

**THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMME,  
UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT: MENTAL HEALTH AND  
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES**

**VOLUME 2**

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## **CHAPTER 7: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS**

## **7.1 Introduction**

The findings of the quantitative survey are presented in this chapter. The results fall naturally into four sections. The first section (7.2) is brief, providing an account of the summary descriptive statistics. This is followed by the two major sections (7.3 and 7.4) which correspond to the primary research aims of the thesis.

**AIM 1:** To consider individual differences in the mental health of unemployed adults.

**AIM 2:** To explore the psychological experience of participation on Community Programme, a UK government intervention scheme for long-term unemployed adults.

Finally a summary of the findings is presented. At the beginning of each substantive section, an account will be given of the background to, and rationale for the analyses undertaken.

### **A note on "triangulation"**

As discussed in Chapter 5, one of the author's intentions in adopting a multi-method design was to enable "triangulation" of the qualitative and quantitative results. However, two factors combined to undermine this objective. These were: (a) that the questionnaire used in the quantitative study was designed with insufficient attention to the results of the qualitative findings, and (b) that the interview structure and strategy adopted for analysing the results were to a large extent incompatible with the approach adopted in the quantitative study. Consequently, only a limited number of the quantitative results can be seen as following on from, or elaborating upon the qualitative findings. However, where it seems possible that there may be links between the qualitative and quantitative findings, I shall indicate this at the beginning of the section.



## 7.2 Summary Descriptive Statistics

Summary statistics and zero-order Pearson correlation coefficients for the main variables within the study are presented in Table 7.2. The mean scores and correlations which appear in the table are for the sample as a whole, and therefore difficult to interpret since they include employed, unemployed and CP workers. Nevertheless, some aspects of the table are immediately striking and I shall comment on these now. With the exception of the reverse scored Affective well-being (GHQ) and Personal Control scales, the maximum score on each variable would be 5. Given a sample of between 458 and 481 people therefore, the mean scores of 4.50 for Growth Needs Strength, and 4.36 for Commitment to Work Activity, are remarkably high. This fact, combined with the fact that the standard deviations for these scales are the lowest of all, would seem to raise questions about how effectively they discriminate between individuals.

It is clear from the table that careful analysis is required since most of the variables in the study are significantly intercorrelated. Although this raises the spectre of method variance (and I shall discuss this further in Chapter 8), the sizes of the correlations are not alarmingly high (the largest being .54) and the issue of the independence of the measures has already been addressed in Chapter 5. Therefore I shall assume in the analyses which follow that the operationalised variables are actually measuring different constructs. (Of course whether these are the constructs they were actually intended to measure is a different matter, and I discuss the relationship between the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the variables later). However, given that so many of the variables are interrelated, I shall rely primarily on multivariate analyses in an attempt to control for these interdependencies.

**Table 7.2: Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for principal continuous variables**

	X	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Proj satis	3.81	.71								
2. Activity	3.79	.91	.03							
3. Competence	4.16	.66	.17	.19						
4. Control(R)	2.57	.99	-.08	-.24	-.08					
5. Aff.W.B.(R)	.85	.50	-.22	-.24	-.25	.23				
6. Work Commit	4.36	.59	.22	.14	.54	-.04	-.12			
7. Self Motiv	3.86	.65	.08	.27	.43	-.29	-.20	.32		
8. Growth Need	4.50	.58	.16	.20	.49	-.11	-.08	.50	.36	
9. Employ comm	3.83	.98	.16	-.09	.18	.14	.03	.31	-.10	.16

Note: N varies between 458 and 481 depending on missing values

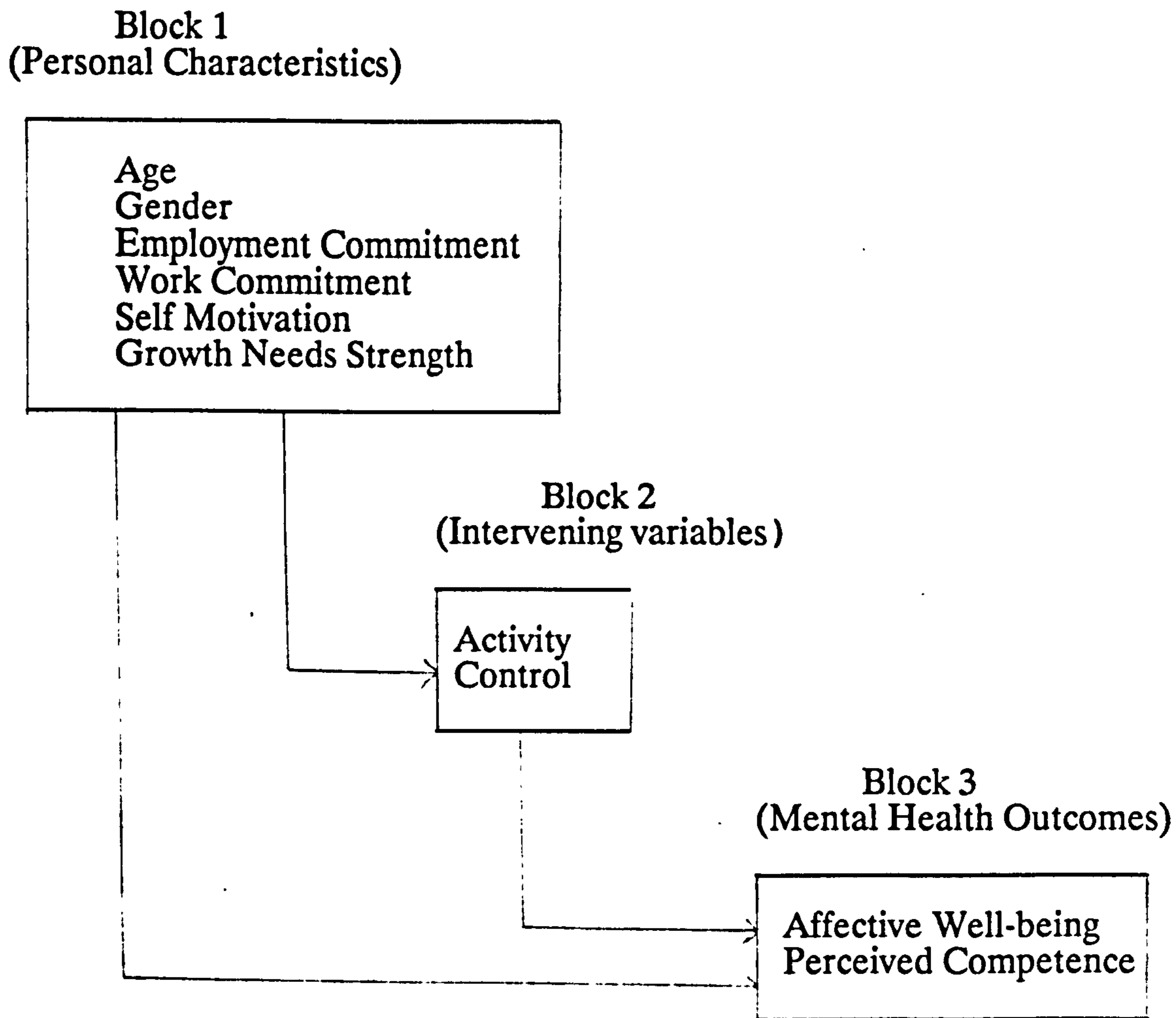
N.B. All correlations shown in the table are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  except those where coefficient is smaller than .07.

### **7.3 Aim 1: Analyses relating to individual differences in the mental health of unemployed adults.**

#### **7.3.1 Introduction**

This section focuses on an exploration of some of the issues raised in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the thesis concerning individual differences in the mental health of unemployed adults. In particular, the analyses revolve around the questions raised by, and variables incorporated within, the guiding conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 3. They represent a preliminary investigation of the relationships between these variables and mental health. The framework is presented again below:

**Figure 1: Guiding Framework for the investigation of individual differences in mental health during unemployment**



There are three blocks of variables, referred to as personal characteristics, intervening variables and mental health outcomes. The personal characteristics in Block 1 were assumed to be relatively stable characteristics of the individual which moderated the impact of unemployment on mental health. The variables in Block 2 of the framework were assumed to be influenced by the personal characteristics in Block 1, and in turn, to affect the mental health outcomes in Block 3.

The aim is to explore individual differences in the mental health of unemployed adults, but bearing in mind the comments made in Chapter 1 concerning the risks attached to focussing solely on unemployed groups, (this approach leaves open the possibility that findings have nothing to do with unemployment per se) all three employment status groups (unemployed, employed and CP) are incorporated within the analyses.



The analyses take the form of a series of multiple regressions ("path analysis") which are used to identify significant relationships (paths) between the different variables. Once these analyses have been completed, the results are then used to draw up a revised version of the conceptual framework, showing only the significant relationships between variables. This procedure is repeated four times for: (a) the sample as a whole (b) the unemployed group (c) the employed group (d) the CP group.

Before turning to these four main sections, I shall briefly consider some analyses relating to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the personal characteristics variables within the framework (including the three variables which were claimed to represent elements of, or at least to be related to, the construct of "proactivity", namely growth needs strength, work commitment and self-motivation). These variables were conceptualised in Chapter 3 as relatively stable personal characteristics. Some empirical evidence in support of the relative stability of two of the operationalised variables (growth needs and employment commitment) was discussed in Chapter 5. There would seem to be no strong basis for questioning the operationalisations of age and gender (except perhaps that respondents may not always report their age accurately), but this still leaves the two newly conceptualised and operationalised variables, work commitment and self-motivation. The assumptions made about the stability or instability of these variables over time cannot be tested within the present cross-sectional design, but some limited evidence relating to their stability across environments is available. Post hoc comparisons of the mean scores of the employed, unemployed and CP groups on each variable were conducted using analyses of variance. The results are shown in Table 7.3.1(a) including, for the sake of completeness, the block 2 and block 3 variables which, on the basis of the conceptualisations in Chapter 3, would (or at least might) be expected to vary.



**Table 7.3.1(a): Individual difference variables across employed, unemployed and CP groups**

	CP Mean	EMP Mean	UNEMP Mean	F	p
Work Commit	4.30	4.42	4.44	2.39	n.s.
Self Motiv	3.82	3.98	3.86	1.72	n.s.
Growth Needs	4.46	4.58	4.49	1.25	n.s.
Employ Comm	3.80	3.94	3.81	1.45	n.s.
Activity	3.83	4.10	3.30	16.16	***
Control (R)	2.63	2.35	2.65	2.95	*
Aff. W-B (R)	.78	.86	1.05	8.21	***
Competence	4.14	4.07	4.30	2.37	n.s.

Note: (Two way ANOVA to control for possible effects of differences between agencies)

N=460; CP N=290 EMPLOYED N=88 UNEMPLOYED N=82

Encouragingly, there were no effects of employment status on the block 1 (personal characteristics) variables which were assumed to be relatively stable. Moreover, as expected, the block 2 (intervening) variables were shown to differ between employment status groups. There were main effects of employment status on activity ( $F=16.16$ ,  $df=2,430$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and on perceived control ( $F=2.95$ ,  $df=2,447$ ,  $p=.05$ ). One of the two mental health outcome variables, affective well-being, reflected differences between groups ( $F=8.21$ ,  $df=2,447$ ,  $p<.001$ ), although perceived competence appeared to be similar between groups. (Potentially raising questions about the current operationalisation or conceptualisation, or both). Although it would be inappropriate to claim that these findings confirm the conceptualisations and operationalisations adopted, it does seem that they are largely consistent with the treatment of the variables outlined in the framework.

### 7.3.2 Path Analysis (Whole Sample)

"Fitting" the model shown in Figure 1 (path analysis) required two sets of multiple regression analyses. First, the variables in block 1 were used as predictors of the block 2 variables. Then all the variables in block 1 and 2 were used as predictors of the block 3 variables. The resultant standardised regression weights (beta values) are considered as path coefficients and can be interpreted as indicators of the strength of direct and indirect relationships amongst the variables (Land, 1969). These analyses will now be reported.

#### Effects of Personal Characteristics on Activity

Table 7.3.2(a) shows the results of the first regression analysis using the Block 1 variables as predictors of activity level.

Table 7.3.2(b): Individual differences: Predictors of activity (whole sample)

Predictor Variable	Beta	t	p
Age	.14	2.93	**
Growth Needs	.12	2.17	*
Gender	.18	3.81	***
Employment Commitment	-.08	-1.64	n.s.
Self Motivation	.17	3.34	***
Work Commitment	.02	.36	n.s.

Notes: N varies between 434 and 484 depending on missing values

Multiple R = .36

F = 10.34,  $p < 0.0001$

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Age, growth needs strength, gender and self motivation were all significantly related to activity. The beta values in the table show little difference between the strength of the relationships. The positive beta value for gender indicates that women were more active than men, and the positive values for the other predictors indicate that older respondents, those with more growth needs and those who were more self-motivated were all likely to be more active.



### Effects of Personal Characteristics on Perceived Control

The results of the second regression analysis, this time using the block 1 variables as predictors of control is shown in Table 7.3.2(c).

**Table 7.3.2(c): Individual differences: Predictors of perceived control (whole sample)**

Predictor Variable	Beta	t	p
Age	.07	1.59	n.s.
Growth Needs	-.03	-.47	n.s.
Gender	-.03	-.76	n.s.
Employment Commitment	.09	1.87	n.s.
Self Motivation	-.29	-5.77	***
Work Commitment	.02	.29	n.s.

Notes: N varies between 453 and 484 depending on missing values

Multiple R = .32

F = 8.75, p < 0.0001

\* p < 0.05

\*\* p < 0.01

\*\*\* p < 0.001

Only self motivation is significantly associated with perceived control. Bearing in mind that the measure of control used here is negatively phrased, the negative beta weight indicates that self motivated individuals were more likely to feel able to control their immediate environment.

