

GIVE ME A BREAK: A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF
UNITED STATES WORK POLICIES

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors Committee of
Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillments
of the Requirements
for Graduation in the Honors College

by Preston Paul

San Marcos, Texas
May 2016

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UNITED STATES WORK POLICIES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work and effort put into this honors thesis would be nothing without the support system I have had available to me during my time writing my thesis. To my dearest friends and brothers who encouraged me in my successes and mourned with me my failures and misfortunes, thank you for being a listening ear, even when the talking became too much. To those friends who completed their theses before or were also doing their theses at the same time, thank you for allowing me to ask millions of questions at odd hours of the night to ensure that what I was doing was hopefully correct.

To my family, thank you for supporting me morally and financially throughout my undergraduate career. Nothing I have accomplished these last five years, especially this thesis, would have been possible without your support. My grandparents, Ron and Kathleen Ledbetter, thank you so much for making sacrifices to put your eldest grandson through college. My only wish is that throughout these long five years I've made you proud in the end, and I hope to continue to do so in the future. I love you both dearly.

Finally, to the faculty at Texas State for being a vast wealth of knowledge for me, and also with helping me see that getting this thesis finished is actually possible. Thank you to all of those professors who have influenced me while at Texas State; Dr. Turri of the Marketing Department, Dr. Cooper of the Geography Department, and Dr. Forrest of the Department of Modern Languages. You all have helped me grow so much. Of course, thank you to my thesis supervisor Dr. Janet Hale and second reader Dr. Raymond Fisk. I owe you both more than words could ever say. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

The division between the professional and personal realms of an employee's life has been widely accepted as an important component of employee happiness, and as a result, overall employee productivity. With multiple routes to improving and strengthening the divide between the two, having the time off to have a personal life outside of one's professional life can be extremely beneficial, but how does the United States fare? By examining other Western countries (Austria, Australia, Denmark, and Switzerland) that have a higher rate of employee happiness and more federally mandated breaks, it is clear that with having more federally mandated holidays, shorter work weeks, and paid time off, it increases employee satisfaction and productivity which the United States could stand to benefit from.

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INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction. The overarching goal of hundreds of millions of people on this Earth. People make choices throughout their lives to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, and search for their calling to have the most satisfying life possible. It becomes the single most important thing on our minds from childhood, and carries on and grows in importance as we enter adulthood. As a society, we make choices towards satisfaction in the people we surround ourselves with, the objects we own, the places we live, but what about in our workplaces?

In modern American society, it is common and almost expected for people to loathe their workplace¹. They are expected to take long commutes and work long hours in bland offices doing work they despise, all for the overarching goal of making as much money, or being as successful as possible to truly enjoy their lives. In spite of all of this, it is easy to overlook the fact that, on average, people spend the highest percentage of their day during the work week at or doing work². Should the activities we as a society spend most of the day doing during the work week not be something that we can look forward to in some way?

The short answer is yes. Having a negative and/or stressful work environment can cause short-term health effects such as digestion issues, lack of sleep, headaches, and changed mood such as sadness, anger, and irritability, and long-term effects such as unemployment³, depression, heart-disease, generalized anxiety, and over-all lowered

¹ http://www.gallup.com/poll/181289/majority-employees-not-engaged-despite-gains-2014.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_content=heading&utm_campaign=syndication

² <http://www.bls.gov/tus/charts/>

³ <http://oecdinsights.org/2014/07/10/depressing-depression-mental-illness-and-work/>

health that could result in a shorter lifespan⁴. The toll the workplace can take both physically and mentally on the employee definitely suggests a need for reform in regards to the workplace mindset. How does the workplace effect employers though, or the productivity as a whole? Does satisfaction, affect the workplace?

There are multiple studies that suggest that employee satisfaction affects the company and workplace as a whole. For instance, low satisfaction leads to poorer job performance due to apathy and/or resentment towards the company, which lowers a company's overall productivity⁵. Conversely, companies that are noted for their employee satisfaction, such as those listed on "Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For", can be more alluring to people in the labor force looking for jobs, while these companies also encourage those employees who are already part of the company to stay and grow with the company, lowering overall job turnover rates⁶.

In short, happiness matters, not just in the personal aspects, also but in the professional aspects of people's lives too. It influences choices beyond home, friends, and in their personal lives, but the overall happiness of a company's employees can determine the course a business heads towards; whether that be success, failure, or stagnation⁷. Therefore, most companies would make the conclusion that employee satisfaction, should be a high priority. However, there are many companies that could see improving satisfaction to be a challenge, and they may not know how to do so.

⁴ <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/workschedules/>

⁵ http://www.academia.edu/9617953/The_Positive_and_Negative_Effects_of_Job_Satisfaction_on_Employee_Performance_in_an_Organization

⁶ http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/188399/retaining-employees-money-matter.aspx?g_source=employee%20happiness&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles

⁷ <http://pps.sagepub.com/content/5/4/378.full.pdf+html>

There are studies that have suggested multiple ways to increase satisfaction and productivity⁸. Pay is the first way that comes to mind for many employers, and while pay can be a factor for increasing employee satisfaction, such effects are drastically reduced once the employee in question is outside of the poverty level, and is therefore not as strong of a motivator as we believe it to be⁹, and can conversely have employees working based on monetary gain and not based on their motivation to work for the company itself, as can be noted from Festinger and Carlsmith's 1956 experiment¹⁰. There is also the aspect of company culture and employer-employee relations, but such aspects are hard to measure and make for complicated comparisons, as some believe that there is no catchall management style, but often management and corporate culture depend on the company environment and the employees¹¹. What professionals are finding is that work-life balance can play a significant role in employee success and satisfaction¹².

Work-life balance is a culmination of parts, from leaving work at the office, separating personal aspect of one's life from the professional aspects, and even time away from the office. Such time away from the desk could be issues such as maternity/paternity leave, more holidays, and paid time off (PTO), or simply shorter workdays. If companies increase the amount of time away from work via PTO, maternity and paternity leave, and/or decreased hours per work week, companies would find an increase in job satisfaction and an increase in productivity in those hours worked.

⁸ <http://www.happiestminds.com/whitepapers/smiles-differentiating-quotient-for-happiness-at-work.pdf>

⁹ http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/188399/retaining-employees-money-matter.aspx?g_source=employee%20happiness&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles

¹⁰ <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Festinger/>

¹¹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/grouptthink/2013/10/04/how-to-build-a-great-company-culture/#1e69c2d03ab2>

¹² http://www.academia.edu/190880/Making_the_link_between_work-life_balance_practices_and_organizational_performance

If the United States were to create policy enforcing this notion of more time away from the office, whether through longer breaks, shorter hours, etc., the issue of practical application would undoubtedly come up, and for good reason. Policy makers want to ensure that the policies they enact and/or change will actually serve to benefit not only in theory, but in practice too. To ensure this, the practical application of four different Western countries; Austria, Australia, Denmark, and Switzerland, will be critically examined and compared to United States work policy to better assess how different policies in terms of PTO, work days, and holidays affect the workplace.

Looking at these four countries and what they have to offer can not only generate ideas as to how workplace policy in the United States could benefit employees and their companies, but could also show the effects practical application of these policies have on other Western Industrialized Nations. Recognizing the importance of employee happiness, productivity, and the role work/life balance plays in employee happiness, comparing United States work policies in regards to paid time off and reduced work weeks to other countries could result in improved company performance and employee satisfaction.

CHAPTER ONE: EXPLANATION OF CHOICES

Countries

With 195 countries in existence to date, as recognized by the U.S. Department of State, choosing those countries which would best act as foils for the United States of America is absolutely imperative¹³. The countries need to be similar enough to the United States to make the comparison more applicable, but simultaneously need to hold ideals and utilize principles that stand out from the United States. In addition, the number of selected countries need to be enough to grant diversity and exhibit certain qualities, but not so many that the research becomes impossible to perform. With this in mind, the selection became limited to countries like the United States in the areas of being predominately white, industrialized nations of or from European descent. The countries chosen then became Austria, Australia, Denmark, and Switzerland.

Austria was chosen due to it being the country sporting the most holidays out of all other nations that fit the criteria¹⁴. Looking at the most holidays and days off in a country could show the effectiveness of having more paid days out of the office. It also would allow for the comparison of having more days off versus having shorter work weeks. This contrast provides different suggestion for the issue of balance between work and life, and could allow U.S. policy makers to see what the effects of having a large amount of paid days off and holidays would have in raising the amount of work/life balance per country.

Australia was chosen due to the deep parallels with the United States. Both were former colonies of the British Empire, both are common law countries, and both are very

¹³ <http://www.state.gov/misc/list/index.htm>

¹⁴ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

similar in terms of culture, in addition to being Industrialized, mostly white, and mostly English-speaking¹⁵. Despite these similarities, Australia has shorter work weeks, more days off, and is more productive, suggesting a correlation between an increased balance in work/life, and could be an example of a possible goal for the United States.

Denmark, one of the Scandinavian countries that are frequently cited for their socialistic policies and seemingly idyllic lifestyle, was chosen due to being the most satisfied country among OECD countries, and having the highest rating of work-life balance¹⁶. Having such a high rating in terms of satisfaction should instantly pique the interest of other industrialized nations, and beg the question as to what Denmark is doing that other countries can also implement. Analyzing the amount of time off and seeing how that affects their work/life balance would be absolutely beneficial in making recommendations for the United States.

