Research on Finnish Society
Vol. 4 (2011), pp. 55–66

ISSN 1796-8739

Commitment to employment and organisation: Finland in a European comparison

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Employment and organisational commitment are widely endorsed as goals for labour market policy and organisations. However, there are few comparative studies that examine how, in addition to individual characteristics, dimensions of national culture affect employment and organisational commitment. This article compares employment and organisational commitment among employees in Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Sweden. The main focus is on whether these commitments differ in Finland from those in four other European countries. Finland has seldom been included in this kind of comparative study. Individual-level data come from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), Work Orientation Module III, collected in 2005–2006. Employment commitment was the highest in Sweden, while organisational commitment was the highest among Germans. Finnish employees did not display particularly high levels of employment commitment: Finns were next to last in this category. Organisational commitment in Finland was on the same level as Spain and Sweden. In all five countries low subjective job insecurity among employees increased organisational commitment. Schwartz's (2007) cultural dimensions accounted for a significant share of the variance in employment commitment. The data were analysed mainly by using standard multiple regression analysis and hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Keywords: employment commitment, organisational commitment, comparative research, national culture, Finland.

Introduction

Currently, the European Union and its member states are attempting to address the economic challenge of the deteriorating economic dependency ratio by increasing the employment rate of citizens, among other things (Council of the European Union, 2008; Työministeriö, 2007). Attaining and maintaining high employment rates requires individuals to show a strong commitment to (paid) work. Employee commitment is also vital for organisations, affecting many areas important to an organisation's actions and success. High organisational commitment has been reported to decrease employee turnover and absenteeism, for example. It has also been shown that strong organisational commitment may be linked to better employee performance in the workplace. (Hult, 2004, 10–13; Meyer et al., 2002; Rubin & Brody, 2005.)

Thus, up to a point, high employment and organisational commitment are desirable goals for western societies, which build on work and productivity[1]. The main question addressed in this article, however, is whether, in Finland, employment and organisational commitment differ from these commitments in other European countries. In the following pages employment and organisational commitment in Finland will be compared to the situations in Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Sweden.

What makes Finland an interesting case for comparison? The answers have to do with the pace of economic modernisation in post-war Finland, which has been unique and, in a European context, quite rapid (Alestalo, 1990; Arter, 1989; Crouch, 2008). Thus, whether Finnish employees currently diverge from their European counterparts in countries in which modernisation has mostly taken place at an earlier point in history could reveal important insights into an area in which there have been few studies (however, see Alkula, 1990, 87–94). Moreover, the current educational level of Finns is very high by European standards (Lehto & Sutela, 2008, 9–17). Higher levels of education have usually increased employment commitment on an individual level (Esser, 2005).

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Financial support from LabourNet, Graduate School of Work and Welfare Studies (Finland) is gratefully acknowledged.

[1] From an organisation's point of view, a low employee turnover caused by strong organisational commitment is not an entirely positive outcome. A low employee turnover can cause stagnation in an organisation. (Mamia & Koivumäki, 2006, 155–162.) Also, an individual's pathological commitment to his/her organisation may occur at the cost of other life areas and lead to burn-out. Unemployment may be a personal tragedy for someone with a strong employment commitment. (Hult, 2004, 42–43; Mamia & Koivumäki, 2006, 155–162.)

Different definitions of employment and organisational commitment abound as do the means of measuring them. In this article the following definitions are used for these terms: 'employment commitment' refers to employees' non-financial commitment to paid work in a general sense (Esser, 2009; Warr et al., 1979). 'Organisational commitment' denotes employees' commitment and loyalty to their current organisation and is measured on the so-called 'Porter scale' (Porter et al., 1974). 'Work orientation' is used as an umbrella concept that covers different aspects of attitudes to work. Because high employment and organisational commitment are generally desirable goals in western societies, it is important to know which factors increase these commitments. In addition to an examination of national scores and group differences among the five countries, the role of cultural factors in commitment (Schwartz, 2007; Smith et al., 1996, 2002) is also examined here. Heretofore, the role of national culture has been studied less than the role of national institutions in accounting for employment and organisational commitment.

The article is arranged as follows. First, there is a review of the individual determinants of employment and organisational commitment as shown in previous research. Then the role of national culture in accounting for these types of commitments is discussed. Third, the data, methods and aims of the paper are presented. Finally, the research questions posed are answered using empirical data.

Individual determinants of employment and organisational commitment

According to previous research, it cannot be assumed that employment and organisational commitment permeate individuals' social positions equally. It may also be that different individual characteristics have a greater effect on employment commitment than on organisational commitment (and vice versa). However, there has been a tendency to examine how *the same* individual determinants influence both employment and organisational commitment (e.g. Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001). It can also be presupposed that organisation-level factors, for example, organisational culture, may especially affect organisational commitment. Unfortunately, organisation-level factors are not included in the current data.