### Predictors of Affective Well-being

The second set of regression analyses used all the variables in blocks 1 and 2 as predictors of the mental health outcomes shown in block 3. The results of the first regression analysis, with affective well-being as the dependent variable, is shown in Table 7.3.2(d).

The table shows that there were significant direct effects of control, activity and gender on well-being. The General Health Questionnaire measures

symptoms, so that higher scores indicate lower levels of affective well-being. Therefore, the polarity of the relevant beta values indicates that individuals who were male, or were more active, or felt more in control of their environment tended to have better levels of well-being. However it is worth noting that activity level (beta=-.20) and perceived control (i) were much stronger predictors of well-being than gender (beta=.10).

**Table 7.3.2(d): Individual differences: Predictors of affective well-being (whole sample)**

Predictor Variable	Beta	t	p
Employment Commitment	.01	.01	n.s.
Self Motivation	-.06	-1.28	n.s.
Growth Needs	.02	.43	n.s.
Work Commitment	-.09	-1.65	n.s.
Gender	.10	2.09	*
Age	.01	.29	n.s.
Control (R)	.21	4.22	***
Activity	-.20	-4.02	***

**Notes:**

N varies between 429 and 484 depending on missing values

Multiple R = .36

F = 8.12, p < 0.0001

\* p < 0.05  
 \*\* p < 0.01  
 \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Effects of Individual Differences on Competence**

The effects of the block 1 and 2 variables on perceived competence are presented in Table 7.3(e). In contrast to the findings on affective well-being, there were no effects of activity level or perceived control on levels of competence. This finding again seems to suggest either that competence has a very different basis to affective well-being, or that the current conceptualisation of competence is flawed. I shall discuss this issue further in Chapter 8.



**Table 7.3.2(e): Individual differences: Predictors of perceived competence (whole sample)**

Predictor Variable	Beta	t	p
Employment Commitment	.07	1.91	n.s.
Self Motivation	.24	5.51	***
Growth Needs	.23	5.09	***
Work Commitment	.30	6.48	***
Gender	.03	.75	n.s.
Age	.06	1.49	n.s.
Activity	.04	.87	n.s.
Control	-.01	-.32	n.s.

**Notes:**

N varies between 430 and 484 depending on missing values

Multiple R = .63

F = 35.87, p < 0.0001

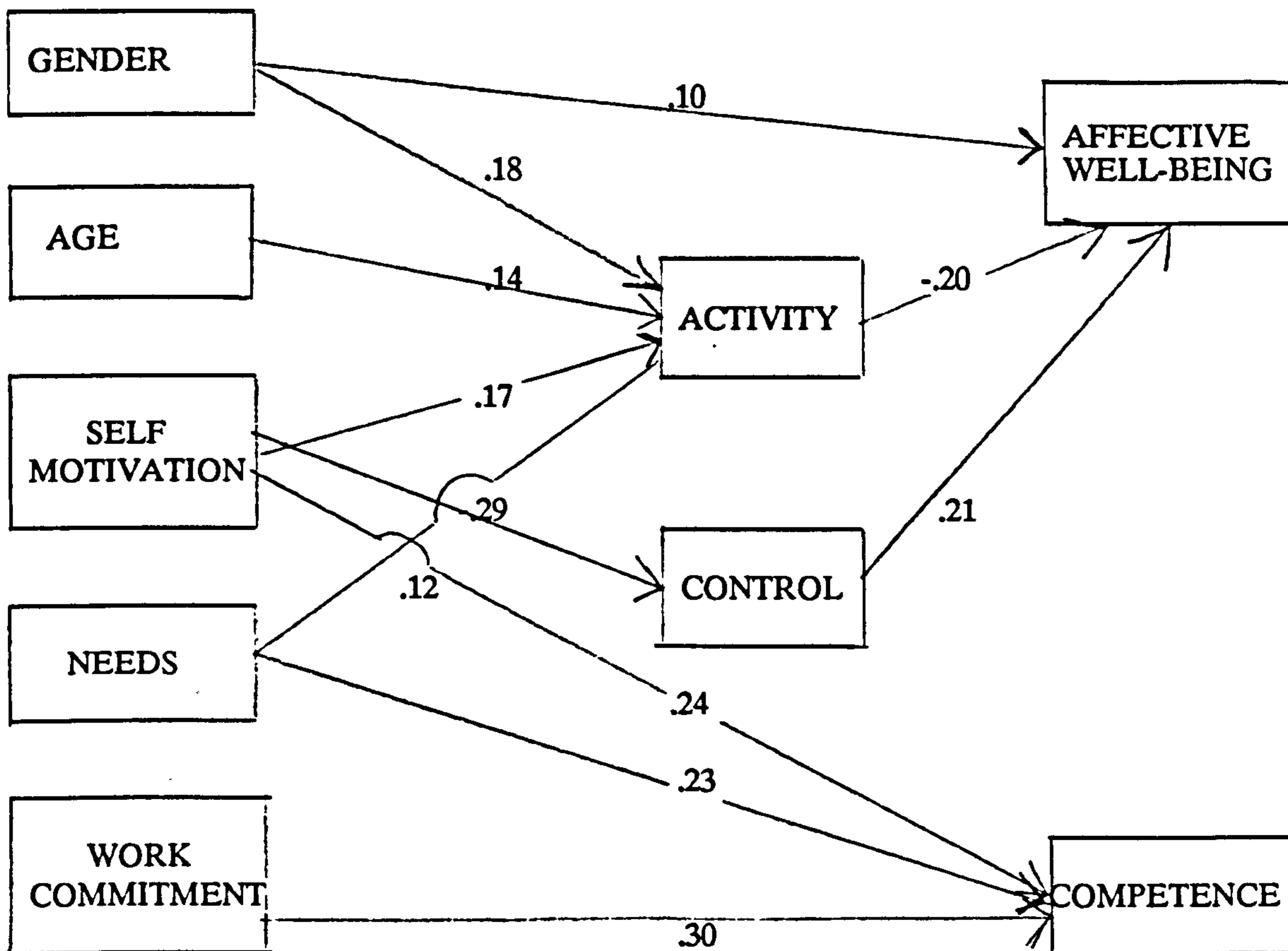
\* p < 0.05  
 \*\* p < 0.01  
 \*\*\* p < 0.001

However, there were direct effects of work commitment, growth need strength and self motivation. The strongest predictor of perceived competence was commitment to work activity. The beta values show that individuals with higher levels of work commitment reported higher levels of perceived competence. Similarly, individuals who were more self motivated and had more growth needs felt more competent. Finally, it is worth noting that employment commitment just failed to reach conventional levels of significance as a predictor of competence (p = .06).

Using the results of these analyses, it was possible to produce a revised form of the model shown in Figure 1, showing only the statistically significant paths between variables. This is shown in Figure 2.

This model shows both direct and indirect influences upon the mental health outcomes.

**Figure 2: Reduced form of the model in Figure 1, showing only significant path coefficients (whole sample)**



It is clear that the major direct influences upon affective well-being are activity level and perceived control. In turn, perceived control is affected by self-motivation, and activity is influenced by gender, age, self motivation and growth needs.

The only direct relationship between the personal characteristics and affective well-being is for gender. Thus, for the most part, the personal characteristics only indirectly influence well-being via activity and control.

In contrast, perceived competence is not affected by activity level or perceived control, but is related to three of the dispositional characteristics, namely self motivation, growth needs strength and work commitment.

### 7.3.3 Path Analysis (Unemployed, employed and CP groups separately)

The results of the analyses involving the whole sample suggest that there were indeed significant effects of the personal characteristics and intervening variables on mental health, but such an analysis is difficult to interpret in any meaningful way because it incorporates all three employment status groups (CP, employed and unemployed).

As discussed earlier, the present study is primarily concerned with individual differences in the mental health of unemployed adults, but I have not focussed solely on the unemployed group as this would leave open the possibility that findings would have nothing to do with unemployment per se. Indeed, in this point lies the key to the rationale for the analyses which follow. Turning this argument around, what is of most interest in the current context are those relationships within the model which are *exclusively* found within the unemployed group.

However, as yet we have not demonstrated that the relationships differ in any way across the three employment status groups. To test for this possibility, two moderated regression analyses were conducted, one for each of the mental health outcome variables, affective well-being and perceived competence.

In this moderated regression, the block 1 and 2 variables and employment status were used as predictors, and in addition, an interaction term was created for each individual difference variable x employment status.

Using perceived competence as the dependent variable, the inclusion of these interaction terms into the regression equation only increased the proportion of variance explained from 42% to 44%. An F-test showed that this increase was not significant ( $F = 1.24$ ,  $df = 12, 409$ ,  $p > .05$ ).



However, using affective well-being as the dependent variable, the inclusion of the interaction terms increased the proportion of variance explained from 16% to 21%. An F-test showed this increase to be significant ( $F = 1.83$ ,  $df = 12, 408$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that the same model was not appropriate for all three groups. In view of this finding, the path analysis was repeated for the three employment status groups separately.

Exactly the same procedure was used as for the full sample. For each employment status group (employed, unemployed and CP), two sets of regression analyses were performed: First, the block 1 variables were used as predictors of those in block 2, and then all of the block 1 and 2 variables were used to predict those in block 3. The results of the individual regression analyses will not be reported here, but they are included in Appendix F. Instead, only the final path diagrams for each employment status group are presented.

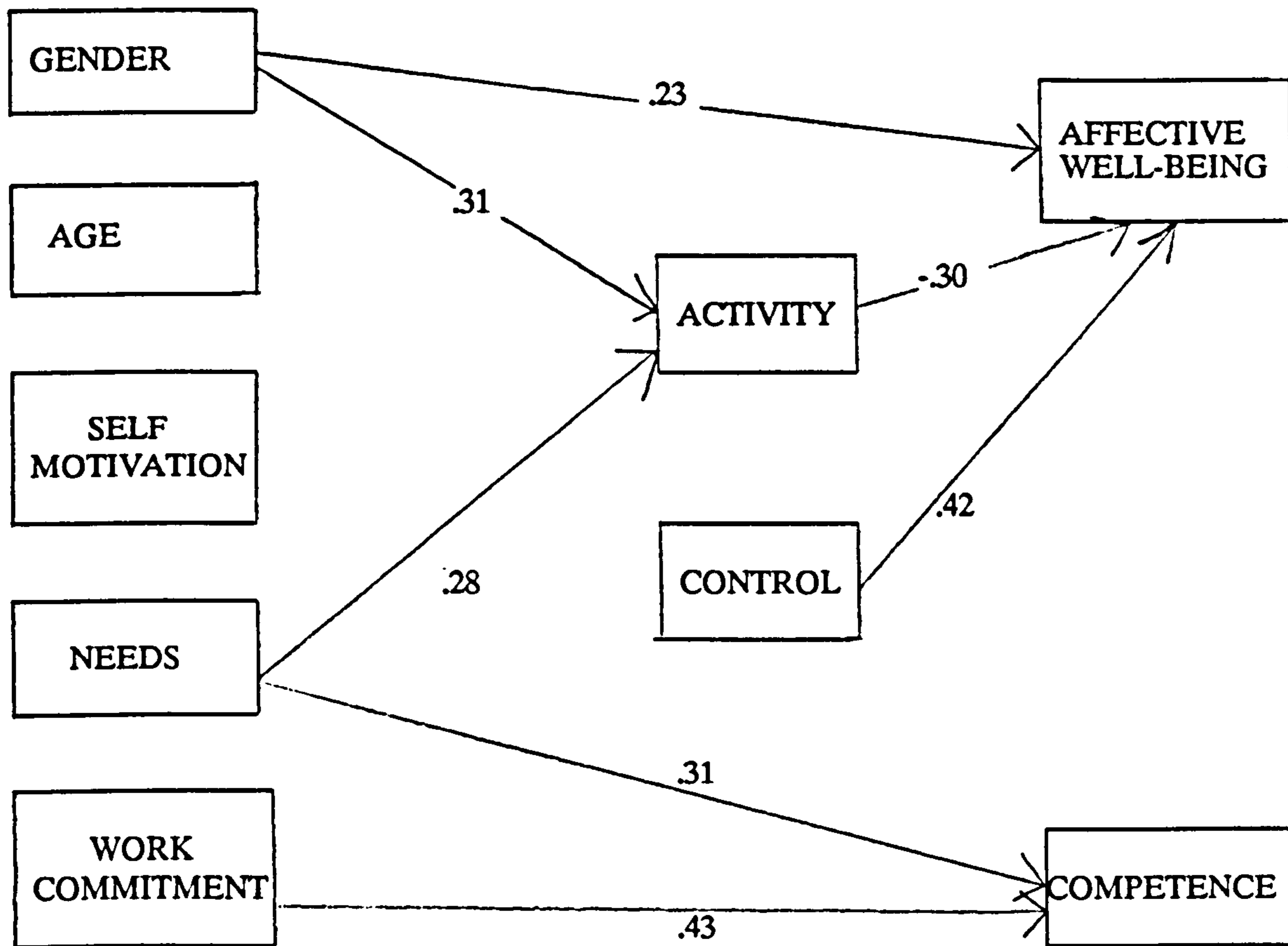
### **Path Analysis - Unemployed Sample**

The results of the path analysis for the unemployed group are shown in Figure 3. The pattern of relationships is similar to that for the whole sample, but there are fewer significant paths. However, those relationships which are significant, are all much stronger than for the sample as a whole.

There are still direct effects of perceived control, activity and gender on affective well-being (being male, active and feeling more in control are associated with greater well-being). Also, growth needs and gender are strongly predictive of activity level. Finally, growth needs and work commitment are directly related to perceived competence.



