular aspect of happiness after family/friends/people and work. Free time was also considered important with 3 respondents mentioning leisure, one the balance between work and leisure and one the balance between work and family. 5 people brought out their hobbies as making them happy and several valued having time to spend on various things (e.g. themselves, their loved ones, interesting activities, family). It is people and closeness that respondents seem to value, but also their work with the chances of proving themselves and the income it yields. Still, leisure and free time to be with the loved ones and engage in activities one enjoys can be considered as a relevant factor influencing the level of happiness.

Finally, a telling set of further results can be presented that condense many of the more relevant points touched upon throughout the survey. Respondents were given pairs of descriptions of Estonians and asked to determine which characterisation is better suited to illustrate Estonians considering all circumstances. Respondents had to choose whether Estonians are happy or unhappy, well rested or overworked, well paid or poorly paid, carefree or stressed and whether they keep together or act separately from others. Based on the results, Estonians can be claimed to be unhappy (46:32), overworked (79:0), poorly paid (63:15), stressed (76:2) and to act separately from others (64:11). Here it would also be interesting to point out that 79 out of 79 respondents considered Estonians to be overworked rather than rested.

## **6.6. Conclusions of the Survey.**

Respondents to the survey conducted on values and issues to do with work and leisure in the contemporary Estonian society referred to the great importance of work and a degree of stress in modern Estonia in several aspects.

Detachment and a hard-working nature were emphasised above other possible characteristics in their descriptions of the perceived Estonian cultural character.

As regards social and societal matters, the sense of uncertainty people have to cope with on daily basis can be seen as a factor leading to stress and highlighting work in their lives. On the one hand people long for security and want the state to be more protective of its members, but on the other they seem to acknowledge that it is individual action, not solidarity or cooperation, that leads to results.

The importance laid on impression is also thought to characterise contemporary Estonians. People value success and achievement and this can be seen as leading towards materialism and consumerism. As indicated by the respondents, though several among them would like to work less time, they cannot afford to decrease the amount of time spent on work for less work means less money earned. In their assessment of cars seen on

Estonian roads a number of respondents point to many Estonians as regarding cars as status symbols to be flaunted.

The focus on work can be seen as leading to lack of leisure and stress, as is indicated by the replies given by several respondents. A number of respondents report to wishing they had more time to spend on their family and friends. Estonians in general are seen as burning away their lives with the majority of respondents referring to drinking as the favourite means for Estonians to relax. Though respondents tend to regard themselves as fairly happy, the average Estonian is portrayed as somewhat dissatisfied with his/her life. The level of happiness is seen as brought down by a characteristic Estonian gloom, materialist concerns, lack of leisure, achievement orientation and by status anxiety or the phenomenon of 'keeping up with the Joneses.' The fact that respondents view Estonians as tending towards being unhappy, overworked, poorly paid and stressed, and as acting separately from others cannot be said to testify to a prevailing sense of ease and happiness in the society.

In all, respondents referred to a number of issues characteristic of contemporary Estonia. The individualism, lack of solidarity, achievement orientation and cult of success that for the sample of the present survey appeared as characteristic of Estonians resemble American views. Also, importantly, the readiness and the pressing need to work hard to guarantee one's daily survival in the face of the prevailing sense of uncertainty, but also the drive to work that springs from one's desires to engage in conspicuous consumption can be seen as suggesting similarities with the American cast of mind.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of the present study has been to observe the effect values have on daily life in the United States and in Western Europe, and to determine how the situation in Estonia compares. Pace of life and the use of time as regards the balance between work and leisure have been under particular attention.

The saying “Americans live to work, Europeans work to live” points to varying priorities in terms of the use of time on the two continents. According to widespread stereotypes Americans dedicate more of their lives to work, while (West) Europeans appreciate the leisure that accompanies free time. For the last decades Americans in aggregate have indeed worked longer hours and had shorter vacations than Europeans. They could thus be said to have less time (and energy) for their loved ones, and for leisure activities like cooking, reading and travelling. The cultural character and the socioeconomic organisation of a society have been referred to when explaining the differences in working time in different societies.