The meta-analytical study by Meyer et al. (2002) provides a useful overview of individual determinants of organisational commitment. The authors divide the individual determinants into four groups: demographic variables, variables relating to individual differences, variables relating to individuals' work experiences and alternatives/investments.[2] Perceived organisational support was the strongest predictor, especially of affective organisational commitment, in the study by Meyer et al. (2002). The above-mentioned general grouping of variables also seems suitable for studying individual determinants of employment commitment. However, what is most important from the viewpoint of the present article is whether the effects of individual determinants on employment and organisational commitment differ among the comparison countries. More precisely put, the question is raised of whether the effects are universal or nation-specific. Selected demographic and work experience variables are used in the empirical analyses. The independent variables used are *age, gender, occupational class* and *subjective job insecurity*.

In recent comparative studies of advanced western societies, women have been more committed to employment than men (Esser, 2009; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001). In her study Esser (ibid.) mainly used data from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), Work Orientation Module III, collected in 2005–2006. Hult & Svallfors (ibid.) and Svallfors et al. (ibid.) employed data from the earlier Work Orientation Module II, collected in 1997. However, Finland and Spain were not included in these studies. Nevertheless, a study of Finnish wage earners using the Finnish Quality of Work Life survey indicates the same gender difference among Finns: women are more committed to employment than men (Lehto & Sutela, 2008, 20–21). In recent studies there have been no gender differences in organisational commitment (Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Lehto & Sutela, 2008, 205–208; Svallfors et al., 2001).

In Felstead's (2010) study based on British data, the organisational commitment of 50- to 60-year-old British employees clearly decreased in the period 1992–2006. Organisational commitment of the other age groups studied (employees 20 to 34 years of age and 35 to 49 years of age) remained largely constant over this period. As a result, age-group differences in organisational commitment were almost negligible in the latest survey (2006). In the early 1990s 50- to 60-year-old employees still clearly showed higher levels of organisational commitment than the younger age groups in Great Britain. However, ageing decreased employment commitment in that study (for similar results, see Lehto & Sutela, 2008, 20–21; Esser, 2009, for men). In Mamia and Koivumäki's study of Finnish employees using Finnish data, older employees showed increased organisational commitment. Greater age especially increased employment commitment. (Mamia & Koivumäki, 2006, 120–121.[3]) In the early 2000s, the temporary employment rate in the European Union was at its highest level in Spain (Jouhette & Romans, 2006). In addition, fixed-term contracts concentrate especially on young people in Spain (Banyuls et al., 2009). Despite the fact that 'in this context it can be said that job insecurity is coming to be regarded as "normal" among young people' in Spain (ibid., 257), young people are expected to differ from their elders in their employment and organisational commitments. On the whole, based on the previous studies discussed above, one can assume that there are national differences in how age affects employment and organ-

[2] By alternatives/investments Meyer et al. (2002) are referring, for example, to the transferability of an individual's education and skills.

[3] The difference between Mamia and Koivumäki's results (ibid.) and Lehto and Sutela's (2008, 20–21) may be due to differences in the dependent variables.

isational commitment.

An employee's position in an organisation's hierarchy has traditionally been related to the employee's commitment. The higher occupational classes have been more committed to their organisation and employment *per se* than have the lower classes in West Germany, Great Britain and Sweden (Esser, 2009; Hult, 2005; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001). In the Finnish study based on Finnish data it was found that salary earners showed a higher level of organisational commitment than workers (Melin, 2009, 70–74). Unfortunately, data on Spain are not available here.

In the 1990s the number of employees who regarded their current work as insecure increased in many European countries (Green, 2006, 126–149). However, there are few, if any, *comparative* studies that examine how the perceived security of a person's current job affects the individual's commitment to the current organisation and to employment in general. However, there are some studies on the national scale. In a Belgian study the subjective insecurity of the continuity of the current job decreased organisational commitment. This held true, however, only for the permanent employees. (Cuyper & Witte, 2006.) In cross-cultural comparisons it has been found that avoidance of uncertainties might be stronger in Spain, Germany and Finland than in the other countries examined here (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, 166–170; for the Finnish case, see also Ylöstalo, 2007). With a low acceptance of uncertainties Hofstede and Hofstede (ibid.), for example, noted employees' preference for having long employment relationships with their present employer. Based on this finding, one can postulate that the relationship between subjective job insecurity and especially organisational commitment is more pronounced in Spain, Germany and Finland than in the other comparison countries.