**Figure 3: Reduced form of the model in Figure 1, showing only significant path coefficients (unemployed sample)**

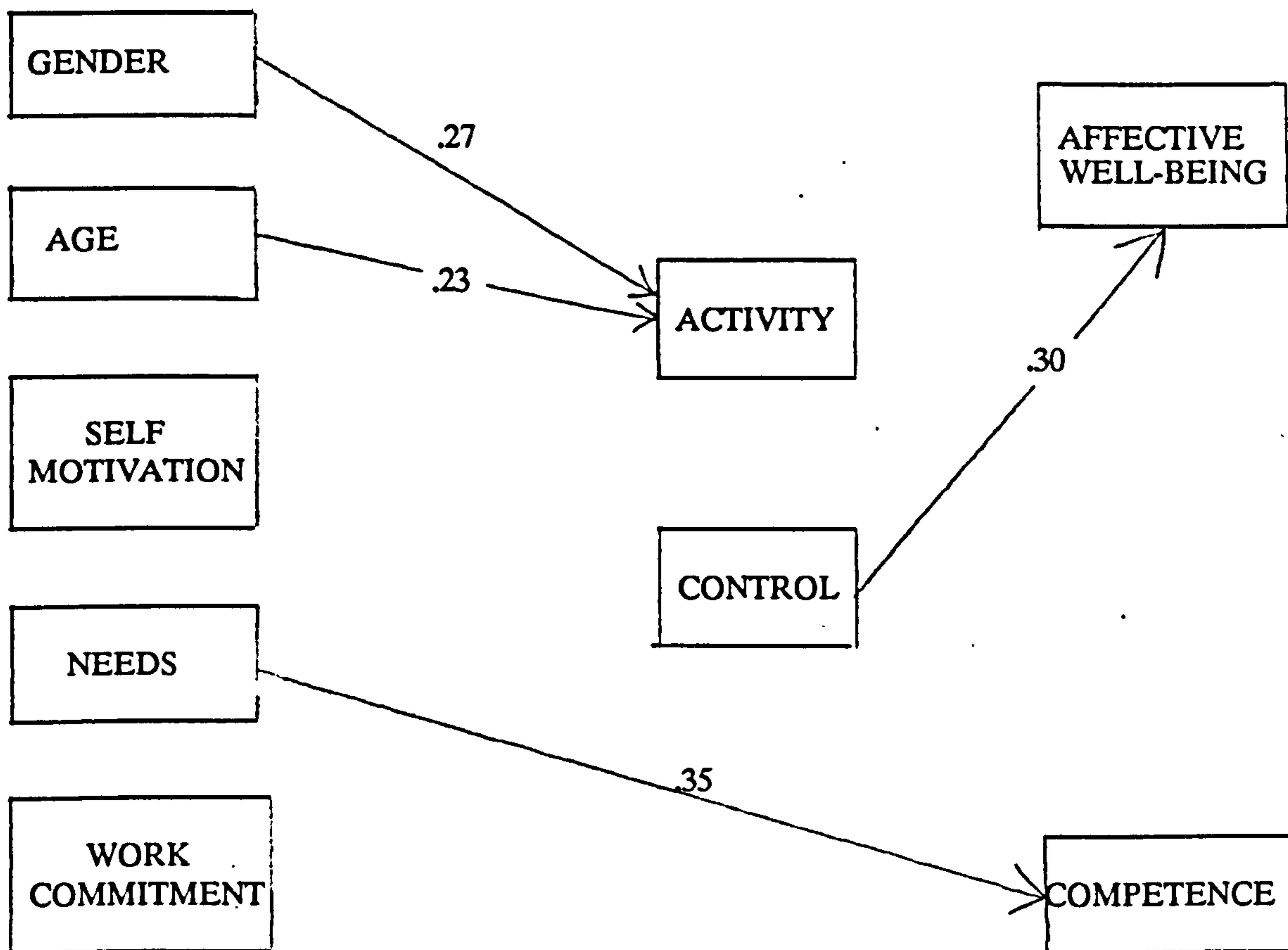


It is surprising, given the findings reported in the literature, that there is no effect of employment commitment on levels of well-being within this sample. For this variable, probability estimates did not even approach conventional levels of significance. The non-significant finding for age as a predictor variable is less surprising as the relationships described in the literature tend to be curvilinear and therefore may not be detected by linear regression analysis.

### **Path Analysis - Employed Sample**

Turning to the consideration of individual differences and well-being amongst the employed sample, (Figure 4), it is clear that the effect of the individual difference variables on mental health is much less important. Only four of the paths were significant.

**Figure 4: Reduced form of the model in Figure 1, showing only significant path coefficients (Employed sample)**



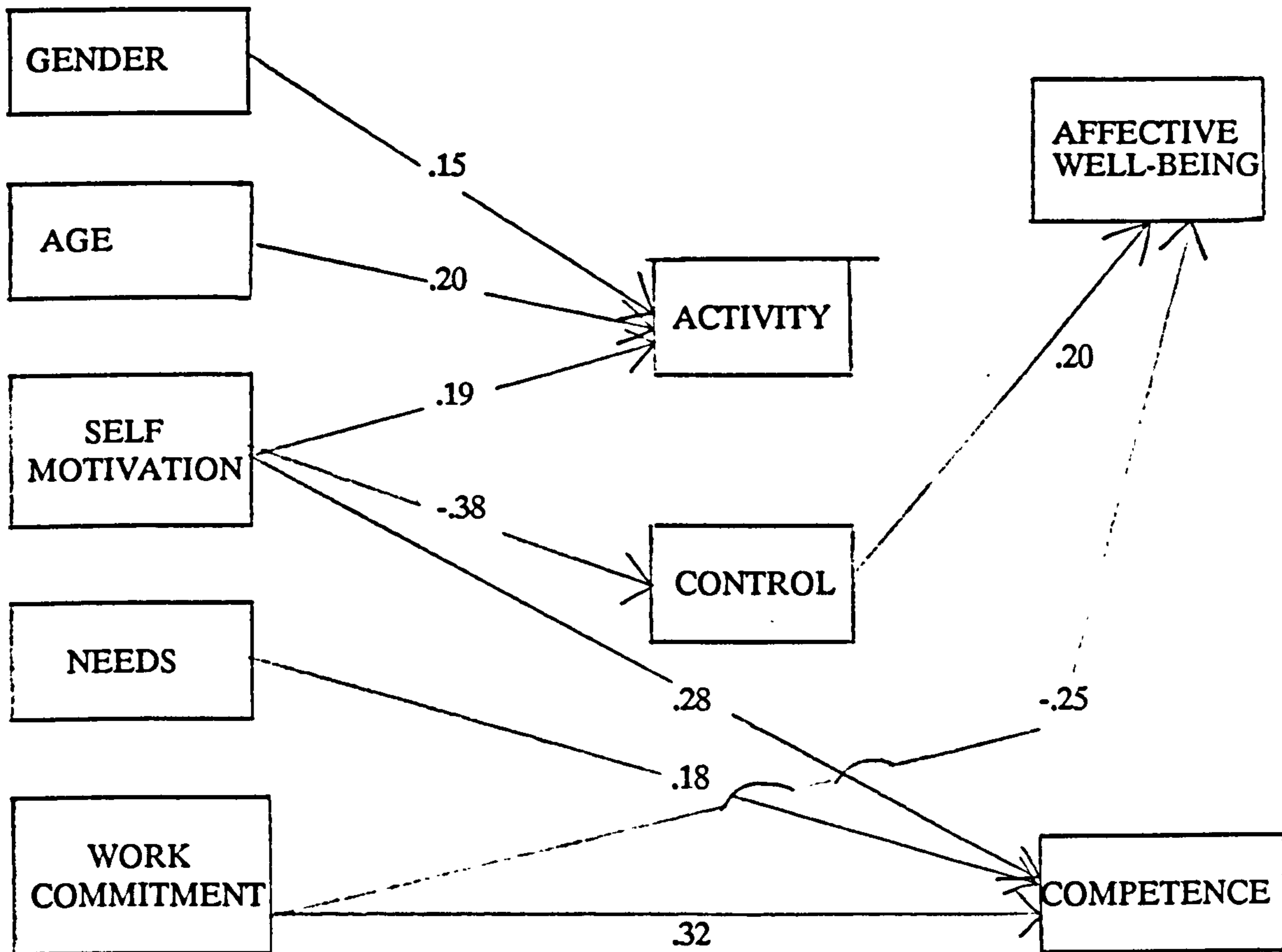
The only predictor of well-being amongst this group was perceived control. The direction of this association is as before, with those individuals having more control over their environments reporting higher levels of well-being. Unlike the unemployed sample there is no effect of gender or of activity level on well-being. However, age and gender were significantly associated with activity level. Once again, growth needs strength was strongly associated with perceived competence. Again it is surprising that there is no effect of employment commitment on affective well-being, although the t-value for work commitment and well-being approached significance ( $p = .10$ ).

### **Path Analysis - CP Sample**

The path analysis for the CP sample revealed many more significant relationships between the variables than in either of the two other groups. In

part, this may be because this sample was larger and therefore significant relationships would be easier to detect.

**Figure 5: Reduced form of the model in Figure 1, showing only significant path coefficients (CP sample)**



Possibly the most interesting finding to emerge from this set of analyses is that there is a direct effect of work commitment on well-being within this group. Higher levels of work commitment were associated with greater well-being.

As with the other two groups, control was predictive of well-being, and growth needs strength was related to perceived competence. But unlike either of the other two groups, greater self motivation was associated with higher levels of activity and control.

Self motivation was also predictive of perceived competence, as was work commitment. Finally, both gender and age were related to activity levels.



## Overview

The set of analyses presented above have identified an enormous number of different relationships between the variables in the framework. Whilst every one of these relationships is potentially interesting, it would become rapidly confusing to discuss the alternative interpretations and implications of all of them. Therefore some sort of guiding principles are required if we are to make sense of these data.

First, I will highlight the relationships which emerged whether the respondents were employed, unemployed or on CP. These were:

1. Women were more active than men.
2. Individuals who felt more in control tended to experience greater well-being.
3. Individuals with higher levels of growth needs strength tended to feel more competent.

Second, (and of most relevance in the context of the specific questions being raised in the present study), I will highlight those relationships which were *exclusively* found within the unemployed group. The rationale for this is that these are the findings which would seem to have something specifically to do with individual differences in the experience of unemployment per se (rather than being relationships which occur whatever the circumstances of the individual). (It is, however, acknowledged that although these relationships were significant within the unemployed group and not significant within the other groups, the analyses presented here do not show unequivocally that the strength of the relationships were significantly different on a statistical basis. However, inspection of the relevant beta weights for the employed and CP samples (see Appendix E) would seem to support the suggestion that these relationships were substantially rather than only marginally different).

These relationships were that amongst unemployed people:

1. Men had higher levels of affective well-being
2. Higher levels of growth needs strength were associated with higher levels of activity.
3. Higher levels of activity were associated with higher levels of affective well-being.

Third, I will highlight those relationships which were specific to the CP or employed groups:

1. Work commitment was associated with affective well-being (CP group only).
2. Self motivation was associated with activity (CP group only)
3. Self motivation was associated with control (CP group only)
4. Self motivation was associated with competence (CP group only).

Two final points are also worth noting:

1. Contrary to almost all findings within the unemployment literature, employment commitment was not associated with any of the other variables in any of the analyses.
2. Very few relationships were identifiable within the employed group, a finding which might be interpreted as an indication that the fact of being employed *at all* is a more important factor influencing mental health than the individual differences/ personal characteristics incorporated within the framework.



## **7.4 Aim 2: Analyses Relating to The Experience of Participation on Community Programme**

The findings of the qualitative study suggested that for many respondents the experience of unemployment was largely negative, and that in contrast the experience of CP was largely, (but not entirely) evaluated positively. The interviewees reported improvements in confidence, satisfaction and happiness upon starting CP, but a major negative feature of CP was the temporary nature of the employment contract. It appeared that this had led to feelings of uncertainty about the future. In an effort to substantiate and elaborate upon at least some of these findings, three types of quantitative analysis are used:

- (i) Employment status group comparisons.
- (ii) Comparisons with data from other studies.
- (iii) Consideration of specific features of CP.

The rationale for these analyses is given at the beginning of each section.

### **7.4.1 Employment Status Group Comparisons**

One design feature of the questionnaire study is that it includes not only individuals who are participating on CP, but also employed and unemployed samples. In the absence of longitudinal data, and in an attempt to provide a tentative quantitative assessment of the qualitative findings concerning the extent to which psychological experience of CP was a positive one, the self-reports of the CP group on two dimensions of mental health (affective well-being and competence) are compared (cross-sectionally) with similar self-reports from the employed and unemployed groups. Similar comparisons are also made for activity level and control in an attempt to explore what might lie behind any differences which emerged.



The full sample was split into three groups by employment status. Most respondents were: (a) Participating in CP, or (b) employed, or (c) unemployed. Only 24 respondents (5%) did not fall into one of these categories. Comparisons were made between these groups on four variables: Affective Well-Being, Perceived Competence, Perceived Control and Activity Level. The results for each of these variables are presented separately.

Analysis of Covariance procedures were used to test for main effects of employment status (CP v Employed v Unemployed) on each of the variables. Analysis of covariance was used to control for differences by; managing agency (Agency A v Agency B); age; gender; marital status; number of children; full-time/part-time CP post; age of leaving full-time education; and length of unemployment, which may otherwise have produced artefactual differences between the employment status groups (ie these variables were incorporated as the covariates). In addition to the tests for main effects, planned comparisons were conducted to test for differences between groups. With three groups being involved in the analyses (two degrees of freedom), only two independent comparisons could be made. The comparisons selected were therefore:

- (a) CP v Unemployed, and
- (b) CP v Employed.