The bulk of Americans can be described as ambitious, achievement-oriented, hard-working, competitive, individualist, optimistic, restless, self-reliant and acquisitive. People want to excel, each person is thought to be responsible for the course of their life, wealth is appreciated and there is a readiness to give up the sense of security in the name of success. Hard work and perseverance are seen as leading to success, effort is lauded and each person should try and make the most of opportunities that are perceived to be open to all. Keeping busy and being active are treated as desirable while excessive leisure can be viewed at with suspicion. Europeans tend to appreciate the traits of compassion, solidarity, cooperation, stability and environmental consciousness to a greater degree. The general atmosphere in Western Europe demonstrates more care towards weaker members of the society and lays less importance on individual striving. People value the maintenance of relationships with others and feel grateful for the leisure they have. The central cultural tendencies or the values and patterns of behaviour the majority in a society subscribe to will condition those living there. While the features associated with Americans can be seen as encouraging work, traits related to Europeans do not spur an individual to toil away to a similar degree.

Liberal market economies with their lesser state-involvement tend to highlight the importance of work, while the coordinated market approach has been described as fostering greater security and reducing the pressures for competitiveness. Taxation and labour market regulation, especially the degree of unionisation, are particularly noted for their influence on working time. It has been explained that higher taxes in countries favouring coordination tend to curb the individuals’ drive for excessive toil and greater union power has contributed to the decrease in hours at work. Socioeconomic conditions of a society could be seen as a reflection of values held, with Americans stressing individuals’ free choice, lauding initiative and subscribing to liberal views, and Europeans expressing a greater concern for solidarity and tending to favour/tolerate a more active state. Political choices influence the amount of time spent on work directly through appropriate legislation and indirectly through the degree of security individuals feel.

The fact that nowadays there are more options with which to fill free time has contributed to the perceived busyness of life. In many cases also the pace of work has increased and workplaces have become more mentally demanding. Additionally, people

face the dilemma of whether to work more to have more money for their leisure or to have less money to spend during more free time. As a result of political choices West Europeans have had more free time during the past decades; they have become used to their leisure and would not like to see the proportion of time spent on work to increase much in their societies. The pace of life in Europe has been seen as more relaxed and less harried than that in the States.

As regards Estonia, hard work remains a central feature in the Estonian self-image and is frequently referred to when discussing Estonians in the past and at present. Similarity with attributes common to Americans can be seen in the traits of individualism, cult of success, status anxiety, competitiveness, orientation to action, self-reliance, acquisitiveness, perseverance and readiness to take risks. People want to prove their worth, secure their existence and improve their station in life by toiling and amassing possessions. Hard values emanating from concern with materialism and physical comfort tend to be rated above soft values to do with self-expression and the quality and enjoyment of life. While located in Europe, Estonians do not share much the sense of solidarity characteristic of West Europeans. Rather, individualistic striving, lack of trust and acting separately from others have tended to describe Estonians in the last decades.

Life in post-independence Estonia has been veering towards work-centeredness. Estonians on average spend more hours on work than West Europeans and thus have less time available for leisure. In addition to the cultural character and the self-image that underline the importance of work, socioeconomic circumstances and the daily environment favour concentration on work. The state has been run according to liberalist principles, welfare is limited, taxes do not discourage overwork or lessen the gap between the rich and the poor, and unions lack bargaining power. The neoliberalist creed stresses the importance of each individual's hard work in shaping their present conditions and their future. Lack of state-guarantees, a sense of insecurity and the need to get by without external help motivate work in the society.

Also, consumerism with its exhortations to spend calls for work as people want to compensate past scarcity and gain the material means to fulfil their dreams despite the relatively high cost of living. A number of Estonians need to consistently work to repay loans. The cult of success with its endless comparisons to others fosters conspicuous consumption and demands one to demonstrate one's achievement or to follow the perceived standards set by peers and examples in the media. Additionally, people have been sensing a need to work hard and postpone personal gratification for the country to be able to recover and catch up with "the West".