National culture and commitment to employment and the organisation

In addition to individual characteristics, characteristics of national culture may also affect employment and organisational commitment. It may also be that the reverse is true: individual work orientations have an effect on national culture. However, here the effect of cultural factors on work orientations is the focus of study. Some researchers have argued that the role of cultural factors on individuals' behaviour and preferences have been less often studied than the role of national institutions. On the other hand, it is also acknowledged that cultural and institutional factors are interrelated, for example, within one country. (Pfau-Effinger, 2004; 2005; see also Oorschot et al., 2008.) This general observation of the partial neglect of cultural factors, however, is valid in comparative studies of working life, in particular, in the studies of work orientations. That is not to say that cultural factors have not been included at all in previous comparative studies of work orientations (see e.g. Hult, 2008; Lück & Hofäcker, 2008; Warr, 2008). Here I use the country means for cultural dimensions given by Schwartz (2007) and Smith et al. (1996; 2002), which might be related to employment and organisational commitment. The scores for cultural dimensions described in Smith et al. (ibid.) were kindly provided by Peter Smith via e-mail.[4]

Schwartz identifies three, dualistic, ideal-typical dimensions of culture that represent alternative solutions to three basic problems confronting all societies: *autonomy* versus *embeddedness*, *egalitarianism* versus *hierarchy* and *harmony* versus *mastery*. The country means for these cultural dimensions are based on survey responses from 67 countries.[5] Schwartz has also hypothesised about the possible relationships between these cultural dimensions and work centrality, which he defines as the importance of work overall in a person's life (Schwartz, 1999, 40–42). Schwartz's concept of work centrality comes satisfactorily close to the present author's concept of employment commitment.

Schwartz's first societal problem addresses the nature of the relationship between the person and the group: to what extent are individuals autonomous versus embedded in their groups. Schwartz also makes a distinction between intellectual autonomy (ideas, thoughts) and affective autonomy (experiences). He has proposed that, especially in post-industrial societies, the level of national intellectual autonomy might correlate positively with work centrality.[6] (Schwartz, 1999, 40–42; 2006; 2007; on Schwartz's theory, see also Helkama & Seppälä, 2006.)

Schwartz's second problem is to guarantee that individuals behave in a responsible and predictable manner such that the social fabric is preserved. In egalitarian cultures people learn to internalise a commitment to consider the welfare of others. In hierarchical cultures individuals are socialised to take for granted the unequal distribution of power, roles and resources. Schwartz has hypothesised that a high degree of hierarchy in the national culture correlates positively with work centrality. Because the unequal distribution of resources is legitimate in hierarchical cultures, it is justifiable to try and increase one's power and wealth within the system. Hence, hierarchical cultures encourage people to devote themselves to work through which such goals can be attained. (Ibid.)

The third societal problem is to control how people manage their relationship to the surrounding world. In harmonious cultures the world is taken as it is rather than as something to be changed or exploited. In cultures in which values of mastery prevail, changing the environment to attain group or personal goals is encouraged. Schwartz has suggested that in cultures where values of mastery are pronounced, work too is regarded as all-important. The justification for this is that values of mastery emphasise the active and self-assertive shaping of one's surroundings. In most societies working life is the most legitimate arena for this kind of action. (Ibid.)

Schwartz does not have any hypotheses about how his cul-

[4] Data on Germany pertain to the former area of West Germany.

[5] On the measurement of these dimensions, see Schwartz, 2006.

[6] There were no data on Great Britain and Sweden regarding affective autonomy. Hence, in the autonomy vs. embeddedness dimension, variable autonomy refers to intellectual autonomy. (Schwartz, 1994; 2007.)

tural dimensions may relate to organisational commitment. Nor is there any empirical evidence for that relationship (see Gelade et al., 2006). Smith et al. (1996; 2002) have identified two ideal-typical cultural dimensions that may relate to organisational commitment. Their results are based on survey responses from 8,841 employees in forty-three countries. First, the authors differentiate between *conservative* cultures and cultures based on *egalitarian commitment*. In the latter, for example, the achieved status is valued over the ascribed status. In conservative cultures, it is believed that jobs should be filled on the basis of personal criteria, not on the basis of qualifications. Of the countries being compared here, Spain is clearly the most conservative and Great Britain, the most egalitarian (see Appendix).

Smith et al.'s (ibid.) second dualistic dimension of culture is called *loyal involvement* vs. *utilitarian involvement*. In loyal cultures, the commitment to the organisation is long-lasting, and an organisation's goals are internalised as one's own. In utilitarian cultures, however, the commitment to an organisation may be more short-lived. What is essential for attachment to an organisation is that the personal goals materialise within the organisation. Of the countries researched here, Spain is the most loyal and Sweden, the most utilitarian (see Appendix). An earlier study has shown that organisational commitment, and more precisely, affective organisational commitment, was higher in egalitarian cultures than in conservative cultures. Quite unexpectedly, Smith's second dimension of culture was not related to organisational commitment in that study. (Gelade et al., 2006.)