#### **Affective Well-Being (GHQ-12)**

The mean scores for affective well being are shown in Table 7.4.1(a). The GHQ measure is negatively phrased so that a higher score indicates greater distress. As the analysis involved a covariance procedure, both actual group means and the adjusted group means (after controlling for covariates) are shown. Initial inspection of the means suggests that the unemployed group experience considerably lower levels of affective well-being than the CP

participants and the employed respondents. This interpretation was borne out by the analyses.

**Table 7.4.1(a): Comparison of CP, employed and unemployed groups: Affective well-being**

		CP	Employed	Unemployed
AFF. W.B.	Actual Mean	.78	.86	1.05
	(Adjusted Mean)	.80	.88	1.07)

#### ANCOVA

Overall Test	F=5.65	df=2,348	p<.01	**
Comparison 1 (CP v Unemployed)	F=11.28	df=1,348	p<.001	***
Comparison 2 (CP v Employed)	F=1.01	df=1,348	p=.315	n.s.

Analysis of covariance shows there to be a main effect of employment status on affective well-being (GHQ-12) ( $F=5.65$ ,  $df=2,348$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). There were no significant effects of covariates. Planned comparisons confirm that the unemployed group experienced greater psychological distress than the CP group ( $F=11.28$ ,  $df=1,348$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and that there was no *significant* difference between the mean distress scores of the CP group and the employed group.

In brief, the CP participants experienced less distress than the unemployed respondents and had comparable levels of well-being to those of the employed sample. However, one particularly surprising aspect of these findings cannot go without comment. This is the fact that the mean distress score for the CP group was actually *lower* (although non-significantly) than the employed group. This finding is not easy to explain and raises some serious questions about the nature of the sample which will be dealt with further in Chapter 8.



## Perceived Competence

The mean scores for competence are shown in Table 7.4.1(b).

**Table 7.4.1(b): Comparison of CP, employed and unemployed groups: Perceived competence**

		CP	Employed	Unemployed
COMP	Actual Mean	4.14	4.07	4.30
	(Adjusted Mean	4.14	4.08	4.30)

## ANCOVA

Overall Test	F=2.196	df=2,351	p=.113	n.s.
Comparison 1 (CP v Unemployed)	F=2.44	df=1,351	p=.119	n.s.
Comparison 2 (CP v Employed)	F=.343	df=1,351	p=.343	n.s.

The pattern of mean scores across groups is particularly surprising, with the unemployed group having the highest mean score and the employed group the lowest. The CP group falls between the other two groups. However the analyses show that these differences were not significant either in tests for main effects or the planned comparisons. On the basis of these findings, competence does not appear to be related to employment status, but there *were* some significant effects of covariates. Gender was associated with perceived competence ( $F=4.59$ ,  $df=1,351$ ,  $p=.03$ ) with women reporting higher levels of competence than men. Also part-time/full-time contract on CP was associated with competence ( $F=9.02$ ,  $df=1,351$ ,  $p=.003$ ), with full-timers reporting higher levels of competence than part-timers.

## Perceived Control

The mean scores for the employed, unemployed and CP groups are shown in Table 7.4.1(c). As with well-being, the control measure is negatively phrased, so that higher scores indicate lower levels of perceived control.



**Table 7.4.1(c): Comparison of CP, employed and unemployed groups: Perceived control**

		CP	Employed	Unemployed
CONTROL	Actual Mean	2.63	2.35	2.65
	(Adjusted Mean	2.61	2.33	2.61)

#### ANCOVA

Overall Test	F=1.95	df=2,349	p=.14	n.s.
Comparison 1 (CP v Unemployed)	F=0.26	df=1,349	p=.608	n.s.
Comparison 2 (CP v Employed)	F=3.91	df=1,349	p=.049	*

Initial inspection of the group means suggests that the relationship of employment status to perceived control is different to that for affective well-being. The CP participants report similar levels of control to the unemployed sample, with the employed sample reporting higher levels of perceived control. These apparent differences were partially borne out by the analyses. Although in the overall test for a main effect, the F-value is not significant, the planned comparisons do suggest that there is no significant difference between the control scores of the CP and unemployed groups, but that the employed group experience higher levels of perceived control than the CP group (F=3.91, df=1,349, p<.05). There were no significant effects of covariates.

In short, the CP participants did seem to experience lower levels of control than the employed respondents and no better levels of control than the unemployed groups.

#### Activity Level

The group means for activity are shown in Table 7.4.1(d). The employed group reported the highest levels of activity, followed by the CP group, with the unemployed group being the least active. The analyses confirm a main effect

of employment status on levels of activity ( $F=12.15$ ,  $df=2,334$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Planned comparisons showed that the unemployed were less active than those on CP ( $F=14.10$ ,  $df=1,334$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and those on CP were less active than the employed group ( $F=4.88$ ,  $df=1,334$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). There was one significant effect of a covariate; gender ( $F=12.97$ ,  $df=1,334$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with women reporting higher levels of activity than men.

**Table 7.4.1(d): Comparison of CP, employed and unemployed groups: Activity**

		CP	Employed	Unemployed
ACTIVITY	Actual Mean	3.83	4.10	3.30
	(Adjusted Mean	3.78	4.11	3.30)

#### ANCOVA

Overall Test	$F=12.15$	$df=2,334$	$p<.001$	***
Comparison 1 (CP v Unemployed)	$F=14.10$	$df=1,334$	$p<.001$	***
Comparison 2 (CP v Employed)	$F=4.88$	$df=1,334$	$p=.028$	*

In brief, the CP participants were more active than the unemployed respondents but less active than those who had jobs within the mainstream of the labour market. Women were also more active than men.

To summarise the key findings of comparisons between employment status groups, CP participants reported levels of well-being which were comparable with the employed sample, but felt no more in control of their environment than the unemployed sample. Levels of activity were highest amongst the employed group and lowest amongst the unemployed group, with the CP participants falling between the two. These findings are represented schematically below:



Aff. Well Being	Unemployed < CP = Employed
Competence	Unemployed = CP = Employed
Control	Unemployed = CP < Employed
Activity	Unemployed < CP < Employed

#### **7.4.2 Comparisons with Data from Other Studies**

A weakness of the current quantitative study already noted is that the design is cross-sectional. The comparisons between employment status groups described above are therefore open to a host of different interpretations. In an attempt to partially compensate for this weakness, statistical comparisons of the affective well-being of the CP, employed and unemployed groups are made with findings of other studies in which the same psychometric measure of affective well-being (The General Health Questionnaire; Goldberg 1972) was used. It was hoped that by considering the data within a wider context some tentative assessment as to the generalisability of the within-study comparisons could be made. (For example, whether or not the between-group differences simply reflected some atypicality of the samples).

Table 7.4.2 summarises the distress scores of the three main groups in the present study and gives details of mean distress scores in samples from three other studies (Banks, Clegg, Jackson, Kemp, Stafford and Wall, 1980; Jackson, 1985; Stafford, 1982). This approach to comparison (comparing with other studies) was taken because the original manual for the GHQ (Goldberg 1972) does not provide standardisation norms for employed and unemployed groups separately. The Banks et al. (1980) study was selected particularly because it represents the first attempt to provide what amounted to a standardisation study for the use of the GHQ in occupational settings. The other two studies were selected because they met all of the following conditions:

- (a) the samples were taken from the UK population
- (b) they used the 12-item version of the GHQ



- (b) they used the likert scoring method for the GHQ
- (c) they incorporated employed and unemployed samples
- (d) they presented means, sample sizes and standard deviations for the GHQ scores of the employed and unemployed samples separately (enabling statistical comparisons).

However, it should be recognised that these samples differed in some ways to the present sample and therefore the comparisons need to be interpreted very cautiously. In particular, it should be noted that:

1. The sample in the Jackson (1985) study were all men.
2. The sample in the Stafford (1982) study were all school-leavers aged 16-18 with less than two O-levels or CSE equivalents
3. The sample from the Banks et al. (1980) study were all men.

Initial inspection of the mean scores suggests that the pattern of results in the present study is similar to that of the other studies, with the employed and CP/YOP samples reporting higher levels of well-being than the unemployed samples. However, two differences seem to be discernible between the current study and other studies. In the present study, employed respondents reported somewhat higher levels of distress than in other studies, whilst unemployed respondents reported somewhat lower levels of distress than in the other studies. Three groups of t-tests were performed to ascertain whether the apparent similarities and differences were borne out statistically.

**Table 7.4.2: Summary statistics for affective well-being by employment status in four unemployment studies**

		Government Programme	Employed	Unemployed
This Study	Mean	(CP) .79	.87	1.05
	n s.d	290 (.47)	88 (.49)	82 (.59)
Banks et al. 1980	Mean	-	.73	1.30
	n s.d		552 (.33)	91 (.65)
Jackson 1985	Mean	-	.65	1.23
	n s.d		162 (.39)	538 (.59)
Stafford 1982	Mean	(YOP) .64	.69	1.11
	n s.d	30 (.44)	394 (.64)	52 (.56)

(It is acknowledged that the use of multiple t-tests increases the probability of finding significant differences, and therefore a significance level of  $p < .01$  was adopted. In fact, most differences were significant at  $p < .001$ ).

#### **Current CP sample v Employed, unemployed and YOP samples of other studies**

On the basis of the pattern of findings for the present study presented above (Section 7.4.1) it would be expected that the mean distress score of the present CP sample would not differ significantly from the scores of the YOP or employed samples, but would be significantly lower than the distress scores of the unemployed samples. This was largely found to be the case.

No significant difference was found between the distress level of the present CP sample and that of the Stafford YOP sample ( $t = 1.67$ ,  $df = 318$ , n.s.). Highly significant differences were found showing the present CP sample to have



lower levels of distress than the unemployed samples of Banks et al. ( $t=-8.19$ ,  $df=379$ ,  $p<.001$ ), Jackson ( $t=-10.96$ ,  $df=826$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and Stafford ( $t=-4.39$ ,  $df=340$ ,  $p<.001$ ). No differences were found between the present CP sample and the employed samples of Banks ( $t=2.15$ ,  $df=840$ , n.s.) and Stafford ( $t=2.25$ ,  $df=682$ , n.s.), although Jacksons' employed sample reported a significantly lower level of distress than the present CP participants ( $t=3.22$ ,  $df=450$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

**DISTRESS:**

Davies (CP)	=	Stafford (YOP)	n.s.
Davies (CP)	<	Banks et al. (Unemployed)	$p<.001$
Davies (CP)	<	Jackson (Unemployed)	$p<.001$
Davies (CP)	<	Stafford (Unemployed)	$p<.001$
Davies (CP)	=	Banks et al. (Employed)	n.s.
Davies (CP)	=	Stafford (Employed)	n.s.
Davies (CP)	>	Jackson (Employed)	$p<.01$

**Current employed sample v other employed samples**

As suggested above, the employed sample in the present study reported slightly lower levels of well-being than in other studies. There are significant differences when this sample is compared with the Banks et al. employed sample ( $t=3.42$ ,  $df=638$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and the Jackson sample ( $t=3.88$ ,  $df=248$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The well-being of the present employed sample was not significantly different from that of the Stafford employed sample ( $t=2.48$ ,  $df=480$ , n.s.) presumably because of the slightly higher mean score and high standard deviation in the Stafford sample. This finding is important because in pointing towards a potential atypicality of the present employed sample, it may provide a partial explanation as to why the CP sample had a slightly (though non-significantly) lower distress score than the employed sample.



## DISTRESS:

Davies (Employed)	>	Banks et al. (Employed)	p<.001
Davies (Employed)	>	Jackson (Employed)	p<.001
Davies (Employed)	=	Stafford (Employed)	n.s.

### Current unemployed sample v other unemployed samples

The unemployed group in the present study reported slightly lower levels of distress than the unemployed in two of the three other studies. There are significant differences when this sample is compared with the Banks et al. unemployed sample ( $t=-2.64$ ,  $df=171$ ,  $p<.01$ ), and with the Jackson unemployed sample ( $t=-2.57$ ,  $df=618$ ,  $p=.01$ ). However, there is no difference between this sample and Stafford's unemployed sample ( $t=-0.58$ ,  $df=132$ , n.s.).

## DISTRESS:

Davies (Unemployed)	<	Banks et al. (Unemployed)	p<.01
Davies (Unemployed)	<	Jackson (Unemployed)	p=.01
Davies (Unemployed)	=	Stafford (Unemployed)	n.s.

To summarise, four important findings arise from these comparisons. First, it appears that the employed individuals in the present study have somewhat lower levels of well-being than the employed in other studies. This is important because it raises the possibility that the comparability of the CP and employed distress scores *within* the present study (Section 7.4.1) resulted from an atypical (distressed) employed sample rather than any generalisable similarity.

However, the second finding, that the psychological well-being of individuals on CP is comparable with the well-being of individuals in mainstream employment in other studies, would seem to counter such an argument. (Note also that, in contrast to the somewhat puzzling finding in the present study where the CP group had slightly but non-significantly *higher* affective well-

being than the employed sample, when the CP group is compared with the employed samples in other studies, this slight difference is reversed).

Moreover, the third finding, that CP participants experience much lower levels of distress than unemployed individuals in other studies, would also seem to add weight to the differences found within the present study.