In a society where it is common for people to find themselves consumed by concern over securing an income, worry emanating from work and work-related issues takes up much of an individual's thoughts. Excessive concentration on work can be said to have a detrimental influence on the quality of life while more free time and a sense of security contribute to a feeling of happiness. As revealed by the results of the survey conducted as part of the thesis, respondents think Estonians tend to act separately from others and tend towards being unhappy, overworked, poorly paid and stressed.

Both cultural conditioning and the socioeconomic factors that shape the daily realities of an individual could be seen as having an impact on the time-use patterns in a society. Referring to the stereotypical saying "Americans live to work, Europeans work to live,"

contemporary mainstream Estonians, like Americans, could be said to be rather living to work than working to live in the manner of the Europeans.

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## Appendix 1: The Questionnaire

Tere!

Kirjutan hetkel teadusmagistritööd ühiskondlik-kultuurilistel teemadel ja oluline osa tööst käsitleb eestlaste harjumusi, kombeid, käitumismalle, iseloomujooni ja suhtumisi ühiskondlikesse protsessidesse. Käesolev küsimustik ongi koostatud, et välja selgitada inimeste arvamusi antud teemadel ja Teie panus oleks uurimuse jaoks olulise väärtusega. Oleksin Teile väga tänulik, kui Te leiaksite aega siinsele küsimustikule vastata. Igasugused teiepoolsed kommentaarid on kõigi küsimuste juures teretulnud, vastuse pikkus pole limiteeritud. Avatud vastusevariandi puhul palun kirjutage oma vastus pärast küsimust, tähtedega vastuse variantide puhul palun tõmmake ring ümber sobiva tähe. Kui soovite midagi pikemalt kommenteerida, on ruumi viimasel lehel. Vastuseid analüüsin anonüümselt, kuid Teie kohta oleks vaja teada järgnevaid andmeid:

Sugu:

Vanus:

Amet/tegevusala:

Veel kord, olen väga tänulik, et Te vastamisele oma aega kulutate.

1. Millised omadussõnad tulevad Teil pähe kui Teil palutakse eestlasi kirjeldada?

2. Kuidas suhtute järgnevatesse lausetesse...

- 1 täiesti nõus
- 2 pigem nõus
- 3 pigem ei ole nõus
- 4 ei ole nõus
- 5 ei oska öelda

Palun kirjutage vastav number tulpa väite taha

1. Eesti inimeste sissetulekutes on liiga suured erinevused	
2. Vahet suurema ja väiksema sissetulekuga inimeste vahel tuleks korrigeerida suurema sissetulekuga inimesi suuremalt maksustades (astmelise tulumaksuga)	
3. Hindade ja palga suhe on paigast ära	
4. Töötajate õigused on Eestis hästi kaitstud	
5. Riik peaks aktiivsemalt aitama neid, kes ühiskonnas iseseisvalt hakkama ei saa	
6. Abi töötutele (abiraha, ümberõpe, abi uue töökoha leidmisel) on piisav	
7. Võimalikult paljudele inimestele tuleks tagada tasuta arstiabi	
8. Riik peaks ettevõtteid efektiivsemalt kontrollima	
9. Eestlastel on kõik võimalused oma unistuste ja soovide täideviimiseks	
10. Et midagi saavutada tuleb ise kõvasti pingutada	
11. Eesti inimestel on ühiskonnas hakkama saamiseks põhimõtteliselt võrdsed võimalused	
12. Keskmisele eestlasele on tähtis õnnelik pereelu	