Hofstede's (especially 2001) theory of cultural dimensions is perhaps the most often-cited theory of national cultures ever developed in cross-cultural psychology. Hofstede has identified five dimensions that differentiate national cultures: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation. Schwartz and Smith et al. build on Hofstede's ideas, but they also reformulate them. However, many of the criticisms directed at Hofstede also apply to Schwartz and Smith et al. First, the theories of all of these researchers are based on individual responses to surveys. The ensuing concept of culture can be regarded as very limited, narrow and also overtly self-conscious (cf. Fiske, 2002; McSweeney, 2002; 2009). Second, it can be charged that these theories assume that national culture permeates all nationals similarly. The basis for this criticism is that the effects of other cultures, such as subcultures, are not taken into account. Moreover, non-cultural factors are left out of the analysis. (McSweeney, 2002; 2009.)

The latter criticism can be countered with the individual determinants of employment and organisational commitment analysed in this article. It is important also to bear in mind that the concept of national culture does not acknowledge regional differences within countries (cf. East and West Germany). Third, it may be asked whether it is reasonable to assume that culture follows national borders in this age of globalisation. Despite the criticism of national cultures, the country means proposed by Schwartz and Smith et al. are utilised here. In short, as in most attitudinal studies, national culture is used here to refer to 'a set of collective constructions of meaning: a system of ideas, values, norms and beliefs common to the *majority* of [a national] population' (Lepianka et al., 2010, 58) [italics added].

Aims, data and methods

The research questions posed in this article are the following:

1. How is the Finnish working population ranked in employment and organisational commitment compared to four other advanced western societies?

2. Are the individual determinants of employment and organisational commitment similar or different in the countries examined?

3. Are the cultural dimensions identified by Schwartz (2007) and Smith et al. (1996; 2002) related to employment and organisational commitment in the researched countries after controlling for individual determinants?

Individual-level data come from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), Work Orientation Module III. The data were collected in all research countries in 2005 with the exception of Germany, where the data were collected in 2006. The ISSP is an attempt to create a truly comparative data set with which to analyse attitudes comparatively. All the ISSP countries take part in designing the questionnaires. Thus, the problem of establishing the cross-national validity of concepts is not insurmountable. (Hult, 2005; Melin et al., 2007, 57–59.) The data were collected in face-to-face interviews in Germany, Great Britain and Spain. In Finland and Sweden they were collected with a mailed-in survey. Response rates varied from 73 per cent in Spain to 41 per cent in Germany. (Scholz et al., 2008).[7] These response rates are comparable to recent similar studies. The results below pertain to the 18- to 64-year-old salaried respondents in the current data. The data are cross-sectional; thereby, clear limits are placed on causal arguments (Alkula et al., 1994, 157–163, 166–174).

Earlier studies suggested that employment and organisational commitment may be multidimensional phenomena (Freund & Carmeli, 2003; Meyer et al., 2002). However, given the current data, one cannot capture all the possible dimensions of commitment(s). A principal component analysis was thus applied to five propositions (see below) measuring employment and organisational commitment in previous studies with ISSP data. As expected, the analysis produced two principal components with eigenvalues greater than one in each country.[8] With this support it was decided to build two summated indices, which are used as dependent variables in the following analyses. The dependent variables measure employment and organisational commitment in this study. Each respondent's score on both indices varies from

[7] Response rates by the research country are as follows: Finland, 54 %; Germany, 41 %; Great Britain, 47 %; Spain, 73 % and Sweden, 69 %.

[8] PASW-runs are available from the author on request.

one to five, as did the original variables. A higher score indicates stronger commitment and a lower score, a weaker commitment.

First dependent variable measures employment commitment using the following propositions:

1 'A job is just a way of earning money - no more.'

2 'I would enjoy having a paid job even if I did not need the money.'

As already noted, employment commitment refers here to the degree to which a person wants to be engaged in paid employment in general, regardless of financial need (Esser, 2009; Warr et al., 1979). As such, a high commitment to employment is opposed to an instrumental orientation to work. Non-financial employment commitment has been measured with similar variables in several previous studies (Esser, 2009; Hult, 2008; Hult & Edlund, 2008; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001).

Organisational commitment is operationalised here with the following three survey questions:

3 'I would turn down another job that offered quite a bit more pay in order to stay with this organisation.'

4 'I am proud to be working for my firm or organisation.'

5 'I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help the firm or organisation I work for succeed.'

Here too the variable ranges between one and five, from low commitment to high. This variable is known as the 'Porter scale' (Porter et al., 1974) and has been used, with slight modifications, in many studies (Felstead, 2010; Hult, 2005). It can be seen that organisational commitment refers here to (3) employees' desire to maintain organisational membership, (4) a belief in and acceptance of the organisation's objectives and values and (5) a willingness to exert effort on the organisation's behalf (Porter et al., 1974). This measure is thus quite similar to the 'affective commitment' of Meyer et al. (2002). Means, dispersion and reliability measures for the indices are shown in Table 1. While the reliability measure (i.e. Cronbach's Alpha) for employment commitment is quite low for Germany and Spain, Cronbach's Alphas are not significantly low when compared to other comparative studies with similar variables (Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001). And, as already stated, employment commitment has been measured with similar variables in several previous studies.