The final nation observed, Switzerland, is almost in a class all on its own. A country nestled in the Swiss Alps, land-locked and yet made a prominent figure due to their banking industry, as noted by Zurich being one of the top five financial centers in the world¹⁷. With 275 different banks of all shapes and sizes, 118 of which being foreign banks¹⁸, it is clear to see how widely the country is regarded as a banking center, and comes as little surprise that the country is ranked number one on the Global Competitive Index by the World Economic Forum¹⁹. Comparing Switzerland to the United States can

¹⁵ geert-hofstede.com/australia.html

¹⁶ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>

¹⁷ http://www.longfinance.net/images/GFCI15_15March2014.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.swissbanking.org/en/facts_figures.htm

¹⁹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf

show how a country can be extremely competitive and have a strong economy and still have more PTO.

Austria, Australia, Denmark, and Switzerland all have their unique aspects that set them apart, and can offer guidance and ideas as to how other countries, specifically the United States, can change policy and work standards for a more functional and productive workspace. While offering unique ideas, they all still hold key aspects that tie them to the United States, and can offer themselves as a foil without being so outside the realm of the United States that it seems impossible or simply not for the country. They each hold a different key aspect of the criteria that will be examined in order to give a comprehensive look at this comparison.

Criteria

To appropriately compare the countries selected with the United States, a set of criteria has to be chosen in order to provide as holistic of an approach as possible. The criteria needs to not only encompass the work/life separation and productivity, but other influential factors to give the examination of difference between the five countries a more well-rounded approach. The criteria can be broken up into four subsections, outlining the important facets of each country that will be examined. Economic factors, social factors, time away from work, and factors of satisfaction all contribute to the overall analyzation of the countries.

The economic factors are those factors the specifically focus on production both as a country and as an individual. Looking at various factors of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), such as GDP Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), GDP per capita, and GDP per hour

worked gives us a sense of the country's financial standings on the individual and national level so that each aspect can be better analyzed for correlations. The employment rate will also be regarded to evaluate economic health and also to prevent the contradiction of the labor force of these nations having good work/life balance and being productive, but having a large number of people within the country unable to find a job at all. Finally, there will be a comparison based on the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Rating (GCR). This index serve the purpose of analyzing overall competitiveness in each country, showing the power each country holds on a global scale.

Social aspects of each country are important as they can be strong indicators as to why a country has the policies they do and how they have become widely accepted. Such social factors are cultural aspects such as those laid out through Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions are a series of six aspects of a country's culture laid out by Geert Hofstede that make up and define a country's culture. Just as important is the country's history and background, as it can provide telling evidence as to how a country accepted the policies it has to maintain work-life balance and increase citizen satisfaction. Also, looking at a survey the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has available can give a brief glimpse as to what aspects of life the people of each country give precedence to.

Time away from work can take various forms and this study attempts to analyze it in as many forms as possible. Looking at the amount of paid time off (PTO) is one of the most common aspects of separation from the workplace. Under PTO is maternity and paternity leave. Looking at which countries have federally mandated paid maternity/paternity leave and for how long can be a strong indicator for work/life balance

and therefore employee satisfaction. Also under PTO is federally mandated holidays, days in which companies are required to close their businesses for the day and let their employees and themselves enjoy the day. Another aspect of PTO is simply generic time off for vacations or other uses. They allow employees to utilize these days either for vacations, trips for family, medical emergencies, or deaths. Finally, the aspect of the length of the work week itself can have significant bearings on employees, especially if they feel as though they are always at the workplace.

Satisfaction and its components are difficult to measure, and therefore are not plentiful in data. The OECD's Better Life Index was the primary component for the collection of satisfaction data. Satisfaction is split between work/life balance, and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is measured by the OECD by asking participants how satisfied they are with their lives as a whole, and attempt to focus on not having the answer choices swayed by current emotions. Work-life balance is measured by survey reports in addition to the number of citizens that are working long hours and the number of hours that citizens from each country report dedicating to leisurely activities. These qualities are set against surveys also performed by the OECD in which participants are asked to rate which qualities measured by the OECD are most important. This survey will allow us to have a brief glimpse into the mentality of the people of each country and see what they value as individuals outside of federal workplace policies.

Regarding all aspects of each country and what effects their policies and their workplace can grants a more complete picture of all aspects that go into a country. Doing so provides a holistic approach to this comparison, and ensures that the increase of PTO in any of its forms will not come into conflict with any other aspects of a country, such as

culture or economics. With this criteria and countries laid out, a closer analyzation of the policies, social and economic factors, and overall happiness can be performed.

CHAPTER TWO: COUNTRIES

Australia

Australia is an island country between the Indian and Pacific Ocean with an imposing desert surrounded by miles of beautiful coastline. This geography has resulted in all major cities in Australia to exist around the coastline, with a majority of population living in these urbanized areas on the coast. The country's 22,751,014 people are predominately white, with over 50% of the population being either English or Australian which correlates to 76.8% of the population speaking English. The population is mostly working age, with 47% of the population being between the ages of 25 and 54 with a median age of 38.4, and are expected to live until their early eighties. The biggest religion in the country is Christianity, with Protestant being the largest percentage, due mostly in part to their history and heritage of British colonialism.²⁰

British settlements did not appear in Australia until 1788. Before then, Australia's population was purely Aborigines, hunter-gatherers who stretched across the continent, and were estimated to have reached a population of 1,000,000 at their peak after crossing over from Asia some 45,000-50,000 years ago. The people were split into multiple "tribes" with hundreds of languages, this divide due to different geographic location. They lived mostly isolated from European influence, despite multiple European explorers

²⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>

visiting the area.²¹ Few explorers found the coasts of Australia, and those who did found it hard to return, until Captain James Cook landed on the island and claimed it for the British Empire.²²

After claiming the island, the British sent multiple convicts to the island to work off their sentences. While those who finished their sentences were promised freedom, those who were still operating under their sentences grew weary from having no rights in choosing the people governing them. In addition, the Aboriginals were poorly treated and driven off lands that were theirs for thousands of years. After revolts, protests by the convicts in Australia, and independent governments formed by each of Australia's states, the independent Commonwealth of Australia formed in 1901. In the years that followed, they would grow to support their mother country of the United Kingdom in both World Wars, come to create trade agreements with surrounding Asian and Oceanian nations, and deal with racial prejudicial issues.²³

With a history deeply rooted in England and in their independence, such beliefs can be seen in their cultural qualities. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Australia scores a 36 in Power Distance, a 90 in Individuality, 61 in Masculinity, 51 in Uncertainty Avoidance, 21 in Long Term Orientation, and a 71 in Indulgence, all numbers which can be noted in Table One. Their 36 in Power Distance means the country is not strictly built around power structures, but instead cross-rank communication is allowed and in some cases encouraged. Information is readily shared and more informal than in countries with a higher Power Distance. Australia's high Individualism is

²¹ <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Australian-Aborigine>

²² <http://www.britannica.com/place/Australia/History>

²³ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Australia/History>

characteristic of a culture that encourages autonomy and forward-thinking. The country focuses on “me” more than “we” when making decisions. A Masculinity score of 61 denotes that Australia has a leaning towards being successful and “winning” versus truly enjoying what they do.

With this drive for success comes how comfortable people are with the unfamiliar, noted by the Uncertainty Avoidance attribute, which Australia scored a very mild 51, showing they are neither threatened nor do they embrace the unfamiliar. Australia also focuses on the short term with their normative thinking, characterized by little saving and more focus on actions that render quick results, all noted in the Long Term Orientation. Finally, their treatment towards desires and impulses tend towards indulgent, with a score of 71 on Indulgence. As a whole, Australia is a nation characterized by independent, success-driven citizens that have little power structures, and indulge on their impulses. They focus little on the future, and are neither avoidant nor acceptant of the unknown.²⁴

Australia’s economy is typical of any industrialized nation in many aspects, which is laid out in Table Two. They have a strong GDP of 1.489 trillion as of 2015, with a 2.4% growth rate. Their average unemployment in 2014 was 6.1%, with an average GDP per capita of 64,700.²⁵ Long term unemployment, or members of the labor force that have been looking for a job for over a year, sits at 1.08% with workers facing a 4.84% chance of losing their jobs.²⁶ The Global Competitive Index put out by the World Economic Forum ranked Australia 21 out of 148 countries, a ranking backed by economic factors in

²⁴ <https://geert-hofstede.com/australia.html>

²⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>

²⁶ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/australia/>

the country, such as infrastructure, efficiency, innovation, and existing institutions.²⁷²⁸

Their labor force of approximately 12.5 million as of 2015 is mostly involved in the service industry, with 75.3% employed in this economic sector. Despite a major focus in services, a major aspect of the Australian economy stems from their mining industry, with major exports such as coal, iron ore, alumina, and gold being a direct result of this industry with major trading partners in both imports and exports being China, the United States, and Japan.²⁹

Directly correlated to their productivity and GDP, their GDP per hour worked has increased by 8.5% from 2010.³⁰ Per hour worked, Australian workers each averaged approximately 55.8 United States Dollars (USD) per hour in 2014.³¹ This GDP per hour is coupled with Australia's less-than-average hours per year, with it being 1664, which is 106 hours less than average for countries that are part of the OECD.³² These lowered work weeks are complimented by Australia's eight federally mandated holidays. All Australians take off for New Year's Day (January 1st), Australia Day (January 26th), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day (April 25th), Queen's birthday holiday, Christmas (December 25th), and Boxing Day (December 26th). In addition to these holidays, Australian workers are guaranteed off any public holiday that is declared by the Territory or State they reside in.³³