13. Eestlased võiksid rohkem teistest inimestest hoolida	
14. Keskmise eestlane mureseb teiste arvamuse pärast ja tahab teistele inimestele endast head mulje jätta	
15. Eestlaste jaoks on tähtis teiste ees oma head elus hakkama saamist näidata	
16. Keskmisele eestlasele on tähtsad looduskaitsega seotud teemad (prügi sortimine, elektri säästmine, globaalne soojenemine)	
17. Keskmisel eestlasel on suur laenukoormus (pangalaenud, liisingud jne)	
18. Hädas olles saab Eestis loota ainult iseendale	
19. Asjad ja olmelised küsimused on eestlaste jaoks suure tähtsusega	
20. Ilma julgelt tegutsemata ei ole kunagi võimalik palju saavutada	
21. Eestlastel on piisavalt aega seltskondlikuks läbikäimiseks sõprade ja tuttavatega (ühised õhtusöögid, väljas käimised)	
22. Eestlastel on piisavalt tahtmist seltskondlikuks läbikäimiseks sõprade ja tuttavatega	
23. Eestlastel jääb piisavalt aega kultuuriga tegelemiseks (teater, kino, raamatud, kontserdid)	
24. Eestlased üldiselt tahavad kultuuriga tegelda	
25. Eestlastel jääb piisavalt aega spordiga tegelemiseks	
26. Keskmise eestlane leiab pere jaoks piisavalt aega	
27. Eestlased võiksid rohkem omavahel koostööd teha	
28. Eestlaste jaoks on oluline pigem enda kui teiste ühiskonna liikmete käekäik	
29. Praegustel Eesti lastel saab olema kergem elu kui praegustel Eesti täiskasvanutel	
30. Eliitkoolide olemasolu on õigustatud, andekamad lapsed/noored saavad niimoodi parema hariduse	
31. Tuleks suhtuda ettevaatlikult suurte muudatuste tegemisse elus	
32. Peavoolumeedia annab Eesti elust tõese pildi	
33. Eestlased leiavad aega sellisteks lihtsateks tegevusteks nagu:	
päikeseloojangu vaatlemine	
pargis jalutamine	
loodusesse minemine	
loominguga tegelemine	
lastega tegelemine	
raamatu lugemine	
34. Eestis on liigselt kaubanduskeskusi ja supermarketeid	
35. Euroopa Liidu sõjalist võimsust tuleks suurendada	
36. Tööandjal on ühiskonnas kõrgem positsioon kui töövõtjal	
37. Keskmise eestlase jaoks on tähtis hoida end kursis mujal maailmas toimuvaga	
38. Heade tulemuste nimel peab julgema riskida	
39. Eestis võiks olla rohkem väikeseid isikupäraseid poode-kauplusi	
40. Ametiühingud peaksid Eestis tugevamad olema	
41. Edu ei sõltu mitte niivõrd inimesest endast, kui võrd tema kontrolli alt välja jäävatest asjaoludest	
42. Inimesed peaksid olema nõus looduse säästmise nimel kõrgemaid makse	

3. Võttes kõiki asjaolusid arvesse, kas Te ütleksite, et eestlased pigem (vastuseks palun trükkige vastavalt a või b noolekese taha)

- on a) õnnelikud b) õnnetud >
- on a) puhanud b) ületöötanud >
- on a) hästitasustatud b) halvasti tasustatud >
- a) hoiavad ühte b) tegutsevad teistest eraldi >
- on a) muretud b) stressiseisundis >

4. Mis on hetkel Eesti ühiskonna jaoks suurimad probleemid?

5. Millised kaks järgneva nelja variandi seas on Teie arvates Eesti jaoks kõige olulisemad?

- a) korra säilitamine riigis
- b) rahvale tähtsates riigiasjades suurema sõnaõiguse andmine
- c) hinnatõusu vastu võitlemine
- d) sõnavabaduse kaitsmine

Neist kahest tähtsam on ...

6. Kas ühiskonna jaoks on parem pigem a) proportsionaalne (praegu Eestis kehtiv) tulumaks või b) progressiivne ehk astmeline tulumaks?