The fourth finding is that on balance, the present unemployed sample had slightly lower levels of distress than might be expected from past evidence. One explanation of this finding might be a selection effect: this unemployed group is a group of ex-CP participants, and it may be that from the wider population of unemployed people, individuals with higher affective well-being are more likely to enter CP. This interpretation would in turn have very important implications for the interpretation of the mean score of the CP group. Perhaps, (it could be argued), this is simply reflecting a selection effect also and therefore the differences between the score of this group and the employed and unemployed groups from other studies are nothing to do with CP, but instead are simply reflecting individual characteristics? In response to such an argument, it is worth pointing out that there are significant differences between the groups within the present study and that all of these individuals are either CP or ex-CP participants. However, it could still be objected that, given that the ex-CP participants must have entered CP earlier than the current CP participants, there may have been historical changes in the way that this selection effect operated. These arguments clearly have fundamental ramifications for the interpretation of the differences in affective well-being between the groups, and I shall return to this question in Chapter 8.

### **7.4.3 Consideration of Specific Features of CP**

In considering CP from a psychological standpoint, it was hoped that it would be possible to discover not only whether CP was a positive psychological



experience for participants, but also to attempt to find out what features of CP accounted for these outcomes. In the qualitative study there were some indications given as to the features of the scheme which participants saw as being positive or negative aspects. In this section I attempt to consider *some* of these issues further.

### **Project Satisfaction: Different Aspects of CP**

In the interviews, the CP participants mentioned that the nature of the work on CP was frequently interesting, satisfying or rewarding. In this section I shall attempt to explore this suggestion further by considering satisfaction with different aspects of CP using the project satisfaction measure.

Overall, high levels of satisfaction were recorded amongst CP participants. On the project satisfaction measure as a whole the mean score was 3.85 (5-point Likert scale with 1 denoting "extremely dissatisfied" and 5 denoting "extremely satisfied"). For the general question "Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel about the job as a whole?", a mean score of 4.06 was recorded, with 78% of the sample reporting that they were either "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied". This finding would seem to be consistent with the interviewees' comments describing their positive experience of CP work, although it seems difficult to reconcile with their highly critical comments and expressions of dissatisfaction with CP as a government response to unemployment. One explanation of this combination of findings might be that although respondents felt positively about their immediate experience of involvement in their own specific CP project, they felt far less positively about what the scheme offered them when considered in a wider (and, bearing in mind their comments about future uncertainty, especially longer term) context.

The mean project satisfaction score can be broken down into individual item mean scores instead of taking the measure as a whole, and this gives an



indication as to satisfaction with different aspects of CP. The mean scores for individual items are shown in Table 7.4.3(a).

**Table 7.4.3(a): Satisfaction with different aspects of community programme (CP participants only)**

	Mean(SD (Max 5)	% satis or extr'ly satisfied
Your fellow workers	4.11(1.03)	76%
Your immediate boss	4.11(1.15)	72%
Freedom to choose your own method of working	4.07(1.08)	75%
Your hours of work	4.04(1.16)	76%
The amount of variety	3.90(1.15)	69%
The amount of responsibility given	3.83(1.07)	66%
The opportunity to use your abilities	3.82(1.13)	65%
The physical working conditions	3.80(1.02)	66%
The recognition for good work	3.65(1.22)	59%
The attention paid to your suggestions	3.62(1.13)	56%
The way the project is managed	3.58(1.23)	57%
The amount of training	3.42(1.27)	51%
Your rate of pay	3.38(1.32)	54%

One striking aspect of these results is that a majority of respondents were satisfied with every one of the features mentioned. It is difficult to know how to interpret this, especially bearing in mind that respondents across a wide

variety of occupations generally tend to be reluctant to rate their jobs negatively (e.g. Clegg and Wall 1981; Clegg, Wall and Kemp, 1987).

If the results are simply taken at face value, it seems that respondents were most satisfied with their colleagues and their immediate bosses, a finding which seems to be consistent with the interview finding that working relationships were perceived as a positive aspect of the scheme. Moreover, the high level of satisfaction with the hours of work would seem to be consistent with the unexpected interview finding that respondents saw the flexibility of their (largely part-time) contracts as a positive aspect of the scheme. At the other end of the scale, respondents were least satisfied with their rate of pay and the amount of training received, but it is particularly difficult to know how to interpret these findings, since even in these areas, half of the sample indicated that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied".

Overall these results are disappointing in that they provide no clear indication as to what were the "good" or "bad" features of CP. Indeed, it is regrettable that the single item which (on the basis of the interview findings) might have been evaluated negatively by the respondents, job security, was omitted entirely.

#### **Part-time working v Full-time working on CP**

The results of the interviews suggested that the CP participants appreciated the flexibility afforded by the hours of work (contrary to the expectation that part-time working would be a weakness of the scheme from a psychological perspective inasmuch as it would make the CP role less like a "traditional" job). In this section I shall attempt to examine this finding further by comparing the scores of part-time workers and full-time workers on: the two dimensions of mental health (affective well-being and competence); their



levels of satisfaction with CP; their self-reported levels of activity and perceived control. The results are shown in Table 7.4.3(b).

**Table 7.4.3(b): Comparison of full-time CP workers with part-time CP workers (One way ANOVA)**

	Part-time (N=207) Mean	Full-Time (N=77) Mean	F	P
Aff. Well-being (R)	.79	.77	.04	n.s.
Proj. Satisfaction	3.80	3.98	3.88	*
Competence	4.07	4.33	8.71	**
Control (R)	2.70	2.43	4.53	*
Activity	3.74	4.10	10.50	**

Notes:

- \* p < 0.05
- \*\* p < 0.01
- \*\*\* p < 0.001

The table shows that there is no difference between the affective well-being of full-time and part-time workers ( $F=.04$ ,  $df=1,283$ ,  $p=.84$ ), but that full-time workers were more satisfied with CP ( $F=3.88$ ,  $df=1,283$ ,  $p=.049$ ), reported higher levels of perceived competence ( $F=8.71$ ,  $df=1,283$ ,  $p=.003$ ), and higher levels of perceived control ( $F=4.53$ ,  $df=1,283$ ,  $p=.034$ ) than part-timers. Finally the full-time workers reported considerably higher levels of activity than the part-timers ( $F=10.50$ ,  $df=1,283$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Clearly, these results (with exception of the finding on affective well-being) would seem to undermine the suggestion that part-time working is as "good" as full-time working from a psychological perspective. In this sense, they seem to be difficult to reconcile with the interviewees comments that the flexibility of the part-time contract was a positive aspect of the scheme. Moreover, the finding that there was no difference between the affective well-being of full-time and part-time workers would seem to have important implications for any attempt to interpret the (CP v employed v unemployed) group differences in terms of a beneficial effect of participation on CP.



## **Remaining Duration of CP Contract**

One finding which emerged strongly from the interviews with CP participants was that the single most salient negative feature of CP was the temporary nature of the employment contract, which was associated with feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about the future. As I have already noted, the item within the job satisfaction measure which might have been expected to provide further evidence about this negative aspect (job security) was omitted from the questionnaire. In the absence of such evidence, the author attempted to examine this issue from a slightly different angle, by considering the relationship between remaining duration of CP contract, the two dimensions of mental health (affective well-being and competence), and levels of satisfaction with CP. On the basis of the interview findings, that participants were concerned about what would happen to them once their contract expired, it was expected that as they came closer to the end of their contract, levels of affective well-being, perceived competence, and satisfaction with CP might decrease.

To test for such relationships, three regression analyses were conducted with remaining duration of contract as a predictor variable and (a) affective well-being, (b) competence and (c) project satisfaction as outcomes. These analyses revealed no significant linear relationships between these variables. Again, these findings seems to be largely inconsistent with the interview results.

### **7.4.4 Summary of Findings Relating to the experience of CP**

The comparisons between employment status groups demonstrated that in overall terms the unemployed respondents came off worst. They experienced lower well-being, felt less in control of situations and events in their lives, and had the lowest levels of activity.

By contrast, the employed group generally came off best, they reported better well-being, felt most in control of their lives and had the highest levels of activity.

Overall, the CP group fell between the two other groups. They reported levels of well being as high as the employed group, but felt no more in control of situations and events than the unemployed group. They were more active than the unemployed group but less active than the employed group. The findings relating to affective well-being were partly substantiated by comparisons with data from other studies.

Consideration of specific features of CP revealed high overall levels of satisfaction with CP, and particularly high levels of satisfaction with the working relationships, the autonomy accorded to CP workers and the hours of work. The well-being of full-time workers was no better than that of the part-timers, but full-timers were more satisfied, had higher levels of perceived competence and higher levels of perceived control. They were also more active than part-timers.

## **CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION**



## **8.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the empirical findings of the qualitative and quantitative elements of the study will be discussed with respect to the two aims of the thesis. I shall discuss some of the alternative interpretations of these findings, the way in which the qualitative and some of the quantitative findings relate (or do not relate) to each other, the way in which the results compare with previous empirical findings, and some of the ways in which these findings might contribute to, or inform the theoretical literature.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first two of these correspond to the two aims of the thesis. The third section incorporates a discussion of the main limitations of the study, and suggests directions for future research.

## **8.2 Individual Differences in The Mental Health of Unemployed Adults**

The first aim of the thesis was to explore the effects of, and relationships between a limited number of demographic, dispositional and behavioural variables which have been proposed in the empirical and theoretical literature as important factors which may help to account for variations in the mental health of unemployed adults. Three of the dispositional variables in particular had not been extensively investigated within the empirical literature on unemployment, but were seen as potential elements of the construct of "proactivity" a topic which has been the focus of widespread theoretical interest within the unemployment literature.

The approach adopted was to develop a theoretically grounded, guiding conceptual framework for the investigation of some of the relationships between these variables and their relationship to two dimensions of mental health. It was hoped that the adoption of a multi-method (qualitative and quantitative) approach would enable "triangulation", thereby providing some

degree of convergent validity to the findings. However, as we shall see, insofar as they related at all, the findings of the qualitative and quantitative elements of the study often provided complementary rather than convergent perspectives.

The findings of the quantitative work highlighted a large number of relationships between the variables within the conceptual framework. For the sake of clarity, I shall not discuss all of these relationships here, but will limit my comments to those which appear to be of particular interest in terms of their wider implications for the literature in the field of unemployment research. I shall of course, also address the relationships which were expected, but which did not emerge from the empirical work.

### **8.2.1 Activity Level and Affective Well-Being**

In developing the guiding conceptual framework for the study in Chapter 3, it was argued that, in general, levels of activity are influenced by employment status and that individual differences in activity level could be invoked to partially explain differences in mental health amongst unemployed groups.

The findings in the present study, that (a) the unemployed group reported lower levels of activity than the employed group and (b) amongst the unemployed respondents (and only amongst this group), activity level was associated with affective well-being, would seem to be consistent with this claim. Unemployed individuals who were more active were also likely to report higher levels of affective well-being. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Hepworth (1980), Kilpatrick and Trew (1985), Evans (1986) and Reynolds and Gilbert (1991) all of whom demonstrated that higher levels of activity within unemployed samples were associated with better mental health.



However, a weakness of these studies is that they focussed exclusively upon unemployed groups. (Evans incorporated an employed sample but did not examine the relationship between activity and well-being within this group). Consequently, it is impossible to determine from the results of these studies whether the findings have anything to do with the psychological significance of activity within the unemployed environment specifically, or whether they simply reflect a more general and pervasive relationship between the two (see for example, Beiser, 1974; Ray, 1979). The present results therefore can be seen as extending these earlier findings insofar as this relationship was *only* found within the unemployed group, pointing towards the possibility that activity level does indeed become particularly important for well-being within the unemployed environment. However, this finding, though interesting, is both difficult to interpret, and in itself raises a number of further, much more fundamental questions. I shall deal with these issues below.

On the basis of the claims made within the theoretical unemployment literature, (eg Jahoda, 1982; Warr, 1987; Fryer, 1988) and the assumed primary direction of causality within the conceptual framework, one interpretation of this finding might be that activity has a beneficial effect on affective well-being during unemployment because, in general, the unemployed environment provides little scope for engaging in activity, and because activity (I shall come shortly to the question of what we mean by this), is in some way important for well-being. In contrast (it could be argued), employed individuals already have high levels of activity by virtue of their circumstances and therefore increased activity is of no benefit (and indeed may even be detrimental to well-being when demands become very high see for example Karasek, 1979). In other words, the suggestion is that the relationship between activity and well-being is non-linear, with activity being important for well-being at lower levels, but with this relationship "plateauing" after a certain threshold level, and only emerging again (in the opposite



direction) at very high levels of activity. (The idea of a "threshold" level incidentally might be seen as being consistent with the finding that part-time CP workers reported lower levels of activity than full-timers, but that there were no differences in affective well-being). It would also be consistent with the finding in the quantitative study that activity levels in the unemployed group were lower than those within the employed group, and with comments of the interviewees in the present qualitative study, to the effect that in order to cope psychologically with the experience of unemployment it was crucial to "keep active" (see Chapter 6).

However, an alternative explanation of the relationship might reverse this causal connection, suggesting that lower levels of affective well-being *lead to* lower levels of activity (and higher levels of well-being lead to higher levels of activity). This interpretation would be consistent with the tenor of the arguments advanced by commentators such as Seligman (1975) in discussing "learned helplessness" and depression.

But these alternative explanations are not necessarily incompatible. Indeed it seems likely that the relationship between activity and well-being is a mutually causative one, which operates as a vicious (or virtuous) circle. Thus, low activity may lead to low well-being which in turn leads to lower activity and so on (or high well-being leads to high levels of activity which in turn lead to higher levels of well-being etc).

One important methodological implication of such an interpretation would be that although activity and well-being would seem to be conceptually distinct constructs, it may be very difficult to separate out their effects empirically, (even using traditional longitudinal panel designs) because they are so closely bound together. Rather, future investigation of the relationship between the

two should include the use of more sophisticated, time series (eg diary or experience sampling), and if possible, non self-report methodologies.

Notwithstanding the comments above about the likelihood of a mutually causal relationship between activity and well-being, if we assume, as suggested within the unemployment literature and the conceptual framework for the present study, that the *primary* direction of causality is indeed from activity to well-being, a number of further questions arise.