²⁷ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf

²⁸ <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2011-12/CountryProfiles/Australia.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>

³⁰ <https://data.oecd.org/lprdy/gdp-per-hour-worked.htm#indicator-chart>

³¹ http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV

³² <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>

³³ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

Not only are Australian workers guaranteed these holidays in the Fair Work Act of 2009, but they are also guaranteed four weeks of leave that may be carried over into the next year. The exceptions for this guaranteed time off are those workers that are considered “casual” or “continuous” workers, both of which experience time off with different conditions and limitations.³⁴ Finally, Australian parents are guaranteed time off at a reduced pay. Australian mothers are eligible for up to 18 weeks of maternity leave at 42% of their pay. Fathers on the other hand receive up to two weeks at 42% of their pay.³⁵

With this time off, one would assume a resulting effect in terms of how Australians are ranked in their work-life balance. Surprisingly, Australia is ranked 30th out of 36 countries in the OECD. 14% of the population works more than 50 hours a week, and by gender, 21% of men work these long weeks and 6% of women. In addition, Australians only spend on average 14.4 hours each day on personal matters, such as sleeping, eating, etc., which is less than the OECD average as well.³⁶ These less-than-average numbers in work-life balance can be mirrored by the fact that out of the 6,367 Australians surveyed, work-life balance was ranked as the most important issue out of 11 topics the OECD covers.³⁷ Despite this probable need for more work-life balance, life satisfaction was ranked a 7.3 out of those surveyed, putting Australia in 10th place out of 36. Though the data is more based on overall feeling and is therefore much more subjective, the data does show the overall mood of Australians, especially with contentment with their quality of life.

³⁴ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

³⁵ https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf

³⁶ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/australia/>

³⁷ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#AUS>

While Australians arguably have room for improvement, across the eight sectors the OECD evaluates, Australia averages out to be the top ranked country.³⁸ A strong economy with a good GDP per capita and very trade and career focused. This every-man-for-himself country may be on the lower end of other OECD member states in terms of their work weeks and work-life balance, a sentiment mirrored by the country's people's responses in the OECD survey. All in all, a very industrialized and developed nation, and surely a strong component of the British Commonwealth.

Austria

The first overviewed of three European nations, Austria's unique history, culture, and work policies resulted in it being examined through this study. A landlocked nation in Eastern Europe of 83,871 sq. km, Austria has had to rely on its more fertile, low-lying lands on the eastern side of the country for trade, with the imposing Alps on its borders with Switzerland and Italy. Presently, Austria has 8,665,550 people within the country, over 90% of which are of Austrian descent. The country mostly speaks German, the national language, with an 88.6% majority. The nation is also predominately Catholic in religion, with over 70% of Austrians labeling themselves as Catholic. Almost half of the total population of the country falls between the ages of 25 to 54, with an average age of 43.6.

Austria, before its formation, was part of the territory claimed by the Roman Empire. It existed under the empire for years until Roman forces were overrun by

³⁸ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/0000000000>

tribes.³⁹ They were overrun by future Holy Roman Emperor Otto I, who conquered the land.⁴⁰ After a series of wars and families ruling the country for hundreds of years, the most noted of all being the Hapsburgs, all came to a standstill upon the anointment of Maria Theresa as the Heiress of Austria.⁴¹ Countries surrounding Austria took great offense at the idea of a woman leading the country, and made move towards encroaching on Austrian territory. While advances were made, this only served to solidify the power of Austria and their presence.⁴²

Years of degradation after this solidification of power in the Austrian empire resulted in a change in policy. To reflect the changing face and to further balance the power in the nation, Austria became Austria-Hungary, a dual nation, dual citizen country, headed by one king.⁴³ After World War I, Austrians were left to pick up the pieces and establish a new government. There were multiple trials through this establishment with Austrians dying to be part of Germany, even going as far as calling the country “German-Austria”. The League of Nations was strongly against this, and recommended the name be changed to “Republic of Austria”.⁴⁴

Hitler’s rise to power, however, ensured the union of the two nations, and Austria became part of Nazi Germany. After the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, Austria was once again left to rebuild while being occupied by Allied forces. They once again became the Republic of Austria after the Allies left the country, and became a

³⁹ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/Cultural-institutions#toc129458>

⁴⁰ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/Early-Middle-Ages#toc33346>

⁴¹ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/Social-economic-and-cultural-trends-in-the-Baroque-period#toc33351>

⁴² <http://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/Social-economic-and-cultural-trends-in-the-Baroque-period#toc33351>

⁴³ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/Constitutional-experimentation-1860-67>

⁴⁴ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/First-Republic-and-the-Anschluss>

federal state. After years of conflict amongst neighbors, the new Austria sought out a way for peace, and is currently a member of both the European Union and the Eurozone.⁴⁵

Austria's cultural aspects are common of other Industrialized, Western nations, as can be noted in Table One. The country has a Power Distance score of 11, so the gap between various parts of the internal power levels of a company are minimal and communication between them is free and informal. Their Individualism sits at a 55, making them slightly individualistic, but not so much that they only focus on themselves and their immediate family, as Austrians most likely would consider their fellow neighbors too. Austria's highest score lies in Masculinity at a 79, meaning the people are a lot more geared towards success and their goals versus enjoyment.⁴⁶

The country has a fairly high Uncertainty Avoidance at 70, so the people of Austria tend to stick with activities or objects that are within the realm of their experiences. Austria's pragmatic society, as noted by their score of 60 in Long Term Orientation, focus on adapting ideals with a constant examination of the times, while constantly making choices for the betterment of the future. Finally, Austria ranked 63 in Indulgence, meaning the people enjoy their leisure time, like to do things for fun and enjoyment, and focus on optimism.⁴⁷

The Austrian economy is heavily intermingled with other countries in the EU, especially Germany, but still has a strong economic sector with an educated labor force. In addition to the EU, Austria is also part of the WTO, but most of its trade partners are EU members, and still maintains its ranking of 16th most competitive country in the

⁴⁵ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Austria/Anschluss-and-World-War-II>

⁴⁶ <https://geert-hofstede.com/austria.html>

⁴⁷ <https://geert-hofstede.com/austria.html>

GCR.⁴⁸ Its main trade partner, Germany, receives 30.2% of the nation's exports, followed by the U.S., Italy, Switzerland, and France, all of which receive less than 10%. Most of these exported goods consist of machinery, car parts, and other metal goods.⁴⁹

The Austrian workforce is primarily located in the service sector however, with 68.5% of the workforce employed here and 70.7% of the GDP originating from this sector. GDP sits at 400.7 billion USD as of 2014, with an average of 47,100 USD per capita. The average Austria worker faces an unemployment rate of 5.6 in 2014, out of a labor force of 3.827 million people.⁵⁰ Long term unemployment is at 1.19%, with an annual increase of 0.1% yearly since 2008, but the chances of an Austrian employee losing their job is at 3.9%.⁵¹

The Austrian work week seems extremely focused on ensuring the worker is productive, but is not overly stressed. Austrians worked 1,629 hours a year in 2014, or 31.33 hours a week⁵² and for each hour of work, the average Austrian made 52.5 USD.⁵³ These work weeks, which are 2.7 hours less than the OECD average each week, compliment Austria's generous days off. Austria enjoys 13 days of in which workers in the country can enjoy full pay, and should they work that day despite having the day off, they are paid double their wages for the day.⁵⁴

In addition to these holidays, Austria also grants its workers 25 days of paid leave, or five weeks for the average worker. This amount increases to 30 when the employee

⁴⁸ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/au.html>

⁵⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/au.html>

⁵¹ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/austria/>

⁵² <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>

⁵³ http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV

⁵⁴ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

has been working with the company for more than 25 years. This time off is also augmented based on the kind of work the employee in question performs. If the employee works late nights, they can be eligible for additional days off depending on the number of times a year said employee has to work overnight shifts. Also Austrian employees enjoy what is called “13th month” bonus in which employees receive bonuses at the end of the year that are equal to a month’s pay with less taxation.⁵⁵

In addition to general PTO, Austria has federally granted maternity and paternity leave for its employees. Mothers can receive up to 16 weeks of maternity leave with full pay to ensure that the mother can focus on taking care of their child. In addition, mothers are also granted 44 weeks of parental and home care leave at 80% of their pay. Fathers conversely receive no paternity leave, but they do receive 8.7 weeks of parental leave at 80% pay. Having the ability to have time away from work should allow a great experience of work-life balance, especially with as many holidays as the country has.⁵⁶

Austria ranks 26th out of all OECD countries in terms of work-life balance. With such a low ranking, the question as to how Austria ended up on the list despite average work week lengths and multiple paid days off. The answer lies in the percentage of people who work overtime (overtime being 50 hours a week or more on average). While only 8% of Austrians work these long hours, they still rank 22nd out of all OECD nations. Also, the disparity between men and women who work these long hours is stark, with 12% of men working long work weeks while only 3% of women work overtime.