7. Kumb on tähtsam, kas a) et kõik saavad oma elu elada ja vabalt eesmärkide poole püüelda, või b) et riik mängib ühiskonda reguleerides aktiivset rolli hoolitsemaks, et keegi ei tunne puudust

8. Kas on õiglane, et kui kaks sekretäri töötavad samas ettevõttes ja täidavad samu ülesandeid, aga üks on usinam ja usaldusväärsem, siis ta saab ka rohkem palka?

9. Kuidas defineerida mõistet „õnn”? Mis on õnn?

10. Kas võiksite kõiki asjaolusid arvesse võttes öelda, et olete...

- a) väga õnnelik b) küllaltki õnnelik c) mitte eriti õnnelik d) üldse mitte õnnelik.

...

11. Palun nimetage kolm asja, mis teevad Teid õnnelikuks.

12. Kas keskmine eestlane on õnnelik?

13. Mis teeb inimese edukaks? Kes on edukas inimene?

14. Ajakirjanduses kirjutatakse sageli eesti inimeste suurest töötegemisest. Kas Teie hinnangul kipub eestlaste elu väga tõiseks minema või jääb eestlastel ka piisavalt aega puhkuseks?

15. Kas eestlane annab tänaval kerjusele raha?

16. Kas eestlastel on kodus palju raamatuid? Kas eestlased on lugeja rahvas? Milliseid raamatuid Teie hinnangul hetkel eelistatakse?

17. Kuulute Te mõnda ühingusse/ gruppi/ seltsi? (Millisesse?)

18. Mitu tundi nädalas Te hetkel töötate?

19. Kas Teil tuleb/on tulnud teha ületunnitööd?

Kui tihti?

Kui pikalt?

20. Kui pikk on Teie puhkus?

21. Kuidas keskmine eestlane lõõgastub?

22. Tunnete Te mõnikord, et tahaksite, et elu kulgeks aeglasemalt?

a) tihti b) mõnikord c) vahel harva d) kunagi e) ...

23. Kas Te pigem ...

a) töötaksite vähem tunde aga saaksite praegust palka?

b) töötaksite sama palju nagu Te hetkel töötate aga saaksite rohkem palka?

24. Kui Teie kuupalk tõuseks kahekordseks, kas te ...

a) töötaksite edasi sama palju kui seni ja saaksite kaks korda rohkem palka

b) töötaksite kuus kuud ja ülejäänud pool aastat puhkaksite (aastapalk jääks sel juhul sama suureks kui see on praegu)

c) töötaksite veelgi rohkem kui seni ja saaksite palju rohkem palka

25. Kas Te oleksite nõus loobuma päevapalgast ühe lisapuhkepäeva vastu nädalas?

26. Maksimaalselt mitu tundi nädalas oleksite valmis (iganädalaselt) töötama kui Teie sissetulek sõltuks vaid töötatud tundide arvust?
27. Kui Teie palk tõuseks järgmisest kuust kahekümne protsendi võrra, siis mida Te teeksite juurde saadava rahaga?
28. Kas Te loobuksite oma tööst kui Te teaksite, et Teil on piisavalt raha, et ilma tööta ära elada? Milline oleks sellisel juhul Teie jaoks „piisav rahahulk“?
29. Kui tihti tuleb ette, et Teie kolleegid, ülemused või kliendid võtavad ühendust Teiega või Teie nendega Teie tavapärasest töötundidest välja jääval ajal?  
a) mitte kunagi b) vähem kui kord nädalas c) kord nädalas d) mitu korda nädalas  
e) vähemalt kord päevas
30. Kas Teie tutvusringkonnas on mõni inimene, kelle kohta võiks kasutada inglisekeelset sõna „workaholic“ (töösõltlane/tööhull/töönarkomaan)?
31. Milliste tunnusjoonte järgi võiks öelda, et mõni inimene on „workaholic“?
32. Kas Teie tutvusringkonnas on inimesi, kes igapäevaelustressi osteldes leevendavad?
33. Kuidas kirjeldaksite autosid, mida igapäevaselt Eesti tänavapildis näete? (Kui Teil on võrdlusmaterjali mõne teise riigiga/riikidega, palun märkige need ja lisage kommentaarid).