For example, we might ask what is activity, and how does it impact upon well-being? In this respect (as noted in Chapter 1) the theoretical unemployment literature is particularly unhelpful. Jahoda and Warr in particular provide only surface descriptions of the relationship between activity and well-being. Jahoda (1984) for example, simply describes activity as a "deep seated need" of humans (p.298), with the implication that it requires no further explanation. I shall therefore step outside this literature to look for potential explanations.

In the present study, activity was conceptualised and operationalised in an undifferentiated way which emphasised the extent to which individuals felt that their time was occupied and that they were generally "busy". Given this somewhat broad conceptualisation of activity, one comparatively straightforward explanation of the current finding might be that "keeping busy" prevented, or at least reduced opportunities for, destructive introspection and reflection (see Beck (1976) for a discussion of "negative automatic thoughts" in depression, and Moorey's (1990) comments on the use of behavioural techniques to distract clients from such thoughts in cognitive behavioural therapy. Alternatively, for a psychodynamic perspective see Freud's (1915) discussion of displacement behaviour). This is perhaps best illustrated by the comment of one of the interviewees that: "...if you don't keep active you'd just end up thinking too much and getting depressed". Although this explanation of



the relationship between activity and well-being in unemployment is interesting (it hints at the possibility of a theoretical account of unemployment grounded in existential ideas about the construction of meaning), I shall not pursue it any further here, as it introduces a range of new themes which are well outside the scope of this thesis.

However, an alternative explanation of the relationship has already been mentioned in passing earlier in the thesis, and is drawn from the theoretical literature on well-being itself. This is Csikszentmihalyi's (1982) concept of "flow". Diener (1984) refers to this account as an "activity theory" of well-being, although Csikszentmihalyi himself prefers to describe it as an "autotelic" theory. In essence, Csikszentmihalyi argues that positive human experience lies in the nature of activity itself. The concept of "flow" can be characterised as the pleasurable subjective experience of involvement in an activity where the person's skill and the challenge of the task are roughly equal. Initially Csikszentmihalyi's work focussed on very specific types of activity such as rock climbing or playing chess, which were considered to have no obvious extrinsic rewards, but more recently he has broadened his focus to consider the experience of flow in the workplace and in leisure. For example, in an empirical study, Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) found that their participants quality of experience was more affected by flow than by whether they were working or in leisure.

Csikszentmihalyi has identified two major aspects of intrinsically rewarding experience: (a) action and awareness are experienced as being merged together, and (b) attention is centred on the limited stimulus field associated with the activity. (Note that the second of these two aspects suggests a link back to the explanation offered above, in that activity within unemployment may, as well as being stimulating in itself, provide a distraction or relief from extended periods of potentially negative or destructive contemplation).



But there is a third potential explanation of the relationship between activity and well-being which is also drawn from the literature on subjective well-being. In Chapter 6 of the thesis, one suggestion for the relationship was that involvement in many activities might be expected to provide a sense of achievement or fulfilment. This explanation hints at the idea that many (or perhaps most) human activities can be regarded as in some sense goal-directed. If human activity is seen as purposive, goal oriented behaviour, then it might be argued that well-being stems from the attainment of, or movement towards those goals. This argument has already been mentioned in passing in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Telic or goal theories of well-being (eg Allport, 1961; Pervin, 1989) assert that happiness results from committing oneself to, the realisation of progress towards, and the achievement of desired goals. This theoretical position, which offers an alternative to the reactive conception of human activity which has dominated unemployment research (and indeed psychology in general) for many years, has recently enjoyed renewed interest under the broad heading of "action theory" (eg Frese and Sabini, 1985). Empirically, this idea has been investigated by Palys and Little (1983) who demonstrated that individuals who were committed to "personal projects" (an interrelated sequence of actions intended to achieve some personal goal) reported greater life satisfaction so long as the projects were relatively short-term and moderately difficult. Weissman and Ricks (1966) also found that people who were committed to goals and purposes tended to be happier than those with relatively fewer goals and purposes.

What is interesting about this literature from the perspective of unemployment research is that it shares much in common with Fryer's attempt to develop an alternative to the dominant deprivation theories of unemployment in the form of Agency theory. Consider, for example, Fryer's underlying model of humans as "...active social agents who strive to assert themselves, initiate and influence

events, are intrinsically motivated and live in a perceived world in which what they do depends on their view of, and plans for, the future as well as memories of the past". Moreover, his view of activity itself is also consistent with action theory: "They try to make sense of what goes on and act in accordance with these interpretations in line with values, purposes, reasons and intentions in the light of anticipations of possible scenarios and outcomes". (Fryer, 1988b) (p.57). Given this degree of commonality, it seems likely that action theory offers one potentially promising vehicle for further theoretical development and empirical exploration of Fryer's interesting, but hitherto somewhat vague and elusive constructs of "agency" and "proactivity" within the context of, (and indeed outside of) unemployment. It is to the latter of these two constructs that I shall turn next.

### **8.2.2 Influences upon Activity Level**

Although it seems possible that personal activity may to some extent ameliorate the negative psychological impact of unemployment, what is uncertain is exactly why certain unemployed individuals are able to sustain higher activity levels than others. The qualitative findings of the present study suggest that one important socioenvironmental factor influencing activity levels within unemployment is the availability of financial resources (and I shall return to this issue later), but earlier in the thesis it was noted that a different explanation, emphasising dispositional characteristics as influences on activity level, has attracted much more widespread theoretical interest within the literature.

Fryer and Payne (1984) have presented some qualitative evidence to support this suggestion in their study of eleven "proactive" individuals who were coping particularly well with the experience of unemployment, but as yet this suggestion has not been investigated using quantitative methodology.



In the present quantitative study therefore, three variables which could be regarded as dispositional characteristics reflecting potential elements of the construct of proactivity were incorporated within the guiding conceptual framework, in the expectation that they might be related to levels of activity amongst the unemployed group. Specifically, it was argued that on a theoretical basis, individuals who were strongly self-motivated, committed to work activity and with higher levels of growth needs (needs for personal challenge, accomplishment, learning and development) might be expected to be able to sustain higher levels of activity in unemployment than individuals with less of these dispositional characteristics.

The findings of the quantitative study were only partially consistent with this claim. Although there was a significant and positive relationship between growth needs strength and activity within the unemployed group (and only within this group), there was no such relationship with activity found for work commitment and self-motivation.

There are of course many potential explanations for these non-significant findings. Both self-motivation and work commitment were newly conceptualised and operationalised variables, and it seems possible that either the conceptualisation or the operationalisation, or both, were in some way problematic. In terms of the operationalisations, the internal consistency reliability of both variables was satisfactory, they appeared to be relatively independent on the basis of a factor analysis, and, as expected, there was little variation across employment status groups. Turning to the conceptualisation of self-motivation, it was noted in Chapter 3 that it may be difficult to make a conceptual distinction between behaviours which are situationally versus individually determined, and that this issue ultimately reduces to an apparently insoluble metaphysical problem; namely freewill versus determinism. However, it is worth noting that self-motivation was related to activity within



the CP group. The conceptualisation of work commitment on the other hand would seem to be relatively transparent and it is difficult to know why it might have been flawed.

An alternative interpretation of these non-confirmed predictions might focus not on the inadequacies of the constructs or measures, but on the relative importance of these dispositional characteristics as influences on activity level. In other words, it may be that these characteristics in fact have relatively little (or no) influence on activity level within unemployment in comparison to either (a) other dispositional characteristics or (b) environmental factors. For example, as noted above, the financial circumstances of the interviewees emerged from the qualitative study as a potentially significant influence on activity, and gender was also related to activity level within the unemployed sample, with women reporting higher levels of activity than men.

But what of the finding which was consistent with the theoretically based prediction? As noted above, within the unemployed group (and only within this group), growth needs strength was associated with activity. Individuals with higher levels of growth needs strength tended to be more active than individuals with lower levels of growth needs strength. This finding, taken together with the finding that higher levels of activity were associated with higher affective well-being within the unemployed group, does seem to be consistent with some of the findings of Fryer and Payne's (1984) qualitative study of eleven "proactive" unemployed people. In particular it seems to accord well with their claims that; (a) certain dispositional characteristics influence the extent to which individuals are able to cope effectively with the experience of unemployment, (b) that these dispositional characteristics include the extent to which individuals are committed to the pursuit of goals which reflect fundamental values and beliefs, including the importance attached to personal growth and development, (c) that these dispositions may

influence the extent to which individuals are able to remain active in unemployment.

Moreover, it might be seen as extending this earlier empirical work in that the present finding comes from a much larger sample and used quantitative methodology to demonstrate differences in well-being using a reliable and widely validated instrument.

However, this finding needs to be interpreted cautiously. Not only is the present study cross-sectional, (and therefore we cannot draw any firm conclusions about causality) but it is also based entirely on self report data, the sample incorporates a specific population (ex-CP participants) and the size of the relationship between these variables is small. Nonetheless this finding does seem to be potentially interesting and worth following up using longitudinal methodologies within other samples.

If this finding were to be substantiated in this way, it might be seen as providing some support for one aspect of the concept of "proactivity" as a dispositional construct which may help to explain why some people are better able to cope with, or adapt to, the experience of unemployment. Turning to the question of why this might be so, the theoretical unemployment literature is once again silent, but we might speculate that dispositional characteristics of this sort affect not only the level of activity, but also the type of activity in which unemployed people become involved, and that it is this which leads to variations in mental health (see for example Kilpatrick and Trew, 1985). For example, it seems at least possible that unemployed individuals with high levels of growth needs strength as conceptualised and operationalised in the current study (emphasising needs for skill use and development, achievement, challenge etc) may be more likely to engage in the sort of activities which



Csikszentmihalyi (1982) has described as being likely to produce the experience of "flow" (high challenge, high skill activities) (see section 8.2.1):

This suggestion requires further empirical investigation, as indeed does the whole concept of "proactivity". This empirical work, and the theoretical development which should precede it, might be usefully informed by research on "hardiness" (see Kobasa, 1988), and the "action styles" of goal orientation and planfulness which Frese, Stewart and Hannover (1987) see as personality characteristics. Of these two, it is perhaps the latter which is most closely aligned with the underlying assumptions of Fryer's approach in that it is based on a model of humans as purposive, goal oriented agents, rather than as passive victims of circumstance.

If this theoretical development and empirical work is not forthcoming, there is a risk that "proactivity" will simply become the default explanation for any non-confirmed predictions in empirical studies of unemployed groups (see for example Schaufeli, 1988), rather than an empirically useful and theoretically interesting concept.

### **8.2.3 Gender and Affective Well-being**

A third relationship between the variables in the conceptual framework found exclusively within the unemployed group, was between gender and affective well-being. Unemployed women reported lower levels of affective well-being than unemployed men. This finding is particularly interesting as, to the author's knowledge it represents the only finding of its kind among adults within the unemployment literature.

Previous empirical work in the field of unemployment research has focussed largely on men, and as noted in Chapter 1, this in itself might be seen as a reflection of common stereotypes concerning the importance of employment

for women. There is however, a minority literature which considers the impact of joblessness on women, and an even smaller body of work which compares the reactions of men and women to unemployment.

It was argued earlier in the thesis that empirical work in this area seems to illustrate that any differences between men and women in their reactions to unemployment follow from the social roles that they adopt rather than any biological differences. Specifically, these previous studies have shown that whilst groups of men and women who are registered as unemployed report similar levels of distress (eg Breakwell, Harrison and Propper, 1984), there are no differences between the mental health of married women who are employed versus those who are not in employment (eg Warr and Parry, 1982(a)). The interpretations offered for the latter finding range from the idea that married women are able to adopt alternative domestic roles (Bartell and Bartell, 1985), to the idea that women's jobs frequently offer less in the way of status, reward and authority than men's jobs and that therefore job loss carries less psychological impact for women (Marshall, 1984). Moreover, other authors have argued that the income of married women is secondary to that of their husbands and that therefore they will be less traumatised by job loss than their spouses. Kasl and Cobb (1979) for example, argue that "men are presumed to be, in the dominant U.S. culture, the primary breadwinners in the family; hence job loss in men should have more of an impact than in women" (p.294).

The present finding however is not consistent with any of these earlier empirical findings. Indeed, not only does this finding fail to confirm the previous findings, but it directly conflicts with the expectation which would follow from the interpretations given, namely that groups of women which incorporated married women, (as in the present sample) would, if anything, on the whole suffer less from unemployment than men.



Interpretation of the present finding is complicated by the fact that the sample includes only ex-CP participants, and the design of the study is cross-sectional. However, a reverse causal interpretation with gender itself can of course be ruled out (though it is possible that there are reverse causal interpretations with the variables for which gender is a proxy), and the suggestion that this simply reflects a more general effect, that women in the population at large report higher levels of distress than men (see Gove, 1972) would seem to be at least partially countered by the fact that this effect did not emerge within the CP or employed groups (although of course in these groups levels of distress were generally lower). How then, could the most obvious interpretation, that unemployment has a greater negative impact on affective well-being for women than for men be explained?

Leana and Feldman (1991) have pointed out that although the sort of accounts offered above may be true for some women, they are by no means an accurate representation of the position of many working women. For example, these interpretations, based on traditional gender stereotypes do not seem to adequately represent the situation of the increasing number of women who are primary wage earners, those who are the sole support of dependent children, those who are recent entrants into non-traditional jobs, and those who value and enjoy their work for whatever reasons. These authors argue that for these women: "...job loss may be even more devastating than it is for their male counterparts" (p.66) Their rationale for this argument is that women generally fare worse than men in terms of their financial resources and their opportunities to replace lost jobs. In support of the latter point, Nowak and Snyder (1983) have demonstrated in an empirical study of a plant shutdown that women as a group may have greater difficulty than men in finding suitable alternative employment once they have lost their jobs.