The distributions of dependent variables were studied using four independent variables: *gender, age, occupational class* and *subjective job insecurity*. Age was recoded to three classes to capture any possible age differences in commitment. Respondents' occupations have been classified in the data according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) 1988. This variable mainly reflects the skill level required for an employee's current job and was subdivided into three classes. Plant and machine operators, assemblers and elementary occupations are included in the lowest occupational class. The middle occupational class consists mainly of clerks, service workers and craft- and related- trades workers. Legislators, senior officials, managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals are included in the highest occupational class. The required skill level decreases when moving from the highest class to the lower ones (see Tilastokeskus, 2001).

Respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale whether they agreed with the statement 'My job is secure' as follows: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree. Following Green (2006, 140–142), employees were identified as 'insecure' if they 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement. Employees who scored 1–3 on this statement were identified as 'secure' (or as having 'low insecurity'). It can be expected that this survey question leads respondents to consider the stability of their current job and also the stability of their employment conditions in general (cf. ibid.). The main methods used in the following sections are standard multiple regression analyses and hierarchical multiple regression analyses.

Country differences and similarities in employment and organisational commitment

The data show that employment commitment is highest in Sweden and lowest in Spain (Tables 1–2). Sweden's high ranking is not surprising, given the findings of other studies in this area (Gallie, 2007; Hult & Svallfors, 2002). However, only the Spanish employees showed lower employment commitment than the Finns. Finnish employees thus did not emerge with particularly high levels of employment commitment in this comparison. This finding is somewhat surprising considering that in Gallie's (2007) study, Danish, Swedish and Finnish employees valued intrinsic job goals more than did employees in Germany and Great Britain. Conceptually, these non-financial, intrinsic job goals are quite similar to the definition of (non-financial) employment commitment used here. However, Gallie's data, the Employment in Europe data, were collected in 1996 and 2001.

Country positions in employment commitment are not fully supportive of Schwartz's (1999) hypotheses, although there was some foundation for them. Sweden scored highest on Schwartz's cultural dimension of autonomy vs. embeddedness (see Appendix). The Swedish employees also displayed the highest employment commitment, which supports Schwartz's hypothesis. Spain scored highest on the egalitarianism vs. hierarchy dimension and lowest in employment commitment, which is also consistent with Schwartz's hypotheses (ibid.).

However, Finland and Sweden showed similar levels of organisational commitment, a factor that was strongest in Germany and Great Britain. Spain displayed a level of organisational commitment similar to that in the Nordic countries included in this study. Also in the ISSP's Work Orientation Module II, whose data were collected in 1997, organisational commitment was mostly higher in Great Britain and (West) Germany than in Sweden. (Hult, 2005; Hult & Svallfors, 2002.)

Great Britain and Germany scored highest on Smith et al.'s

Table 1
Employment and organisational commitment in 2005–2006 in the countries researched.

	Spain	***Great Britain***	***Sweden***	***Germany***	***Finland***
Employment commitment (means)	2.83	3.28	3.64	3.52	3.10
Standard deviation	.93	.98	.89	.94	1.06
Cronbach's alpha	.34	.54	.62	.39	.70
(n)	*554*	*479*	*834*	*902*	*722*
Organisational commitment (means)	3.03	3.38	3.09	3.42	3.12
Standard deviation	.89	.75	.77	.80	.89
Cronbach's alpha	.65	.70	.65	.61	.74
(n)	*553*	*469*	*837*	*885*	*697*

Table 2
The country differences in employment and organisational commitment (standardised regression coefficients from standard multiple regression).

Employment commitment	
Finland (r)	(0)
Germany	.19***
Great Britain	.06**
Spain	-.10***
Sweden	.23***
R^2	*.08*
(n)	*3490*
Organisational commitment	
Finland (r)	(0)
Germany	.16***
Great Britain	.11***
Spain	-.04
Sweden	-.02
R^2	*.04*
(n)	*3440*

*Notes. *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; r= reference category*

(1996; 2002) cultural dimension of egalitarian commitment vs. conservatism (see Appendix). In these countries, as already noted, organisational commitment was also strongest. However, country positions in organisational commitment were not suggestive of Smith et al.'s (ibid.) other cultural dimension. On the whole, it can be concluded that cultural dimensions, at least those defined by Schwartz (2007) and Smith et al., (1996; 2002) do not 'determine' the levels of employment and organisational commitment of a national population. Other factors, including institutional differences and individual characteristics, also influence commitment.