## Appendix 2: Some Numerical Data Subtracted from the Results of the Survey

Kuidas suhtute järgnevasse lausetesse...

1 Täiesti nõus

2 Pigem nõus

3 Pigem ei ole nõus

4 Ei ole nõus

5 Ei oska öelda

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Eesti inimeste sissetulekutes on liiga suured erinevused	28	41	4	1	5
2. Vahet suurema ja väiksema sissetulekuga inimeste vahel tuleks korrigeerida suurema sissetulekuga inimesi suuremalt maksustades (astmelise tulumaksuga)	17	18	17	21	6
3. Hindade ja palga suhe on paigast ära	45	30	1	2	1
4. Töötajate õigused on Eestis hästi kaitstud	4	28	20	18	9
5. Riik peaks aktiivsemalt aitama neid, kes ühiskonnas iseseisvalt hakkama ei saa	21	31	6	2	-
6. Abi töötutele (abiraha, ümberõpe, abi uue töökoha leidmisel) on piisav	4	12	16	20	8
7. Võimalikult paljudele inimestele tuleks tagada tasuta arstiabi	26	23	6	4	1
8. Riik peaks ettevõtteid efektiivsemalt kontrollima	23	27	16	5	8
9. Eestlastel on kõik võimalused oma unistuste ja soovide täideviimiseks	11	34	20	12	2
10. Et midagi saavutada tuleb ise kõvasti pingutada	46	23	-	-	-
11. Eesti inimestel on ühiskonnas hakkama saamiseks põhimõtteliselt võrdsed võimalused	10	28	17	22	-
12. Keskmisele eestlasele on tähtis õnnelik pereelu	23	34	11	7	4
13. Eestlased võiksid rohkem teistest inimestest hoolida	44	33	1	1	-
14. Keskmine eestlane muretsseb teiste arvamuse pärast ja tahab teistele inimestele endast head mulje jätta	45	31	1	1	1
15. Eestlaste jaoks on tähtis teiste ees oma head elus hakkama saamist näidata	47	28	-	-	4
16. Keskmisele eestlasele on tähtsad looduskaitsega seotud teemad (prügi sortimine, elektri säästmine, globaalne soojenemine)	4	16	37	18	4
17. Keskmisel eestlasel on suur laenukoormus (pangalaenud, liisingud jne)	35	36	3	1	4
18. Hädas olles saab Eestis loota ainult iseendale	22	33	18	5	1
19. Asjad ja olmelised küsimused on eestlaste jaoks suure tähtsusega	31	42	2	2	-
20. Ilma julgelt tegutsemata ei ole kunagi võimalik palju saavutada	29	43	3	-	4
21. Eestlastel on piisavalt aega seltskondlikuks	7	17	35	14	6