⁵⁵ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

⁵⁶ https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf

Despite men working more overtime hours than women, on average, men have an hour more of personal and leisure time each day than women do, with men enjoying 15 hours of leisure time and women receiving 14, which brings the average 14.5, below the OECD recommended 15 hours, and therefore puts them in 29th place out of all OECD countries.⁵⁷ Life Satisfaction, however, was 16th place with an average score of 6.9 (on a subjective score of 1 to 10). This happiness score is above the OECD average, so despite having a lower score in work-life balance, Austrians are happier than average.⁵⁸ Finally, across all 11 of the categories the OECD measures, Austria ranks number 17th.⁵⁹

Austria's rich and complicated history has resulted in strong ties with neighbors. These strong ties take the form of relations, such as the E.U., other trade agreements, and with four out of five of Austria's major trading partners being neighbors and/or fellow E.U. members. Having such strong economic partners has allowed the country with a GDP per capita of 47,100 USD to focus on lightening the work week, mostly through the nation's 13 holidays and four weeks of vacation. This masculine country however strives for success and many citizens, especially 12% of men consistently work more than 50 hours a week, showing signs the country is still has work towards improving work-life balance.

Denmark

A nation surrounded by the waters of the North and Baltic Seas with its only land border shared with Germany to the south, this flat peninsula generally noted for its

⁵⁷ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>

⁵⁸ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>

⁵⁹ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/00000000000>

happiness and liberal views certainly stands out from its fellow Scandinavian nations.

The country has a small population of 5,581,503 of primarily Lutheran Scandinavians, a majority of which speak Danish. 39.03% of the population is between the ages of 25-54, with a median age of 41.8 years. Most Danes, however, can expect to live a little under 80 years.⁶⁰

Denmark has a history deeply entrenched in its neighbors to the north, Sweden and Norway. All 3 countries were lands of the Vikings, superb seafarers that conquered many lands, from England to Iceland and Greenland, and even parts of France. In the 10th century, King Gorm consolidated the mainland of Denmark and eventually conquered Norway and created a Christianized nation.⁶¹ Eventually the nation transitioned from the Viking era to Feudalism. With Feudalism came territorial disputes from surrounding kingdoms and the need to defend.⁶²

Denmark's biggest clashes came from the Holy Roman Empire to the south, and Sweden to the north. These countries constantly held Denmark back through their conquests, primarily in the Baltic. Sweden in particular was constantly intertwined with Denmark, at one point even allowing their nation to be led under the same crown as Denmark and Norway⁶³ until Sweden once again became its own nation.⁶⁴ After being dragged into the Napoleonic Wars by the British who then cut off trade with Norway, Sweden, allies of Britain ended up owners of Norway. After this defeat, Denmark stayed

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⁶¹ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Denmark/The-Viking-era>

⁶² <http://www.britannica.com/place/Denmark/The-High-Middle-Ages>

⁶³ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Denmark/Margaret-I-and-the-Kalmar-Union>

⁶⁴ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Denmark/Reformation-and-war>

out of most European wars, most notably World War I and World War II until Nazi Germany conquered the peninsula.

Analyzing Denmark through Hofstede's cultural dimensions, there can be similarities noted between Denmark and the previously viewed countries, but also some drastic differences, as laid out in Table One. In terms of similarities, Denmark is also very individualistic with a score of 74. Danes also enjoy a low Power Distance at 18, so like Austria and Australia, there is a lot of communication between the workplace hierarchy and this conversation can be fairly informal. Finally, Denmark shares the trait of being indulgent with Austria and Australia, so like their people, Danes do not mind occasionally indulging in things for their comfort and enjoyment.⁶⁵

Denmark differs dramatically however when it comes to Masculinity. Denmark is a very feminine country, scoring a 16 in Masculinity. This score indicates that Danes strongly focus on happiness over success, also specifically how "it is important to keep the life/work balance", a quality which may come into play when examining the OECD Better Life Index. The second difference come from Denmark's 23 in Uncertainty Avoidance. Danes are interested in objects and ideas out of their comfort zone and are willing to try new things. It also means Danes do not need a lot of structure and are okay with ambiguity. Danes are also very normative in their long-term orientation, with Danes holding great respect for tradition and focus on quick results.⁶⁶

The Danish Economy is a key member of the European Union, especially in the realm of trade liberalization. This trade only accentuates their 15th place rank in the

⁶⁵ <https://geert-hofstede.com/denmark.html>

⁶⁶ <https://geert-hofstede.com/denmark.html>

Global Competitive Rating⁶⁷, however their belief is reflected in their choice of trade partners in which five out of the six of which are fellow European nations, with the largest being Germany. The most exported products are machinery, meat, and dairy. Their most profitable sector, however is the service industry with 76.3% of the nation's GDP coming from this sector as of 2015.⁶⁸

Seeing how the service industry holds 76.3% of a 257.1 billion USD GDP, it is unsurprising that the biggest employing sector is also the service industry with 77.1% of 2.774 million people in the workforce. Their work has averaged a GDP per capita of 45,100 in 2014, a number fairly similar to Austria's. Their unemployment rate was at 4.9% in 2014,⁶⁹ with a long term unemployment rate of 1.78% with a 0.3% increase over the last year. The rate of job loss, conversely, sits at 5.61%.⁷⁰

With a national economy comes the man hours out in the workforce of that country. On average, Danes worked 1,436 hours in 2014, or 27.62 hours a week.⁷¹ With the average person making 52.5 USD an hour, they are making 1450.05 USD a week.⁷² These shorter work weeks can also be attributed to Denmark's five weeks of PTO. This PTO does come with strings, however. To receive this, employees have to work for the company for a year. In addition, the days off have to be approved by the supervising manager, but must strongly consider the needs and wants of the employee.⁷³

⁶⁷ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf

⁶⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/da.html>

⁶⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/da.html>

⁷⁰ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/denmark/>

⁷¹ <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>

⁷² http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV

⁷³ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

In addition to needs and wants, the needs and wants of new parents are also addressed on a federal level. For mothers, they can receive a total of 50 weeks of PTO at 54.1% of their usual pay. 18 of these weeks are specifically to be used for maternity leave. For new fathers, the amount pales in comparison to the amount of time women receive. Fathers only get two weeks off of paternity leave at 54.1% of their usual pay. Despite their low work weeks and five weeks off, their maternity and paternity is not as extensive as it is in other countries that have been examined.

In terms of work-life balance, Denmark was ranked 1st out of all 36 OECD nations. As a nation that represents the furthest extent of work-life balance out of all OECD nations, there are certain qualities the country possesses to earn its title. 2% of all workers consistently work 50 hours or more per week, broken down into 3% of men and 1% of women. This number, however, has not been increasing since 2008. In addition, both male and female Danes dedicate 16.1 hours a day to personal and leisure time, which is 1.1 hours above the OECD average.⁷⁴

Denmark is also the country that was ranked number one in life satisfaction. On a scale from one to ten, Danes on average rated their satisfaction at 7.5. There is a slight division between men and women, with men scoring 7.6 on average while women only score 7.5. Many Danes, have attributed their high life satisfaction to programs such as the one implemented in Southern Denmark where citizens are regularly asked to self-evaluate their happiness overall and then break that happiness down in terms of multiple factors such as health, etc. This survey is released once a year with a more comprehensive “Hvordan har du det?” or “How are you?” health survey sent out every

⁷⁴ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/denmark/>

four years.⁷⁵ This focus on life satisfaction is also reflected in the survey Danes filled out to identify which of the 11 dimensions of the Better Life Index (BLI) they found most important. Life satisfaction was ranked as most important by 709 Danes, 39% of which lie in the 15-25 range and 62% of which are male. Work-life balance falls farther down the list at 4th place in terms of importance.

On a more all-encompassing scale, Denmark has a spot firmly in 4th place according to the OECD's BLI when looked at all 11 aspects across the 36 different member nations. Denmark's dedication to achieving the best work-life balance and greatest life satisfaction has certainly earned it recognition, from both international institutions to governments abroad. Looking at the policies and actions Denmark has taken to ensure their citizens are the most satisfied they can be will has the potential of being a gold mine of information when making recommendations for ways the United States of America can improve aspects of their federal labor laws in order to ideally one day be a competitor with Denmark in these areas.⁷⁶

Switzerland

Our second landlocked nation, Switzerland lies in the heart of Europe, surrounded by France, Italy, Austria, and Germany. The country boasts the highest peaks out of all the Alps, but also has a mostly mountainous terrain with the Alps in the south and Jura in the northwestern part of the country. The country's ethnic make-up is a result of the borders it shares with its neighbors. 65% of Swiss are of German descent, 18% are

⁷⁵ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>

⁷⁶ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/111111111111>

French, 10% are Italian, and 1% is Romansch. To accommodate their four biggest ethnic components of the country, there are four official languages, each of which correspond to these ethnic groups; German, French, Italian, and Romansch. Switzerland, with all of its diversity, holds 8,121,830 people most of which average around 42.1 years old, and are expected to live until 82.5 years.⁷⁷

In Switzerland's earliest days, the area was filled with Celts. With Germanic people from the north and Romans to the south, the Celts did not last long as they were eventually overrun and conquered by the Romans. Romans developed agriculture in the area and all was well until the eventual breakdown of the empire, which resulted in Roman Switzerland being taken by the Germanic people. The Germanic tribes in Switzerland eventually joined the Holy Roman Empire, effectively adding the territory of Switzerland into the empire. Over time and due to the remoteness of Switzerland in the Alps, eventually royal influence weakened and small dynastic groups of people held local power in various areas of Switzerland.⁷⁸ Over time, these small dynasties faced problems that small groups of people or families could not handle alone, which opened the door to an oligarchic society in Switzerland.⁷⁹