Next, the individual determinants of employment and organisational commitment in the five countries under study here will be examined. The statistical method used is standard multiple regression. Here, the effects of all individual determinants within a country are simultaneously taken into account. Age-group differences are slightly more pronounced in organisational commitment than in employment commitment (Tables 3–4). The effect of age, however, is not very strong. There are also interesting country differences. Only in the Nordic countries included here – Finland and Sweden – were there statistically significant age differences in organisational commitment. When other individual determinants were constant, 35- to 49-year-old Finnish employees were still less committed to their current organisation than 50- to 64-year-old employees (the reference category). Finnish employees in the 18- to 34-year-old category were also less committed to their organisation than those in the reference category, but the effect was not statistically significant. The finding is essentially in line with earlier studies (Mamia & Koivumäki, 2006, 120–121). In Sweden, the youngest employees were less committed to their current employer than were the oldest employees. In the other countries there were no such age differences, which supports Felstead's (2010) findings concerning British employees. Statistically significant age differences can be found in employment commitment only in Spain, where the youngest age group displayed stronger commitment to employment than the oldest age group. This finding can be interpreted in at least two, perhaps not contradictory ways. Either the youngest Spanish employees genuinely value goals other than financial ones in their work or they commit themselves to employment and work *per se* to secure a living in the face of job insecurity (Banyuls et al., 2009).

Women displayed stronger employment commitment than men in all the comparison countries. However, this effect was statistically significant only in Finland, Germany and Sweden. Similar findings have also been reported earlier (Esser, 2009; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Lehto & Sutela, 2008, 20–21; Svallfors et al., 2001). More unexpected is the finding that men were slightly more committed to their current organisation than women in Finland, Sweden and Germany. In previous national and cross-national studies of advanced western societies, no such gender difference was found (Hult & Svallfors, 2002;Lehto & Sutela, 2008, 205–208; Svallfors et al., 2001).

On the whole, there are clear class differences in employment and organisational commitment in all countries, with some exceptions. Class differences are more pronounced in employment commitment. As might be expected (cf. the earlier section on individual determinants of employment and organisational commitment), the highest occupational

Table 3
Determinants of employment commitment (standardised regression coefficients from standard multiple regression.

	Finland	***Germany***	***Great Britain***	***Spain***	***Sweden***	***All countries***
Age						
50–64 yrs. (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
18–34 yrs.	-.00	.01	.03	.12*	.07	.03
35–49 yrs.	-.05	-.04	.03	.03	.02	-.01
Gender						
women (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
men	-.15***	-.10**	-.08	-.02	-.10**	-.09***
Occupational class						
high (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
middle	-.21***	-.19***	-.17***	-.05	-.27***	-.18***
low	-.25***	-.19***	-.34***	-.20***	-.23***	-.24***
Subjective job insecurity						
high insecurity (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
low insecurity	.05	.07*	.00	.17***	.03	.05**
Country						
Finland (r)						(0)
Germany						.22***
Great Britain						.07***
Spain						-.05*
Sweden						.24***
R^2	*.10*	*.07*	*.11*	*.07*	*.10*	*.15*
(n)	*606*	*807*	*469*	*547*	*775*	*3213*

*Notes. *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; r= reference category.*

Table 4
Determinants of organisational commitment (standardised regression coefficients from standard multiple regression).

	Finland	***Germany***	***Great Britain***	***Spain***	***Sweden***	***All countries***
Age						
50–64 yrs. (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
18–34 yrs.	-.09	-.05	-.09	-.03	-.10*	-.07**
35–49 yrs.	-.14**	-.05	-.04	-.07	-.02	-.06**
Gender						
women (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
men	.09*	.05	-.07	-.01	.08*	.04*
Occupational class						
high (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
middle	-.01	.00	-.06	-.23***	-.12**	-.07***
low	-.01	-.12**	-.16**	-.25***	-.10**	-.11***
Subjective job insecurity						
high insecurity (r)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
low insecurity	.22***	.12**	.12**	.22***	.11**	.16***
Country						
Finland (r)						(0)
Germany						.17***
Great Britain						.11***
Spain						-.02
Sweden						-.03
R^2	*.07*	*.04*	*.05*	*.11*	*.05*	*.08*
(n)	*606*	*807*	*461*	*546*	*775*	*3213*

*Notes. *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; r= reference category.*

class showed the strongest employment commitment in all five countries. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the middle and the highest occupational classes in Spain. This is surprising, given the alleged deep segmentation in the Spanish labour market (Banyuls et al., 2009). In all countries except Germany and Sweden, employment commitment systematically decreased from the highest classes to the lower ones. Only in Finland were there no statistically significant class differences in organisational commitment, a finding that deviates from Melin's results (2009, 70–74) in studying Finnish employees. In the four other study countries at least the lowest occupational class displayed lower organisational commitment than the highest class.