Although the present empirical finding is unexpected, it is worth noting that amongst unemployed teenagers, Warr, Banks and Ullah (1985) found that females reported lower levels of affective well-being (using the GHQ-12) than males, and that (also using the GHQ-12) Leana and Feldman (1991) found that unemployed women reported nonsignificantly higher levels of distress than men, (and found no evidence to support the suggestion that marital status was more important as a moderator of distress for women than for men).

Of course, it could be argued that these findings (and the present one) simply reflect women's greater preparedness to report psychological symptomatology (see Gove, 1972). But this is not necessarily to suggest that this is simply an artefact of self-report data. As Wood, Rhodes and Whelan (1989) have commented (in discussing self-reporting of positive affect), there is good reason to suppose that there is a close tie between private experience and public reporting of emotional events. They note that: "Overt behaviour, such as saying one is happy, and internal experiences, or the feeling of happiness, may not be entirely separable in people's phenomenology" (p259). It seems to reasonable to suppose that the same argument would hold for negative affect, and such a view might be seen as being supported by the respected tradition within the field of social psychology which holds that one often knows one's internal states from observing external responses (Bem, 1972).

Whatever interpretation is placed on the current finding, it seems clear that there is a pressing need for further work on the experience of unemployment for women. As Bartell and Bartell (1985) have suggested, the effects of unemployment on women are at least as complex as those on men, and probably even more so due to factors such as family status, alternate income sources, and shifting societal expectations. At present the available literature in the field of unemployment has largely failed to address the question of its



psychological impact for a substantial and increasing proportion of the workforce.

#### **8.2.4 Perceived Competence**

One aspect of the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3 which was argued to represent a strength of the approach taken in the present study was that it incorporated two conceptually separate dimensions of mental health as outcome variables. The second of these two dimensions was perceived competence.

Contrary to expectations, the quantitative empirical study revealed no differences between the CP, employed and unemployed groups in respect of this variable. This finding raises a number of more fundamental questions about the concept of competence and I shall deal with some of these issues here.

Perhaps the most straightforward interpretation of the finding that there were no between group differences is that unemployment has no effect on an individual's sense of competence. In other words, although unemployment influences other dimensions of mental health (and particularly affect), an individual's belief in their ability to perform effectively in different spheres of life, such as problem solving, decision making, interpersonal relations etc, is not affected by changes in employment status. This interpretation might helpfully be compared with the empirical findings of Hartley (1980b), Linn, Sandifer and Stein (1985), and Stokes and Cochrane (1984), all of whom have reported data consistent with the suggestion that self-esteem (another construct closely linked to competence) is a relatively stable aspect of mental health which is unaffected by employment status.

Indeed, if this view is accepted, it could be regarded as providing strong support for the idea advanced in Chapter 2 of this thesis, that it is unacceptable to utilise undifferentiated measures of mental health for studies of unemployment or any other life event, on the grounds that (a) this approach would be inconsistent with almost all theoretical accounts of mental health which describe a number of conceptually distinct dimensions and consequently (b) the use of undifferentiated measures is likely to mask intra-individual and inter-individual differences in experience. Indeed, within the context of the unemployment literature Haworth and Evans (1987) have already made precisely this point, although they use the term well-being instead of mental health:

"...whilst it may be may be convenient to use generic terms such as mental health and psychological well-being, it is nevertheless important to differentiate between various aspects of well-being and the assorted scales and measures used to assess them. This is necessary as reported changes in well-being may be due to the effect of some specific set of circumstances (e.g. life-style change) on a particular component of well-being, without having any discernible influence over other aspects of well-being."  
(p.253)

And along the same lines, Hartley and Cooper (1976) have argued that:

"It appears impossible to define stress in terms of...a single manifestation of 'stress' in an individual. A more complex index of stress is needed".

These calls have not always been heeded within the unemployment literature, and whether or not the present finding concerning competence is interpreted



in the way described above, it does seem clear that there is an urgent need for more carefully considered, (or at least more explicit) conceptualisation of mental health before empirical workers in this field (and indeed other areas) move to the stage of operationalisation and data collection. If this is not done, then it seems likely that empirical findings will be at best ambiguous and at worst uninterpretable.

Returning to the more general suggestion that perceived competence is a relatively stable dimension of mental health, it may be worth comparing the current conceptualisation of this variable with Antonovsky's (1980) notion of:

"...a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected." (p.123).

And perhaps an even closer resemblance is with Ben-Sira's (1985) notion of "potency" which refers to an individual's enduring confidence in their own capacities.

The significance of these comparisons is that both of these authors conceptualise their constructs as *relatively stable personality characteristics* rather than as dimensions of mental health.

Moreover, the construct of self-esteem, referred to above as being closely related to perceived competence, has also been treated both as a dimension of mental health (empirically as an "outcome" variable) (eg Schaufeli, 1987) and as a stable personality characteristic (eg Diener, 1984; Brockner, 1988). Indeed, as noted in Chapter 3, there are similar examples elsewhere in the

literature, such as that between the notion of autonomy (as a dimension of mental health-see Jahoda (1958) Ryff (1989) and Warr (1987)) and the concept of control (as a personality characteristic - see Kobasa (1979)).

The point of these comparisons is not simply to illustrate that there seems to be conceptual overlap or confusion between what have traditionally been regarded as personality characteristics and what have traditionally been regarded as dimensions of mental health (perhaps this would simply be to restate Allen and Potkay's (1981) point that the distinction between states and traits is an arbitrary one). Rather, it is to point out on a more general note, that it seems possible that some dimensions of mental health (such as competence) are simply more stable than others (such as affective well-being).

Indeed, several authors have shown other components of mental health to be as stable (over several years) as some personality constructs (Conley, 1984,1985; Costa and McCrae, 1980; Ormel, 1980). And in the field of unemployment research Payne (1987) has demonstrated that mental health a year before serves as an excellent predictor of current mental health irrespective of changes in employment status.

At this point it is also worth noting that Watson and Clark (1984) have identified a "mood-dispositional dimension" (p.465) which they refer to as negative affectivity. In this study the authors note that: "Distinct and segregated literatures have developed around a number of specific personality measures that, despite dissimilar names, nevertheless intercorrelate so highly that they must be considered measures of the same construct" (p.465). The personality instruments they refer to include well-established measures of neuroticism and trait anxiety, and they see all of these as measures of the disposition to experience negative affect.



Does this then mean that we should dismantle the conceptual distinction between mental health and personality altogether? Perhaps not entirely. One way of integrating these different empirical findings and theoretical perspectives might be through the suggestion that within some dimensions of mental health, there is a (large?) relatively stable component and a (smaller?) labile component, and that the stable component is what has traditionally been referred to as personality.

Adopting this view, the suggestion made earlier, that some dimensions of mental health are more stable than others, could then be explained in terms of the idea that across different dimensions of mental health, the size of the stable component may vary (perhaps not only between, but also within individuals).

Such an explanation would seem to be able to encompass simultaneously the ideas of: (a) individual differences in personality (b) individual differences in mental health (c) the consistent empirical finding that although mental health may fluctuate as a result of socioenvironmental factors, the single, most powerful predictor of current mental health is mental health measured on a previous occasion (see Depue and Munroe, 1986) (d) the empirical and conceptual overlap between personality and mental health. However, it is difficult to know how such a suggestion could be investigated empirically. One possibility is through the use of time series analyses, with frequent (ideally daily) longitudinal measurement of both stable individual attributes (i.e. personality/stable aspects of mental health) and transient mood or "state" constructs, using non self-report measures as well as self-reports.

The starting point for the discussion of mental health above was that perceived competence as conceptualised in the present study is a relatively stable aspect of mental health which is unaffected by employment status. I have suggested

that this interpretation of the present findings can be compared with some other empirical findings concerning a closely related construct, namely self-esteem. However, this interpretation would conflict directly with Warr's (1987) theoretical assertion that: "Subjective competence is expected to decline as a result of unemployment..." (p.196), and with the empirical findings he cites in support of this claim by Layton (1986), Feather and O'Brien (1986) and Fryer and Warr (1984).

Once again, the cross-sectional design of the present study means that it is difficult to say with any confidence that the present results represent evidence against this theoretical prediction or the empirical findings. However, the fact that this is a non-significant finding in some ways reduces the difficulties associated with its interpretation. Specifically, if subjective competence does decline as a result of unemployment we might have anticipated cross-sectional differences between groups. Of course, it might still be objected that the present finding simply reflects a sampling effect or inadequate operationalisation, but these possibilities might equally apply to the earlier studies. For example, Feather and O'Brien's study focused exclusively on school-leavers, whilst Fryer and Warr's study is also cross-sectional and used only a single item measure "Have you found you were getting rusty at things you used to do well?".

Ultimately, it is impossible to say definitively whether perceived competence remains stable across transitions in employment status, but what is clear is that this question requires much more, and more careful, examination. In particular, the question of what *exactly* is being measured needs to be addressed.



### **8.2.5 Perceived Control**

Another variable incorporated within the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3 was perceived control. It was noted that although the issue of whether people feel in control of situations and events has featured heavily within the field of life events research in general, it has been relatively neglected within the field of unemployment research. Furthermore it was pointed out that even where control had been incorporated as a variable within studies of unemployed people, apparently conflicting findings over whether or not it was affected by employment status had emerged. These empirical discrepancies were argued to have arisen from underlying conceptual difficulties about whether control should be regarded as a stable personality characteristic or as a dimension of mental health.

In response to these difficulties control was conceptualised in the present study neither as a trait, nor as a state, but as an intervening, or explanatory variable which lay between the two, with the theoretical rationale that perceived control would influence affective well-being and perceived competence but would itself also be affected by employment status.

Once again it is important to note that the cross-sectional design of the present study prohibits inferences about causality, but the results of the study do seem to be largely (though not entirely) consistent with the account above. Specifically, control was strongly related to affective well-being (across all three employment status groups) and was itself related to employment status, with the unemployed group (and CP group) reporting lower levels of control than the employed group.

One interpretation of this finding might be that unemployment erodes or undermines the individual's sense of control over situations and events, and in turn these feelings of uncontrollability lead to lower levels of affective well-

being. Empirical support for the first part of this interpretation comes from longitudinal study by Patton and Noller (1984) which revealed a significant decrease in perceptions of control for school leavers moving into unemployment and a significant increase for those who gained a job.

This interpretation would be consistent with Fryer's (1988b) theoretical position that one key psychological consequence of unemployment is that it imposes restrictions (particularly in terms of financial resources) upon the individual's ability to exert influence over their environment; that is, to exercise agency or self-determination. Moreover, it is in line with at least four theoretical perspectives which emphasise perceptions of lack of control as a critical factor in the onset of psychological distress. Proponents of Coping theory (e.g. Lazarus and Lurnier, 1978), Learned helplessness theory (e.g. Seligman, 1975), Reactance and expectancy-value theory (eg Feather, 1982), and the less familiar Critical psychology (eg Holzkamp, 1986) (cited in Schaufeli, 1988), have all utilised the idea of control over the environment as a key explanatory theme in their accounts of human disorder.

The breadth of agreement about the importance of perceived control in relation to mental health, along with the present and previous empirical findings, would seem to point towards the need for much greater research attention than has so far been given to this construct within the field of unemployment research. In this respect it is worth noting that Payne and Hartley (1987) have also found perceptions of control to be closely related to affective well-being and a variety of other mental health measures within an unemployed sample. These authors hint at the possibility that their measure of control was tapping what Watson and Clark (1984) have referred to as "negative affectivity" or the disposition to experience negative affect (see section 8.2.4).



If this suggestion were to be applied to the present operationalisation of control, it would then seem hardly surprising that it was so closely related to affective well-being. This then raises the question of whether the finding of a relationship between the two is simply a methodological artefact (ie is negative affectivity simply a methodological nuisance akin to method variance), or is it reflecting something much more fundamental about human personality and mental health. The present author's view is that both perspectives are partially true, inasmuch as (as suggested in section 8.2.4) there is a conceptual overlap between personality and mental health which leads to empirical overlaps (partially measuring the same thing twice).

Once again therefore, this points to the need for very careful conceptualisation and operationalisation before research proceeds in this area. One concern might be that even if self-report measures of "state control" and "trait control" are carefully operationalised in the form "I am the sort of person who typically..." (trait/ personality) and "At present I feel..." (mental health/state) such measures would nevertheless be so highly intercorrelated that they could only be regarded as measures of the same construct. However, with respect to this suggestion Watson and Clark (1984) present some encouraging empirical evidence concerning their negative affectivity construct. A careful reading of their paper shows that measures of negative *affectivity* are more highly intercorrelated with each other than with measures of negative *affect*. Moreover, it is clear from their review that although the measures of negative affect are moderately stable over time, in general they tend to be less stable than measures of negative affectivity. These findings would seem to suggest therefore that it is indeed possible to maintain an empirical distinction which reflects the underlying conceptual distinction.

## 8.2.6 Employment Commitment and Work Commitment

It was argued in Chapter 1 of the thesis that employment commitment as a psychological "risk factor" within unemployment has attracted much more detailed empirical attention than any other single dispositional characteristic. In particular, unemployed individuals with higher levels of employment commitment have been shown to report lower levels of affective well-being than individuals who are less strongly committed to employment.

However, it was also pointed out that within the same literature a number of commentators had pointed to the importance of making a conceptual distinction between work and employment, with the former referring to activity conducted for a purpose beyond that of its own execution, and the latter referring to a contractual exchange relationship in which money changes hands in return for tasks undertaken. It was therefore hypothesised that it would be possible in the present study to make a conceptual and empirical distinction between employment commitment and work commitment. Existing measures of employment commitment could be seen to have blurred this distinction insofar as the content of these measures referred both to "work" and to "employment".