Eventually elected leaders from each family and dynasties gathered together to form the ruling government in this area, a movement that was solidified by the resigning of a treaty promising public peace, which many historians and Swiss alike credit the birth of the country here with the cementation of the Swiss Confederation. While Switzerland involved themselves in skirmishes and battles for the goals of territorial acquisition, that

⁷⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sz.html>

⁷⁸ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Switzerland/History#toc257011>

⁷⁹ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Switzerland/The-Swiss-Confederation-during-the-Late-Middle-Ages>

all came to a head after their defeat at Marignano in 1515. Such a decisive loss discouraged the Swiss from involving themselves further, and eventually paved the way for their international policy of neutrality.⁸⁰

This neutrality allowed for the development of many of their modern important economic sectors. Clockmakers from all over came to Geneva to show their craft, and eventually became a hub refugee clockmakers would go to in times of war. In addition, their neutral position made them a safe spot for banking as they were sure to not involve themselves in war and potentially lose funds. After feeling effects from the French Revolution, the Swiss soon after became an official nation and created a constitution and bicameral legislation that has been relatively unchanged since its formation in 1848.⁸¹ Since then, the nation has maintained neutrality in all wars, even World War I and World War II despite being in the middle of all the conflicting countries.⁸²

As noted in Table One, Swiss culture is defined by high rates in all six aspects of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The lowest of these, Power Distance, sits at 34, though there is a difference between French and German Switzerland. German Switzerland is generally more independent, views power structures as more of a thing of convenience, and celebrates autonomy and equality, much like Germany does. The French Swiss, however, adhere much more strictly to the power structure and believe it brings stability and focuses employees on what their duties are. In Individualism, the nation including both the French and German sides of the country scored high on this list, with the

⁸⁰ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Switzerland/The-Swiss-Confederation-during-the-Late-Middle-Ages>

⁸¹ <http://www.britannica.com/place/Switzerland/The-Helvetic-Republic>

⁸² <http://www.britannica.com/place/Switzerland/World-War-I-and-economic-crisis>

national number at 68, meaning the people for the most part focus more on themselves and immediate group of friends and family more than the society as a whole.⁸³

Masculinity sits at 70, meaning Switzerland has a society that focuses on success as a motivator, and standing out as a positive experience. Switzerland's 58 in Uncertainty Avoidance is most likely a direct result of a cultural divide between German and French Swiss. The French Swiss have a high Uncertainty Avoidance, preferring to stay within tradition and what is familiar, while German Swiss are more likely to try out new things and want experiences outside of the norm. Finally, Indulgence is at 66, indicating Switzerland has a society that tends to indulge themselves and do not focus on controlling impulses and enjoy having fun and enjoying life.⁸⁴

The GCR ranked Switzerland as the most competitive country, with a score of 5.67 out of seven, a title well deserved by the industrious nation.⁸⁵ Its world-renown banking system is mostly likely one of the key facets of the country that has caused its competitive edge to skyrocket. The Swiss banking industry is 1.5 times as productive as the whole economy is on average, with over 200 banks within the nation. These banks hold an excess of 6.5 billion Swiss Francs (CHF), over 50% of which are actually foreign assets.⁸⁶ With these numbers, relations between Switzerland and other nations has to be stable and built on trust to hold funds outside of the nation, and Switzerland fails to disappoint. It comes as no surprise that the service industry makes up 72.6% of the GDP

⁸³ <https://geert-hofstede.com/switzerland.html>

⁸⁴ <https://geert-hofstede.com/switzerland.html>

⁸⁵ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf

⁸⁶ http://www.swissbanking.org/en/facts_figures.htm

and with 73.2% of the labor force is employed in this sector, especially after noting its importance with banking.⁸⁷

The country's labor force of 5.097 million people are certainly devoted primarily to the service industry which drives most of the 478 billion USD GDP in 2014, averaging out to 58,700 USD GDP per capita. This workforce faced an unemployment rate of 3.2% in 2014⁸⁸ with the long term unemployment rate for the country is 1.46%, while the chance of a current worker losing their job is almost equal to the unemployment rate itself at 3%, the second lowest out of all OECD member states. This number has been increasing at a gradual rate of 0.1% a year since 2008.⁸⁹

This country, trusted with billions of dollars in foreign accounts, has a need for a diligent and hardworking workforce. For Switzerland, however, this does not mean that workers need to put in long hours. The Swiss labor force only works an average of 1,568 hours a year, which is only a little over 30 hours a week⁹⁰, at 55.6 USD an hour per person.⁹¹ In terms of PTO, Swiss citizens can receive four weeks of PTO after a year of work, and if under the age of 20, can receive five weeks of PTO. Two of these weeks must be consecutive and must be approved by the employer. In addition, there are four federal unpaid holidays, and often up to eight additional holidays that are dependent on the canton in question, and those who work these holidays are paid at a premium for their service on these days.⁹²

⁸⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sz.html>

⁸⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sz.html>

⁸⁹ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/switzerland/>

⁹⁰ <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>

⁹¹ http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV

⁹² <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

For mothers, the Swiss offer a maternity leave of 14 weeks at 56.8% of usual wages. They do not, however, offer any paid days of home or parental leave. The amount of time off is even less for new fathers, as they do not receive any kind of federally mandated time off for parental or home care, or paternity leave. These days off are spotty, as workers can have around four weeks of paid leave a year, however there are no instances of paid leave specifically for child rearing or the birth of a child, and holidays are unpaid days off. This lack of multiple forms of PTO may, in fact, be due to Switzerland's short work weeks.

Despite these short weeks, approximately 6.7% of Swiss workers find themselves working more than 50 hours a week most weeks. This places them at 18th, despite being 6.3% below the OECD average, with a larger portion of men instead of women working these extended hours. Despite men being more likely to work these extended hours, both men and women are almost equal on finding leisure time each day, on average this leisure and personal time is approximately 15 hours a day. Overall, the country ranks 16th in terms of work-life balance.⁹³

Switzerland more than improves when it comes to life satisfaction. Switzerland is ranked 3rd in Life Satisfaction, with a self-assessment score of 7.5, 0.9 points higher than the OECD average. This score is also equal in terms of sex, with both rating their lives at a 7.5 average.⁹⁴ This high ranking in happiness is wholly unsurprising though, as 1,718 respondents to the OECD survey as to what they found to be most important placed life

⁹³ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>

⁹⁴ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>

satisfaction in first.⁹⁵ Overall, the country ranks 4th out of all 36 OECD member states, with its strong economy and focus on life satisfaction.

CHAPTER THREE: THE UNITED STATES

U.S. Criteria

One of the three nations of North America and a key component of the Western Hemisphere, the United States of America is a tour de force unlike any other. A nation between Canada and Mexico, straddling both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, this country spans across all sorts of environments, from the Rocky Mountains to the Kansas plains, to the rainy forests of Washington and the dry deserts of Nevada. The country boasts a population of over 321 million people, the 3rd largest in the world. The largest percentage of these people are 25-54 year olds at 39.76%. The average age is 37.8 and the average life expectancy is 79.68 years old. Most of the population is white, followed by Hispanics, Blacks, Asians, and Natives as the minority. Most people speak English at almost 80% with 12.9% speaking Spanish.⁹⁶

The United States of America was once a series of British colonies. After years of development and exploitation of the continent's natural resources, the British government and the colonies suffered a series of events causing tension, including issues of taxation, the French-Indian War, and the presence of British troops.⁹⁷ The war for Independence was a long battle, but with superior knowledge of the land, and with some help from the

⁹⁵ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#CHE>

⁹⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

⁹⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/Cultural-and-religious-development>

French, the United States eventually succeeded in becoming its own nation.⁹⁸ The years that followed were a menagerie of conquests and growth. The United States grew from the colonies via events such as the Louisiana Purchase, and wars such as the Spanish-American War and the War of 1812 which expanded American territory further.⁹⁹

Expansion and conquest came to a halt during the Civil War in which America split between the Union and the Confederacy in a fight over state's rights and slavery. The Union was eventually victorious and set about rejoining the land.¹⁰⁰ The years that followed the Civil War were a period of growth for the United States in economic, political, and geographical terms. The country spread as far as it is today, and then went about being drawn into several wars such as both World Wars, in which it emerged victorious and set out a president for American might. In the years that followed of the Cold War, the U.S. fought in more battles that resulted in losses or draws, but economically grew to become powerhouse it was during the Cold War era.¹⁰¹

The history of the United States helped in shaping the country to what it is today not only physically, politically, and economically, but also culturally, figures which can be seen in Table One. The United States has a slightly low Power Distance of 40, meaning communication across various levels of authority is encouraged, however, one should take caution not to be too casual or bold. The United States is a highly individualistic country with a score of 91, a facet of society that results in people focusing on themselves and a small group, and not the betterment of the community as a whole.