Spanish employees with low subjective job insecurity and, to a lesser degree, German employees showed stronger employment commitment than those with high subjective job insecurity. The relationships of perceived job insecurity to commitment were, however, stronger in the case of organisational commitment. In particular, the Finnish and Spanish employees with low subjective job insecurity showed greater commitment to their current organisation than employees who scored high on job insecurity. Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005, 166–170) cross-cultural comparisons suggest that this situation is not unexpected, except that among German employees, the relationship was not as strong as might have been predicted. The Spaniards, the Germans and the Finns scored higher on Hofstede and Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance index than the other countries studied here.

This section will conclude with an examination whether country differences remain in employment and organisational commitment after controlling for the above-mentioned individual characteristics. Column 7 in Tables 3 and 4 shows joint regression models for all five countries. Here the focus is on the country dummy variables. Table 3 shows the same order of the countries in the employment commitment scale as Table 2, with the Swedes displaying the strongest employment commitment in both tables. German and British employees also show the highest organisational commitment, even when age, gender, occupational class and subjective job insecurity are constant. The ranking of the other three countries in organisational commitment remains practically the same, as seen by comparing Table 4 to Table 2. These individual characteristics do not therefore explain the country differences evident in the dependent variables.

Are cultural dimensions related to employment and organisational commitment?

Finally, hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of Schwartz's and Smith et al.'s cultural dimensions to predict employment and organisational commitment in the researched countries after controlling for the influence of individual determinants. Each member of a given nation was assigned the national mean score for his country for each cultural dimension (cf. Fischer et al., 2007). Two models were constructed for both dependent variables, the first using individual determinants and the second using individual determinants and the cultural dimensions in question (Tables 5–6). The focus here is on these models 2, and the data pertain to all five countries.

Table 5
The effects of individual determinants and Smith et al.'s cultural dimensions on organisational commitment, all comparison countries (standardised regression coefficients from hierarchical multiple regression).

	Model 1	***Model 2***
Age		
50–64 yrs. (r)	(0)	(0)
18–34 yrs.	-.07**	-.06**
35–49 yrs.	-.05*	-.05*
Gender		
women (r)	(0)	(0)
men	.04*	.05**
Occupational class		
high (r)	(0)	(0)
middle	-.05**	-.05*
low	-.11***	-.10***
Subjective job insecurity		
high insecurity (r)	(0)	(0)
low insecurity	.15***	.15***
Smith et al.'s cultural dimensions		
egalitarian commitment vs. conservatism		.23***
loyal involvement vs. utilitarian involvement		.16***
R^2	*.04*	*.06*
(n)	*3213*	*3213*

*Notes. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; r= reference category.*

First of all, cultural dimensions were more important in predicting employment than organisational commitment. Table 6 shows that individual determinants (model 1) explained 8 per cent of the variance in employment commitment. Schwartz's two cultural dimensions explained an *additional* 7 per cent of this variance ($p < .001$), after controlling for these individual determinants.[9] Table 5 shows that individual determinants (model 1) accounted for 4 per cent of the variance in organisational commitment. Inclusion of Smith et al.'s cultural dimensions explained only an additional 2 per cent of the variance in organisational commitment ($p < .001$). The fact that cultural dimensions were more important in explaining employment commitment than organisational com-

[9] The final model 2 in Table 6 included Schwartz's cultural dimensions of autonomy vs. embeddedness and egalitarianism vs. hierarchy; the initial model including all of Schwartz's three cultural dimensions had produced a notable multicollinearity problem among these three variables. The strongest multicollinearity emerged between the harmony vs. mastery variables and the egalitarianism vs. hierarchy variables. The final model was chosen on the basis of what would best predict the variance in employment commitment.

Table 6
The effects of individual determinants and Schwartz's cultural dimensions on employment commitment, all comparison countries (standardised regression coefficients from hierarchical multiple regression).

	Model 1	***Model 2***
Age		
50–64 yrs. (r)	(0)	(0)
18–34 yrs.	.00	.03
35–49 yrs.	-.02	-.01
Gender		
women (r)	(0)	(0)
men	-.10***	-.09***
Occupational class		
high (r)	(0)	(0)
middle	-.18***	-.18***
low	-.25***	-.24***
Subjective job insecurity		
high insecurity (r)	(0)	(0)
low insecurity	.06***	.05**
Schwartz's cultural dimensions		
autonomy vs. embeddedness		.31***
egalitarianism vs. hierarchy		-.23***
R^2	*.08*	*.15*
(n)	*3213*	*3213*

*Notes. *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; r= reference category.*

mitment may be understandable from 'the nature' and the point of view of the dependent variables. Perhaps cultural factors are more important in accounting for commitment to employment than commitment to the current organisation because employment commitment displays a more generic orientation to work and employment *per se*, whereas organisational commitment displays a more situational orientation to the current employer and is easily influenced by such things as organisation-level factors.