lähikäimiseks sõprade ja tuttavatega (ühised õhtusöögid, väljas käimised)					
22. Eestlastel on piisavalt tahtmist seltskondlikuks lähikäimiseks sõprade ja tuttavatega	11	35	14	4	5
23. Eestlastel jääb piisavalt aega kultuuriga tegelemiseks (teater, kino, raamatud, kontserdid)	6	27	32	10	4
24. Eestlased üldiselt tahavad kultuuriga tegelda	9	46	15	2	7
25. Eestlastel jääb piisavalt aega spordiga tegelemiseks	10	29	26	6	7
26. Keskmine eestlane leiab pere jaoks piisavalt aega	5	18	39	11	6
27. Eestlased võiksid rohkem omavahel koostööd teha	47	28	1	2	1
28. Eestlaste jaoks on oluline pigem enda kui teiste ühiskonna liikmete käekäik	38	36	3	1	1
29. Praegustel Eesti lastel saab olema kergem elu kui praegustel Eesti täiskasvanutel	9	16	22	9	23
30. Eliitkoolide olemasolu on õigustatud, andekamad lapsed/noored saavad niimoodi parema hariduse	11	23	22	15	8
31. Tuleks suhtuda ettevaatlikult suurte muutustega tegemisse elus	13	30	21	11	4
32. Peavoolumeedia annab Eesti elust tõese pildi	-	10	31	27	11
33. Eestlased leiavad aega sellisteks lihtsateks tegevusteks nagu:					
päikeseloojangu vaatlemine	5	21	31	19	3
loodusesse minemine	11	29	17	6	16
pargis jalutamine	8	20	31	6	14
loominguga tegelemine	4	18	35	8	14
lastega tegelemine	5	31	26	3	14
raamatu lugemine	6	22	30	6	15
34. Eestis on liigselt kaubanduskeskusi ja supermarketeid	23	24	14	7	11
35. Euroopa Liidu sõjalist võimsust tuleks suurendada	6	17	13	13	30
36. Tööandjal on ühiskonnas kõrgem positsioon kui töövõtjal	36	32	3	5	3
37. Keskmise eestlase jaoks on tähtis hoida end kursis mujal maailmas toimuvaga	13	34	22	3	7
38. Heade tulemuste nimel peab julgema riskida	32	39	4	-	4
39. Eestis võiks olla rohkem väikeseid isikupäraseid poode-kauplusi	40	25	5	2	8
40. Ametiühingud peaksid Eestis tugevamad olema	38	22	5	3	11
41. Edu ei sõltu mitte niivõrd inimesest endast, kuivõrd tema kontrolli alt välja jäävatest asjaoludest	3	14	34	17	11
42. Inimesed peaksid olema nõus looduse säästmise nimel kõrgemaid makse maksma	13	32	18	11	5

Võttes kõiki asjaolusid arvesse, ...on eestlased pigem...

Õnnelikud 32 / Õnnetud 46 / Ei vastanud 1

Puhanud 0 / Ületöötanud 79

Hästitasustatud 15 / Halvasti tasustatud 63 / Ei vastanud 1

Hoiavad ühte 13 / Tegutsevad teistest eraldi 64 / Ei vastanud 2  
Muretud 2 / Stressiseisundis 76 / Ei vastanud 1

Ühiskonna jaoks on parem pigem  
proportsionaalne (praegu Eestis kehtiv) tulumaks 42  
progressiivne ehk astmeline tulumaks 35  
Ei vastanud 2

Tähtsam on  
et kõik saavad oma elu elada ja vabalt eesmärkide poole püüelda 56  
et riik mängib ühiskonda reguleerides aktiivset rolli hoolitsemaks, et keegi ei tunne  
puudust 23

Kõiki asjaolusid arvesse võttes olete Te  
Väga õnnelik 10  
Küllaltki õnnelik 57  
Mitte eriti õnnelik 10  
Üldse mitte õnnelik 1  
Ei vastanud 1

Tunnete Te mõnikord, et tahaksite, et elu kulgeks aeglasemalt?  
Tihti 26  
Mõnikord 36  
Vahel harva 16  
Ei vastanud 1

Te pigem  
töotaksite sama palju nagu Te hetkel töotate aga saaksite rohkem palka 55  
töotaksite vähem tunde aga saaksite praegust palka 22  
ei vastanud 2

Kui Teie kuupalk tõuseks kahekordseks, Te pigem...  
töotaksite edasi sama palju kui seni ja saaksite kaks korda rohkem palka 48  
töotaksite kuus kuud ja ülejäänud pool aastat puhkaksite (aastapalk jääks sel juhul  
sama suureks kui see on praegu) 21  
töotaksite veelgi rohkem kui seni ja saaksite palju rohkem palka 9  
ei vastanud 1

Kui tihti tuleb ette, et Teie kolleegid, ülemused või kliendid võtavad ühendust Teiega või  
Teie nendega Teie tavapäraest töötundidest välja jääval ajal?  
Vähemalt kord päevas 5  
Mitu korda nädalas 12  
Kord nädalas 17  
Vähem kui kord nädalas 32  
Mitte kunagi 10