⁹⁸ <http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/The-American-Revolutionary-War>

⁹⁹ <http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/The-United-States-from-1816-to-1850>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/The-Civil-War>

¹⁰¹ <http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/The-late-20th-century>

The nation is also fairly masculine, making the United States a culture in which success is what should be most sought after.¹⁰²

In terms of Uncertainty Avoidance, the U.S. scores close to the middle with 46. This results in a situational uncertainty avoidance, but when it comes to ideals such as innovation and invention of new products, the American people tend to be more open to new experiences. As a normative country with a score of 26 in Long Term Orientation, Americans are driven towards quick results and are generally cautious when given information and frequently need to fact check to ensure its validity. Finally, the United States is a fairly indulgent country with a score of 68, a result of many Americans making decisions based on impulse and fun.¹⁰³

An economic powerhouse, the United States has certain qualities that result in it being a powerful trade partner. Ranked 5th on the Global Competitiveness Rating,¹⁰⁴ the 20 Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) the United States is part of result in a strong foundation for economic prosperity.¹⁰⁵ Out of those FTAs, the countries the United States exports the most to are its neighbors, Canada and Mexico, and also China, and Japan. A large portion of exported goods are electronics and their parts, such as computers, automobiles, and planes, followed by organic chemicals.¹⁰⁶

The GDP PPP for the country reached 17.52 trillion USD in 2014, with a per capita GDP of 54,900 USD for the 156.4 million people in the U.S. workforce.

¹⁰² <https://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html>

¹⁰³ <https://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html>

¹⁰⁴ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf

¹⁰⁵ <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

Unemployment for this workforce reached 6.2% in 2014,¹⁰⁷ with long term unemployment at 1.91%. This long term unemployment has seen a 0.3% increase annually since 2008. For those who are employed, however, they only have to concern themselves with a 5.9% chance of losing their jobs.¹⁰⁸

In regards to federally mandated paid time off of any kind, the United States turns up empty handed. They offer no federally mandated days off, nor federally mandated holidays. The only days that are federally mandated are those under the Davis-Bacon act.¹⁰⁹ The Davis-Bacon act is an act set in place to ensure just compensation for contractors and subcontractors working on public buildings.¹¹⁰ The country also offers no federally mandated paid maternity leave, but does mandate 12 weeks of unpaid maternity leave.¹¹¹

With the resounding lack of any federal PTO, the work weeks would ideally reflect a decrease to ensure work-life balance. However, Americans worked 1,789 hours in 2014, which is an average of 34.4 hours a week. This is slightly above the OECD average, which sits at 34.03 hours a week.¹¹² These hours are counteracted by the nation's productivity with a rate of workers making 62.4 USD an hour.¹¹³

Unsurprisingly due to lack of federal PTO, the United States ranks 29th out of the 36 countries in the OECD in Work-Life Balance. 11.3% of American workers work more than 50 hours consistently, which breaks down into 16% of men, which is above the

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/united-states/>

¹⁰⁹ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

¹¹⁰ <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/statutes/dbra.htm>

¹¹¹ https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf

¹¹² <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>

¹¹³ http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV

OECD average, and 7% of women. This tendency for long work days has put them in 26th place. Alternatively, Americans only spend 14.3 hours on personal and leisure time, which earned them 32nd place out of all 36 OECD member states.¹¹⁴

In terms of overall life satisfaction, the ranking is much more optimistic. The United States ended up on 12th place with a life satisfaction average rating of 7.2.¹¹⁵ This coincides with the survey 18,114 Americans took in which they ranked Life Satisfaction as the most important out of the 11 OECD factors.¹¹⁶ This focus on satisfaction for the American people despite their less-than-ideal work-life balance suggests that the idea suffering at the workplace is believed to be part of being an adult, but despite that Americans so desperately want to be satisfied with their overall quality of life. Across all 11 qualities examined by the OECD, the United States ranks 7th when looking at all of these qualities equally.¹¹⁷

Comparisons

Looking at how the United States compares directly to Austria, Australia, Denmark, and Switzerland will offer a better understanding as to how the United States can alter its policy to encourage more life satisfaction and work-life balance through increased PTO. Australia and the United States are incredibly similar in terms of cultural aspects as can be noted in Table One, which was the main reason for using Australia as a foil for the United States. In terms of all six aspects, the biggest margin of difference is

¹¹⁴ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>

¹¹⁵ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#USA>

¹¹⁷ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/1111111111>

between Uncertainty Avoidance and Long Term Orientation, both of which have a difference of five points.

The importance of cultural aspects reflects how likely the American people will be to accepting policies similar to these countries, and since Australia has policies regarding PTO and has a culture similar to the United States, cultural issues should not be a problem when adopting these policies. Both countries have low power distances, both countries are highly individualistic, both countries are very masculine, Australia tends to be slightly more avoidant of things it is unsure of and the U.S. tends to be slightly less avoidant, but both are in the middle ground. Both nations are normative, and both tend to indulge in whims.

Economically, Australia and United States are still similar in certain ways, as seen in Table Two. Both nations have a GDP in the trillions, and are the only two to do so out of all five of the countries examined. Australia, however has a much higher GDP per capita by almost 10,000 USD. Opposite of the previous figure, however, while the GDP per capita is higher in Australia, the GDP per hour worked per person is actually higher in the U.S., this may be in part, however to the U.S.'s much larger labor force which is over ten times the size of Australia's. The unemployment rates are very similar, but the long-term unemployment is almost a full point higher for the United States than it is for Australia. GCR scores are fairly close, but United States does have the edge over Australia.

While the United States undoubtedly has one of the strongest economies, the connections between Australia and United States serve the same purpose the cultural aspects viewed before do. They allow those who would consider policy changes the

opportunity to see how those policies are affect the economy in a country that is similar to the United States. This adds to the debate for policy changes, as the argument that the effects of the policy changes would have on the U.S. economy could result in unforeseen damages becomes invalid.

The similarities between the two countries abruptly end when comparing their PTO policies which can be seen clearly in Table Three. United States' resounding lack of PTO, and longer work weeks more than likely resulted in scoring below Australia in both Work-Life Balance and in Life Satisfaction. The only drawback from this data is that despite the average Australian working less hours than the average American, a greater percentage of Australians work 50 hours or more per week on a regular basis.

Comparing the two countries, one can see that Australia is very similar to the United States in terms of culture and fairly similar in terms of economics, with Australia being in some ways a scaled down U.S. economy. With these similarities in hand, it allows for a more comprehensive look at what enacting policies regarding work weeks or PTO would do to the United States. While Australia is not perfect and while there are some differences between the two nations, the overall health of the Australian economy is a sign that enacting policy changes in favor of more PTO would not devastate the U.S. economy.

Austria, a country chosen for its number of days off, is in some ways a far cry from American economics and society. The two countries do share some cultural traits and some aspects in terms of economy, but overall the two countries drastically differ from each other, but offer a look at how a country that is enacting what would be a large

change to current U.S. PTO policy is doing in terms of economic health and the satisfaction of the Austrian workforce.

While Austria and the United States both have low scores in Power Distance, Austria's score is much lower than it is for the United States. This shows that casual conversation throughout members of the hierarchy is much more common and encouraged in Austria than it is in the United States. Individualism, is conversely much higher in the United States than in Austria, meaning people in the U.S. are much more focused on the self than people are in Austria. Both countries are fairly masculine, with Austria being the more success-driven and goal oriented between them. The United States is a lot more open to change than Austria is, and finally, they are both fairly equal in terms of indulgence. These figures are all laid out in Table One for easier comparison with more concrete numbers.

Economically speaking, the United States bests Austria in almost every factor examined as seen in Table Two. The U.S. has a much higher GDP, GDP per capita, and GDP per hour worked. The U.S. labor force absolutely overwhelms the Austria labor force with over 40 times as many workers. The United States was also ranked higher on the GCR than Austria by 0.33 points. In terms of keeping the labor force working, Austria does a better job than the United States. Unemployment as a whole is lower in Austria than in the United States, and long-term unemployment is also lower.

Austria's obscene amount of days off might be too much for politicians to consider in the United States, but seeing the deep end of federally mandated PTO could allow policy makers to see to what extent this PTO no longer becomes effective. In Table Three, we can see Austria's work weeks are shorter by three hours versus United States

work weeks. In addition to these shorter work weeks, Austria also gives 25 days off plus 13 days of holiday, while the United States is still stuck at zero for all federally mandated days off. In addition to this large number of days off, mothers almost get a whole year's worth of fully paid time off, and fathers receive 6.9 weeks. With all of these days off, we do not see an increase in citizens working overtime to make up for these shorter work weeks, but instead the percentage of the workforce that works overtime is less than that in the United States.

The converse side of all of these days off is that the United States still has higher scores than Austria on not only Work-Life Balance, but Life Satisfaction as a whole. This suggests that while a nation may have the most paid time off, if the employee is still not having enough time to spend doing leisure and personal activities, making that work-life separation, and finding balance, then their balance and life satisfaction will suffer.

The lesson in Austria is to focus on achieving balance and using PTO and parental leave as a tool for those means, but it also shows that nation with a high number of days off also has much lower long-term and short-term unemployment rates. It also shows that cultural boundaries can often be hard to overcome and even with certain policies in place, it will not change the mindset of a nation. Austria ranks high in masculinity, a cultural aspect focused on success and making as many advancements in life as possible instead of taking time to enjoy life and to find that separation between work and life. Since United States is also a masculine society, the issue could be the same for that nation, where federally mandated PTO is increased, but there is no increase in ratings on Work-Life Balance.