A greater level of intellectual autonomy and hierarchy in the national culture increased employment commitment, which fits Schwartz's (1999) hypotheses (Table 6). More egalitarian and loyal cultures also showed stronger organisational commitment than did conservative and utilitarian cultures (Table 5). Egalitarian commitment also correlated positively with organisational commitment in previous research, whereas surprisingly, there was no such relationship between loyal involvement and organisational commitment (Gelade et al., 2006). It can be concluded that national culture indeed accounts for some variance in employment and organisational commitment. However, there is still much variance to be accounted for (see R^2s in Tables 5 and 6). An educated guess is that country-specific institutional factors, which are surely linked to cultural factors, may also explain some of this variance.

Conclusions

In Finland a story is told that, in the early 1900s, a mother advised a daughter who was setting off to harvest crops in the Finnish countryside: 'Harvest as much as you can, and then harvest another fifty per cent; then you will have enough' ('Niin leikkaa, kun ikänä jaksat ja siihen viälä pualen pykäät, niin sitten on hyvä', Parikka, 1999, 7–8). For most people paid work has changed a great deal since that time. Yet the ISSP data used here show that only Spanish employees had lower employment commitment than their Finnish counterparts in 2005–2006. This held true even after controlling for individual determinants of employment commitment. This finding in itself points up the need for continuous attention to work-life development from the viewpoint of Finnish labour market policy, since the goal of higher employment rates requires high employment commitment.

That Swedish employees are more committed to employment than Finns is a particularly interesting finding, given that these countries are similar in many respects. By way of comparison, paid work was clearly regarded as more central to Finns than to Swedes in the late 1970s (Alkula, 1990, 87–94), although the societies were structurally very different then. In Alkula's study the respondents rated the importance of different aspects of life, including paid work, leisure activities pursued outside the home and home life. However, in the present study Finns and Swedes displayed similar levels of organisational commitment. Future research could investigate the reasons for the perceived difference between these countries in employment commitment.

A reasonable question to ask about working life today is to what do employees ultimately commit themselves: their organisation, the employment or work per se, their career, their occupation or perhaps their colleagues or customers? An educated guess is that in empirical reality, employees commit themselves to all of these things, albeit to different degrees. It has been suggested, however, that career commitment or employment commitment may be on the rise at the expense of organisational commitment, because in an era of labour market insecurity, commitment to the current employer may not be reasonable from the employee's point of view. Furthermore, organisations, at least in contemporary Finland, increasingly try to promote commitment by providing opportunities for employees to develop their skills and have positive work experiences, because organisations often cannot offer employees the stability of an employment relationship. (Lehto & Sutela, 2008, 205–208; Mamia & Koivumäki, 2006; Rubin & Brody, 2005.) Nevertheless, this article shows that low subjective job insecurity increased organisational commitment in all five countries studied. The same kind of relationship vis-à-vis low subjective job insecurity and employment commitment was also found in Germany and Spain. Offering employees at least the promise of stable employment whenever possible would be a sensible strategy for organisations if we hold the view that a high level of organisational commitment is a desirable goal.

The characteristics of national culture, as identified by Schwartz (2007) and Smith et al. (1996; 2002), also ac-

counted for some variance in employment and organisational commitment in the countries studied here. This was especially clear in the case of Schwartz's cultural dimensions and employment commitment. However, further research is warranted, especially research that combines individual, institutional and cultural factors in studying the commitment to work and an organisation. Qualitative material would further enrich the picture given here.

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Appendix Table 1
Research countries on Schwartz's (2007) and Smith et al.'s (1996; 2002) cultural dimensions.

Schwartz's cultural dimensions[a]		***Smith et al.'s cultural dimensions[b]***	
egalitarianism vs. hierarchy	Spain: 3.39 Germany: 3.19 Finland: 3.10 Sweden: 3.07 Great Britain: 2.59	***loyal involvement vs. utilitarian involvement***	Spain: .53 Great Britain: .05 Finland: -.20 Germany: -.54 Sweden: -.94
autonomy vs. embeddedness	Sweden: 1.97 Germany: 1.85 Spain: 1.68 Finland: 1.56 Great Britain: 1.28	***egalitarian commitment vs. conservatism***	Great Britain: 1.42 Germany: 1.38 Sweden: 1.29 Finland: 1.09 Spain: .03
harmony vs. mastery	Germany: .68 Finland: .68 Spain: .67 Sweden: .65 Great Britain: -.10		

[a] Instructions for Schwartz's dimensions: the greater the number of cultural dimensions, the greater the nation-level egalitarianism in a given country. In this example, the smaller the number, the more the opposite pole of egalitarianism, hierarchy, is emphasised in a given country.

[b] Instructions for Smith et al.'s dimensions: the greater the number, the greater the nation-level loyal involvement in a given country. In this example, the smaller the number, the more the opposite pole of loyal involvement, namely, utilitarian involvement, is emphasised in a given country.