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
INGLISE FILOLOOGIA ÕPPETOOL

Kristiina Kuslapuu

The Impact of Cultural Values and Societal Factors on the Pace of Life and on the Relationship Between Work and Leisure in the United States, Western Europe and Estonia: A Comparative Analysis

Kultuuriväärtuste ja ühiskondlike tegurite mõju elutempole ning töö- ja puhkeaja suhtele Ameerika Ühendriikides, Lääne-Euroopas ja Eestis: võrdlev uuring

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**Annotatsioon**

Käesolev töö käsitleb väärtushinnangute mõju igapäevaelule Ameerika Ühendriikides ja Lääne-Euroopas võttes erilise tähelepanu alla väärtuste mõju inimeste ajakasutusele ja inimeste suhtumise töösse ja vabasse aega. Väärtusi ja ajakasutust Ameerika Ühendriikides ja Lääne-Euroopas võrreldakse olukorraga Eestis.

Kõigepealt vaadeldakse tüüpilisi ameeriklastele ja eurooplastele omaseid jooni ja nenditakse, et kui peavoolu ameeriklasi iseloomustavad individualism, konkurentsimeelsus, tulemustele orienteeritus, optimism, enese peale lootmine, avatus muutustele, oma ühiskondliku positsiooni pärast muretsemine ja tarbijalikkus, siis lääneeurooplased hindavad ameeriklastest enam koostööd, inimestevahelist suhtlust, solidaarsust, stabiilsust ja huvitavat ajaveetmist. Seejärel kirjeldatakse ühiskonnakorraldust, milles peegelduvad üldised väärtushinnangud. Ühendriikides on levinud liberaalne mõtlemine, lääneeurooplased kalduvad pooldama ja tolereerima riigi suuremat osalemist elu korraldamisel. Riigi roll mõjutab sotsiaalse kindlus- või ebakindlustunde kujunemist, mis omakorda mõjutab inimeste suhet tööga. On leitud, et erinevused maksusüsteemides ja tööelu reguleerimises, eriti ametiühingute tugevuses, on mõjutanud ameeriklasi tähtsustama töö osa oma elus ja jätavad eurooplastele rohkem vaba aega. Lääneeurooplased töötavad vähem tunde ja nende puhkused on pikemad kui ameeriklastel. Üldistades, kui ameeriklased kipuvad hindama tarbimist ja omanduse akumulereimist, siis eurooplaste jaoks on olulised inimsuhted ja vaba aja meeldiv sisustamine.

Eesti puhul võib öelda, et ühiskond on keskendunud pigem töötamisele kui vaba aja väärtustamisele. Sarnaselt ameeriklastega on eestlaste seas levinud individualism, võistluslikkus, enese peale lootmine ja avatus muutustele. Eestlaste autostereotüüp tõstab au sisse töökuse ja töörügamise. Levinud liberaalne ideoloogia rõhutab iseseisvalt hakkama saamist. Materiaalne ebakindlus on sundinud inimesi kõvemaid väärtusi hindama. Edukultus innustab tarbima, tarbimine omakorda nõuab tööd ja raha teenimist. Samuti on inimesed teadvustanud vajadust jõukamatele „Lääne“ riikidele järele jõuda ja selle nimel pingutada. Lääne-Euroopaga võrreldes on eestlaste töötunnid pikemad ja puhkused lühemad. Kui viidata stereotüüpilisele lausele „Ameeriklased elavad, et töötada; eurooplased töötavad, et elada,“ tundub, et paljude eestlaste elu kaldub pigem töö tähtsustamise kui vaba aja nautimise poole. Ka 79 vastaja hulgas läbi viidud tööd,



ajakasutust ja väärtushinnanguid puudutanud küsitluse tulemused lubavad väita, et töö on hetkel eestlaste elus olulisel kohal.

Märksõnad: ameeriklased, eurooplased, eestlased, kultuurilised karakterid, töö ja vaba aeg, väärtused, kultuuriuuringud, ühiskond, tarbimine