The 3rd nation examined, Denmark is drastically different from the United States. A nation with a strong emphasis in happiness as a nation has earned it the title of Happiest/Most Satisfied Nation from multiple sources, including the OECD. The nation's strong focus on happiness can be viewed throughout all aspects of their data. While the United States does not focus on happiness quite to the extent that Denmark does, there are some pieces of Danish policy the United States could draw from.

The Danes do not have a large Power Distance, much like Austria. While the United States has a Power Distance level on the lower end, its closer-to-mid-range level slightly sets Denmark apart from the United States. Both countries are very individualistic, with United States being even more Individualistic. In terms of Masculinity, this is where the countries most drastically differ. Denmark is a highly feminine country, focuses more on satisfaction and work-life balance, while masculine countries like the United States are focused on success via any means necessary, even if that means long hours at the office. This disparity results in a nations that are at ends about what aspects of work they care about most.

Denmark and the United States are both similar in being acceptant of things out of their realm of experience and of breaking from routine, but Denmark as a much more lax attitude towards these aspects than the United States does. Both nations are normative, with a focus on tradition and the short-term, with a low propensity to save. Both nations are also indulgent, giving into desires and allowing for off-the-cuff decision making. These numbers can be seen in Table One.

Denmark is a small economy, especially when compared to the United States, a 17.52 trillion USD GDP versus the Danish 253.1 billion USD GDP, and is compared in

Table Two. Even per capita, the United States dominates Denmark 54,900 USD to 45,100 USD, almost a 10,000 USD lead. The U.S. continues to lead in GDP per hours worked 62.4 to 58.8 USD, labor force of 156.4 million to 2.774 million, and the country is ranked higher according to the GCR. Unfortunately in 2014 the United States had a much higher unemployment and long-term unemployment compared to Denmark.

The Danish not only have a smaller economy compared to the U.S., but much fewer work hours too. Danes only work 27.62 hours per week on average, almost seven hours less than the United States. In addition, they have five weeks or 25 days of PTO, where the United States has no days of PTO. While neither nation has any federally mandated holidays, Denmark does have the equivalent of 27 weeks of fully paid leave for mothers and 1.1 weeks of leave for fathers, while the United States has none again. Only 2% of working Danes work over 50 hours a week consistently, where 11.3% of working Americans work more than 50 a week consistently. Denmark was ranked a 9.8 in Work-Life Balance, almost a perfect score, while United States scored 5.3. In overall Life Satisfaction, Denmark scored 7.5 while the U.S. got close with 7.2, all of which can be seen in Table Three.

Denmark is a nation unparalleled in its dedication to its citizens' happiness, even in the workplace. Though facing serious cultural differences that result in a divide between Denmark and the United States, there are still aspects of the Danish lifestyle that can be drawn from, especially in regard to lowering the amount of time spent at the workplace and increasing the dedication to ensuring employee satisfaction nationwide.

Switzerland, a nation dedicated to its reputation as an international banking center, has invested countless time and money in being the most free and competitive

market in the world. These are aspects the United States has slowly been striving towards over its years of existence, especially in regards to Switzerland's 1st place in the GCR. With its strong economy paired with its lesser work weeks and more holidays, Switzerland can be an easy source of inspiration for a change in U.S. policy.

U.S and Switzerland share many aspects of culture between the two nations, something that can be seen in Table One. Both have a mid-to-low Power Distance, so these countries encourage communication outside of the chain of command, but have restrictions on how informal these conversations can be. Switzerland and the United States are both very individualistic nations, and both are very masculine societies driven by success. The United States is more accepting of things outside of tradition and what is familiar, while Switzerland is less accepting of these things. The United States is very normative with a strong focus on short-term quick solutions, while Switzerland is very pragmatic, likes to think of the long term effects of actions before making a decision. Finally, both countries are fairly indulgent when it comes to desires and happiness.

While the GDP and labor force of Switzerland are not as large as the United States' is, Switzerland's low unemployment, high competitive nature, and high GDP per capita make it a force in its own right. The GDP of Switzerland is 478 billion USD while the United States is much higher, which is also the case with GDP per hour worked. GDP per capita, however, is won by Switzerland with 59,300 USD per person versus the United States' 54,900 USD. This number is probably related to each country's labor force size, as Switzerland has 5.097 million people, and the United States has 156.4 million. These figures can all be compared in Table Two.

Unemployment is much lower in Switzerland than the United States. Swiss unemployment sits at 3.2%, almost half of the U.S.'s 6.2%. Long-term unemployment is also lower, with 1.46% long-term unemployment versus 1.91% long-term unemployment. As a whole, Switzerland, ranked the most competitive nation in the GCR, sits at 5.67 out of seven, while the U.S. is at 5.48.

Switzerland's ability to offer the number of days off that it does and as many shortened hours as it does and yet remain the most competitive country in the world is representative of how a nation can still be competitive without overworking employees. Swiss workers work over four hours fewer per week than workers in the United States do, and still have 20 days of PTO. The Swiss also offer 7.9 weeks equivalent of fully paid leave for new mothers, but offer no time to the father. Switzerland does have a decent percentage of workers clocking in over 50 hours a week regularly at 6.7%, but that number pales in comparison to the United States' 11.3%. Overall, Switzerland has a higher rating of Work-Life Balance and Life Satisfaction than the United States does, which can be seen in Table Three.

All four countries have their strengths and weakness that when compared to the United States can offer a comprehensive guide to what enacting certain policies in the United States could look like on the quest to becoming a more productive and more balanced working society. Australia's similarities, Austria's large number days off, Denmark's high figures of satisfaction and work-life balance, and Switzerland's ability to balance their competitive edge with respecting the workforce all offer valid points of view for the United States' consideration.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHERE CAN THIS BE TAKEN?

Recommendation & Implementation

The need for improved work-life balance in clear, and the United States, for all of its wealth, has much to improve on in this aspect. The United States is the only nation out of all 36 OECD nations that still does not have any federally mandated leave for its citizens, and as a nation that prides itself on being the front-runners of the Industrialized World, the country's citizens, which are a backbone to this society, need to be guaranteed time off. While there may be multiple states that have implemented labor laws, having guaranteed time off via federal law changes, allows for more continuity across the nation. The recommended course of action, therefore, for the United States would be to have a change in labor policy at the federal level.

The recommendation is a three-pronged approach to changing the way the workforce is structured in terms of labor laws. The first part would be an approach to increasing paid time off as a whole, without making special concessions for holidays specifically. The second part would be focused on increasing family leave both for mothers and for fathers, at different rates of leave. The third part of the approach would be policies that would encourage workers and their employers not to have their employees work overtime (more than 50 hours a week) regularly.

With the first part of the policy changes, mandatory paid time off, the number suggested for days off would be 20 days, or four weeks for the average American worker. This number provides a minimum that companies can exceed if they choose to, but offers a basis for all companies to follow. This number of hours is the same number of hours

Australia and Switzerland mandates, two countries that are very similar to the United States in terms of economy and culture, but also ensures that the number of days off is not so many that it seems ineffective, such as is arguably the case with Austria. This is also close to the average amount of days workers were given off in 2012, with ten days of vacation and eight days of holidays, totaling up to 18 days off.¹¹⁸ The reason this number was exceeded is to ensure that American workers are getting the days off needed to truly enjoy life outside of the workplace, and also because the number of total days off has not increased since 1992/1993¹¹⁹. The reasoning for choosing a blanket amount of days off instead of having vacation days and holidays is to keep with the spirit of the United States being a melting pot of culture by ensuring that companies are inclusive of various religions and ethnicities that may need certain days off.

The second aspect of the proposed policy change, parental leave, comes with two separate aspects to it. Maternity leave will have to be increased, from the 12 weeks of unpaid maternity leave, to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave with an additional 6 weeks of half-paid maternity leave. The reason for these recommendations is regarding a study done by Pinka Chatterji, Sara Markowitz, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. The study found that mothers that return to work soon after birth have noticeably increased rates of depression around three months, and decreased health around six months.¹²⁰ To avoid such issues with the mother's health, which in turn negatively affects the workplace, almost three months of full paid maternity leave, which is estimated to be around 13 weeks, will allow mothers to have decreased mental and physical health problems. Also, by allowing new

¹¹⁸ <http://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-2/paid-leave-in-private-industry-over-the-past-20-years.htm>

¹¹⁹ <http://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-2/paid-leave-in-private-industry-over-the-past-20-years.htm>

¹²⁰ <http://www.nber.org/papers/w17212.pdf>

mothers to have this time off for the child has resulted in a notable amount of job satisfaction and loyalty.¹²¹ There has also been a noted increase of working mothers, especially single working mothers.¹²² If a mother is financially forced to return to work after child birth, it could result in poorer work performance and a disconnected home life, as noted earlier.

For the other parent, the father, they would not be receiving as much federally mandated paid time off. The recommendation is for fathers of new children to be given 3 weeks of fully paid time off. The reason for so little time off compared to the mother is due in part by what policies the United States currently has, and what has been analyzed through the comparison. The United States presently offers no time off for fathers, and so wanting to start on the smaller end for paid time off is important to ease Americans into the idea. Also, Switzerland offers no paternity leave, and Denmark and Australia only offer around a week, as seen in Table Two.

The reason the recommendation for three weeks was made, however is to prevent hiring discrimination against women and to ensure that the father has an active role in the family. Studies cited by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) found that having paternal leave increases the number and the amount of participation by women in the workforce. Also, this same policy brief from the DOL found that fathers who take extended paternity leaves report “higher satisfaction with parenting and increased engagement in caring for their children”.¹²³ While there are other developed nations that do not have paid paternity

¹²¹ Paid Parental Leave in the United States, Gault et al.

¹²² <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/29/breadwinner-moms/>

¹²³ <https://www.dol.gov/asp/policy-development/PaternityBrief.pdf>

leave, the trend has been towards establishing federal paternity leave, and would benefit the United States to follow suit.¹²⁴

Despite the masculine nature of American society, especially in their drive to be the best and succeed professionally, working more than 50 hours a week regularly does more harm than good. A study by John Pencavel of Stanford University found that the marginal productivity of weekly hours decreases after reaching the 50 hour mark, which can be seen graphically in Figure One.¹²⁵ This is why the third approach to work policy change is to change the amount of overtime the American workforce participates in. Due to the cultural nature of Americans, the most solidified approach would be a “rod-and-carrot” method in which companies are rewarded for good behavior, and punished for incorrect behavior. The suggestion would be to give tax breaks to companies who have little percentages of overtime, ideally less than 10%, and added taxes to companies which have increased overtime, ideally more than 20%. These percentages are chosen due to attempting to be below the average of OECD member states’ population that works overtime.¹²⁶

With such policy changes, there is going to be criticism from Americans and especially policy makers as to whether or not implementing such practices is best for the country. One outcry the matter of cultural dissonance in which employees can be given more days off, but may not be willing to utilize them due to the American society’s masculine nature. The response is that as the next generation, the Millennials or Generation Y enters the workforce, we tend to find Millennials would much rather have

¹²⁴ http://www.cite.gov.pt/asstscite/images/grafs11/Parent_Leave_Policies_21.pdf

¹²⁵ <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8129.pdf>

¹²⁶ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>

time for themselves and have flexible work schedules that previous generations.¹²⁷ As Millennials enter the workforce, it is imperative to tailor workplace policies to those generations that are entering the workplace. In addition to wanting more flexible hours, Millennials also want more paid maternity leave than previous generations, and stated that they would be more likely to have more engagement were these policies put into place. Coupled with these issues, is the problem of where the money for this time off will be coming from, but Millennials have also made claims that they would be more willing to take decreased pay in favor for paid family leave.¹²⁸ While there may be hesitations with the culture of the American people, as the next generation becomes the dominant power in the workplace, we could see a people who readily welcome these policy changes.

Future Study

With these recommendations in hand, there are certain areas of future study that given the time, funds, and/or resources, would be extremely beneficial in giving the policy makers of the United States a more holistic and concrete recommendation on how to better structure labor policy. One would be the examination of other countries from various forms of industrialization and different backgrounds. While those countries that are similar to the United States were chosen due to them being as directly applicable as possible, excluding those countries with different levels of industrialization or different cultural sphere (i.e. not Western, predominately white, or Christian in country origin) very much narrows the different information available. Also increasing the number of

¹²⁷ <https://hbr.org/2015/02/what-millennials-want-from-work-charted-across-the-world>

¹²⁸ [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations/\\$FILE/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations/$FILE/EY-global-generations-a-global-study-on-work-life-challenges-across-generations.pdf)

countries examined would allow for a variety of different countries and cultures, and including those performing worse than the United States would allow for a critical comparison of both ends of the spectrum.

With these comparisons, it would be even more beneficial to have primary data via conducting surveys within the country. Being able to communicate with the people and companies whose lives are effected daily by these policies and seeing first-hand how these policies do affect them would allow potentially for a greater wealth of knowledge. The benefit of primary sources is also ensuring the validity of the source and ensuring that the data is a representative sample size of the population.

Being able to talk with policy makers on the driving factors behind enacting certain policy changes towards federally mandated PTO would also be beneficial to see what political and legal barriers are in the way of enacting these changes. In regards to PTO, being able to first-hand read the laws in their native language and understanding the importance of each law and its shortcomings and strengths would also allow for a more comprehensive and ensured approach to making a recommendation for the United States. Despite these opportunities for future study, and admitted margins of error, the data presented was not only ensured for its validity, but for its applicability and wide range of subjects in order to avoid applying causation to factors when it is only a correlation.

APPENDIX

Table One: Comparison of Cultural Dimensions

<i>Countries</i> <i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>	<i>United States</i>
<i>Power Distance</i>	36	11	18	34	40
<i>Individualism</i>	90	55	74	68	91
<i>Masculinity</i>	61	79	16	70	62
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance</i>	51	70	23	58	46
<i>Long Term Orientation</i>	21	60	35	74	26
<i>Indulgence</i>	71	63	70	66	68

Source: <https://geert-hofstede.com/>

Table Two: Comparison of Economic Dimensions in 2014

<i>Countries</i> <i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>	<i>United States</i>
<i>GDP (USD)</i> ¹²⁹	1,454	403.8	253.1	478	17,520
<i>GDP Per Capita (USD)</i>	64,700	47,500	45,100	59,300	54,900
<i>GDP per Hour Worked (USD)</i> ¹³⁰	53.1	52.5	58.8	55.6	62.4
<i>Labor Force (Millions) 2015</i>	12.5	3.827	2.774	5.097	156.4
<i>Unemployment</i>	6.1%	5.6%	4.9%	3.2%	6.2%
<i>Long-Term Unemployment</i> ¹³¹	1.08%	1.19%	1.78%	1.46%	1.91%
<i>Global Competitive Index Score</i> ¹³²	5.09	5.15	5.18	5.67	5.48

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/>

Table Three: Comparison of PTO & Work-Life balance

¹²⁹ PPP in billions

¹³⁰ http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV 2010 PPPs with 2014 Data

¹³¹ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/denmark/>

¹³² http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>	<i>United States</i>
<i>Dimensions</i>					
<i>Working Hours/Week</i> ¹³³	32.00	31.33	27.62	30.15	34.40
<i># of Days Off</i> ¹³⁴	20	25	25	20	0
<i>Paid Holidays</i>	8	13	0	0	0
<i>Paid Leave for Mothers(FRE)</i> ¹³⁵	7.6	51.2	27.0	7.9	0
<i>Paid Leave for Fathers (FRE)</i>	0.8	6.9	1.1	0	0
<i>% of Citizens working over 50 hrs./week regularly</i> ¹³⁶	14	7.6	2.0	6.7	11.3
<i>W/LB Rating</i> ¹³⁷	6.0	5.2	9.8	7.2	5.3
<i>LS Rating</i> ¹³⁸	7.3	6.9	7.5	7.5	7.2

Source: https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf

Figure One: Marginal Product of Hours and Average Product of Hours

¹³³ <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>

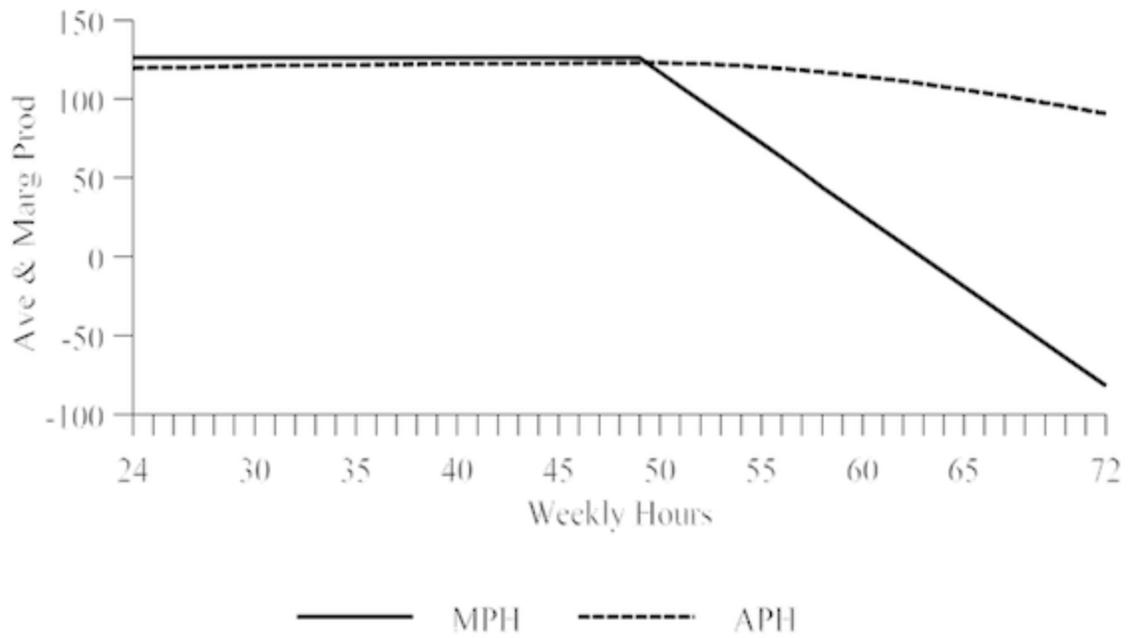
¹³⁴ <http://cepr.net/documents/no-vacation-update-2014-04.pdf>

¹³⁵ FRE= Full Rate Equivalent, or the amount of weeks of full pay someone gets for their parental leave

¹³⁶ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>

¹³⁷ W/LB=Work-Life Balance: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>

¹³⁸ LS= Life Satisfaction: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>



Source: <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8129.pdf>

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