In essence then, the present author attempted to develop two separate scales, one tapping commitment to paid employment and one tapping the strength of commitment to work activity in any context. The results of the present study were, on initial inspection, encouraging in this respect. The two measures had satisfactory levels of internal consistency reliability (in fact slightly higher than the reported coefficients for previous measures of employment commitment), they appeared to be relatively independent on a factor analytic basis, and, as expected, there was little variation across employment status groups.



However, it was very surprising that employment commitment bore no relationship to any of the other variables within the conceptual framework within any of the three employment status groups, and in particular, that there was no relationship between employment commitment and affective well-being. This finding is contrary to almost all previous findings within the literature, and this seems to raise doubts about the current operationalisation. In defence of the current measure, it might be argued that it is less strongly positively skewed than previous measures of employment commitment, and the standard deviation in the present study is larger than for previous measures (see Fryer and Payne, 1986). Moreover, as suggested above, the item content of the present scale has a firm conceptual grounding.

One explanation of the present nonsignificant finding might be that any effects of employment commitment on mental health were swamped by the effects of the other variables within the regression analyses. In other words, in multivariate analyses employment commitment did not add any significant independent contribution to the prediction of the mental health variables. Such an explanation would seem to be consistent with the findings of at least one of two other dissonant findings within the unemployment literature, that of Payne and Hartley (1987), who also found no independent contribution of employment commitment to the prediction of mental health variables in multivariate analyses. (The other nonsignificant finding was within a study of unemployed Australian men by McPherson and Hall, 1983).

Such an interpretation would point towards the need for future work to incorporate variables such as employment commitment only alongside other variables with which it might be expected to covary, such as financial circumstances, work commitment or perceived control. Indeed, in this respect it is worth noting that within the present qualitative study, there appeared to be a strong relationship between employment commitment and the financial

circumstances of the interviewees, with greater financial hardship being associated with a stronger desire to secure employment.

Turning to work commitment, this was strongly related to perceived competence within both the unemployed and CP groups (and was related to affective well-being within the CP group). Higher levels of work commitment were associated with higher levels of perceived competence and affective well-being. Disappointingly however, the expectation that any such relationships would be mediated by the effects of activity was not corroborated and this fact would seem to seriously undermine the claims made in the conceptual framework for the way in which this variable might impact upon mental health (see section 8.2.2).

What are the general implications of these findings for the theoretical literature in the field of unemployment research? Whilst some of the findings discussed here do seem to bear some relationship to various elements of the accounts advanced by Jahoda, Warr, and Fryer, they also seem to highlight the fact that there are many lacunae in our theoretical understanding of the processes and mechanisms through which "distress" may come about during unemployment.

In other words, it might be argued that these theories tend to provide surface descriptions, but often lack depth or genuine explanatory value. (Indeed, with respect to the latter point, even if explanations are regarded simply as a further level of description, this further level of description is still frequently lacking).

Of the three theories discussed in the this thesis it is perhaps the agency approach proposed by Fryer which seems to offer some promising routes towards the development of a more sophisticated account of the experience of



unemployment. However, having said this, it should be acknowledged that that even Fryer's account is still somewhat underdeveloped. I hope to have suggested above some ways in which it might now be taken forward, drawing upon theoretical development in other areas of psychology.

In brief then, the discussion of these findings seems to reinforce the points made earlier in the thesis concerning the need for more theoretical attention to the questions of how and why unemployment causes negative psychological effects, what exactly these effects are, and especially the ways in which the different features of unemployment relate to the different psychological "outcomes".

### **8.3 The Experience of Participation on Community Programme**

The second aim of the thesis was to explore the psychological experience of participation on Community Programme, a UK government intervention scheme for long term unemployed adults. It was hoped that it would be possible to adopt an approach which simultaneously achieved two objectives; that of considering the immediate, short term psychological impact of CP in its own right (and the features of the scheme which might underlie any effects which emerged); and that of considering the scheme as an intermediate role, halfway between employment and unemployment, thereby hopefully providing interesting insights into the psychological experience of unemployment and employment. As we shall see, these objectives were not fully met, but there were some interesting findings which provide indications about potentially interesting issues for further research.

The findings of the quantitative survey demonstrated clear differences between the affective well-being of the employed, unemployed and CP subsamples. Comparisons of the group mean scores showed that the unemployed sample experienced significantly lower levels of well-being than the employed

sample. This result can be compared with previous cross-sectional findings within the unemployment literature which consistently show that individuals without jobs experience lower levels of well-being than employed people (Estes and Wilensky, 1978; Hepworth, 1980; Cochrane and Stopes-Roe, 1980; Donovan and Oddy, 1982; Miles, 1983; Pearlin and Lieberman, 1979; Brinkmann, 1984; Westcott, 1985; Grayson, 1985; Evans, 1986).

One interpretation of this finding is that unemployment has a negative causal impact on well-being. This effect has been demonstrated within other samples by means of longitudinal investigations which have followed the progress of individuals through changes in employment status (Jackson, Stafford, Banks and Warr, 1983; Layton, 1985; Linn, Sandifer and Stein, 1985; Payne and Jones, 1987; Banks and Jackson, 1982; Warr and Jackson, 1985). This interpretation would seem to be partially supported by the findings of the present qualitative study, in which respondents described themselves as having become very unhappy, bored or depressed when they had been unemployed. (Although it is important to acknowledge that the interviewees were (a) describing their experience retrospectively and (b) were different individuals from those within the quantitative study).

However, an alternative explanation of the differences between the employed and unemployed groups might reverse this causal connection, suggesting that individuals with lower levels of well-being were more likely to become unemployed after finishing CP, whilst those with higher levels of affective well-being were more likely to become employed. This possibility cannot be rejected out of hand but the qualitative findings of the present study and the evidence from previous longitudinal investigations would seem to weigh against such an interpretation of the results.



A third possible explanation is that one or more other variables were related to both affective well-being and employment status, and that this/these variable/s were in some way causally related to both. Although the analyses conducted incorporated a number of covariates including: Age, gender, marital status, number of children, age of leaving full time education, length of unemployment prior to CP, full-time versus part-time working on CP, and CP managing agency, and there were no effects of these covariates, it is nevertheless possible that another, unmeasured variable may have accounted for these differences.

The negative effect of unemployment on psychological health has been widely documented in the literature, but much less is known about the psychological health of groups who are neither full-time employed nor full-time unemployed. In chapter 4 of the thesis, individuals falling into this category were characterised as having "intermediate roles". This is one area in which it was hoped that the present study would be able to provide interesting insights by comparing the psychological experience of the CP group (particularly in terms of mental health) with that of the employed and unemployed groups.

As discussed in section 8.2, there were no differences between the three employment status groups in terms of perceived competence. In itself this finding is somewhat surprising, particularly because it would seem to conflict with the interview finding that the CP participants reported increases in self-confidence upon joining CP (self-confidence is one element of the current conceptualisation of competence). It is difficult to know how to account for these apparently contradictory findings from the qualitative and quantitative elements of the study. There are a myriad of potential explanations, most of which (it is recognised) have important ramifications for the present study. However these issues (relating to sampling effects, conceptualisations, operationalisations etc) are discussed elsewhere in the present chapter, and as

there were no differences between the groups at all, I shall not discuss this finding any further here.

However, the *affective well-being* of the CP group was shown to be significantly higher than that of the unemployed group, and surprisingly was comparable with, (and even nonsignificantly higher than) that of the employed group. The cross-sectional nature of the design means that interpretation of this finding is somewhat complicated. Several explanations might be put forward to account for the difference in well-being scores of CP and unemployed respondents:

- 1) There are no significant changes in well-being over time, but a selection effect operates to influence entry to CP: From the general population of unemployed people, individuals with higher levels of well-being are disproportionately more likely to enter CP.
- 2) There are no significant changes in well-being over time, but a selection effect influences the probability of successful job search after CP: Amongst CP participants, those individuals with higher levels of well-being are subsequently more successful in securing jobs, whilst those individuals with lower levels of well-being are unsuccessful in securing employment.
- 3) There are no significant changes in well-being over over time, but historical changes in the scheme account for the differences between the groups.
- 4) There are no significant changes in well-being over time, but there were historical changes in the way that self-selection onto CP operated.
- 5) There are no significant changes in well-being over time but other pre-existing differences from those described above account for the differences between the groups



6) There are changes in well-being over time: Unemployed individuals entering CP experience improvements in affective well-being. CP has a positive effect on this element of psychological health but this effect does not last if the individual becomes unemployed after CP.

7) Some combination of the above suggestions account for the differences between the groups.

The first four explanations above suggest that there are no changes in well-being over time and all of these explanations accord causal priority to affective well-being or some other (eg demographic, historical) variable rather than to employment status. In short, the differences are attributed to sampling effects. There are however, some indications which would seem to count against these suggestions as complete explanations.

With regard to the first interpretation, that CP entrants are an atypically healthy sub-sample of the unemployed, it is true that the current unemployed sample reported somewhat lower levels of distress than have been found in other studies. However, it is important to remember that all the respondents including those who were employed and unemployed had themselves been CP participants. Therefore whilst self-selection of psychologically healthier individuals onto CP may be a reality, it seems to be less well able to account for the differences shown within this overall sample. However having said this, it is still possible, given that the unemployed group had entered CP at an earlier point in time (historically), that the nature of self-selection onto CP (explanation 4) or the nature of the scheme itself (explanation 3) changed over time, and that this accounted for the group differences.

The second interpretation of the findings, that psychologically healthier CP participants are subsequently more likely to secure employment and less healthy participants are less likely to secure employment, is at first sight quite plausible. As noted above, the employed sample did indeed report higher levels of affective well-being than the unemployed sample. However, if it is assumed that: (a) there were no changes in well-being over time and (b) the CP sample constituted a mix of individuals who would subsequently go on to become either employed or unemployed, then the mean well-being score of the CP group would be expected to fall somewhere between the scores of the employed and unemployed groups. This was not the case: The CP group in fact reported levels of well-being which were comparable with those of the employed group. (If the argument was taken to its logical conclusion, this would lead us to expect that, looking ahead in time, all of the current CP participants in the sample were going to be successful in finding a job when they finished CP - an extremely unlikely outcome.) Furthermore, it should be remembered that almost all the respondents had been long-term unemployed before entering CP and therefore by definition, almost all could be considered unsuccessful job-seekers. Nevertheless, once again it does seem possible that some combination of historical changes in the scheme itself and other pre-existing differences between the samples (explanation 5) accounted for the differences. However, it is notable that there were no effects of the covariates which were included (although of course, other factors which were not included, such as employment history etc may have produced effects).

The sixth interpretation of the results, that CP has a positive effect on psychological health, but that this effect is not lasting if the individual subsequently becomes unemployed, is partly supported by the comments of some of the interviewees in the qualitative study to the effect that they had felt happier since joining CP (although once again, it is important to acknowledge that these individuals were a different group).



This explanation is consistent with the within study group differences identified above and moreover, comparisons of the well-being scores of the CP, employed and unemployed groups in the present study with corresponding groups in other studies seem to suggest that this within study effect was not simply a result of atypicality within the present employed or unemployed samples. The well-being of the CP group was considerably higher than that of unemployed samples from other studies and was comparable to the well-being of employed samples from other studies. (Although again this does not rule out the possibility that the present sample of CP workers had high levels of affective well-being before entering the scheme).

Overall, it is not possible to say for certain that the cross-sectional differences between the CP and unemployed groups found here demonstrate an ameliorative impact of CP on affective well-being, (there are simply too many complex alternative explanations and combinations of explanations and indeed, the present study provides information about only two CP agencies), but this does seem to be a possibility, and is worthy of further longitudinal empirical investigation.

If it were to be assumed that CP has an ameliorative impact on well-being, the question arises as to how this may be brought about. Unfortunately, due to the approach adopted within this thesis, the empirical evidence collected can provide only partial answers to this question. However, it may be worth pointing out that such evidence as was collected suggests that the answer or answers to this question are in any event likely to be far from straightforward.

At the most superficial level, one answer to the question posed above is simply to suggest that in many respects the CP participants did consider their CP role to be a form of employment. They referred to it as a "job" and few intended to

look elsewhere for employment until the end, or near the end of their contract. In this respect then CP could be seen (and apparently was construed by the participants) as being very different to, for example, a training scheme lasting only a few weeks. Rather, a closer comparison (perhaps in terms of both content and duration) would be with other forms of temporary employment. Indeed, it is perhaps worth noting that although the one-year contract was seen by participants as the major weakness of the scheme (and I shall turn to this later), many forms of temporary employment are of much shorter duration than CP.

But this approach to explaining any positive effects of CP offers little in the way of psychological insight, and perhaps more importantly, it would be to ignore the fact that many of the interviewees in the present study explicitly stated that they did not think that CP was a "real" job. However, what it does illustrate (and this may be seen as being important in the context of the psychological unemployment literature) is that there may be considerable difficulties in defining exactly what does and does not constitute "employment". The definition of employment as simply a contractual exchange relationship (in which money changes hands in return for tasks undertaken), which is so widely used within the unemployment literature not only fails to take into account that there may be many different kinds of employment, but also ignores the way in which any such relationship is construed by the different parties (and particularly the "employee") involved (as well as the social context within which this relationship takes place). In other words, employment is a socially constructed phenomenon, which may have different meanings for different individuals, and which may change over time. To treat employment and unemployment as unambiguous "independent variables" (as they have been in this thesis) may be convenient, but it is also an oversimplification which carries with it the risks of exaggerating the differences between the two, and underestimating the essentially social nature of these phenomena.



An alternative explanation of any potentially ameliorative effect of CP might focus instead on the extent and nature of the activity or activities which CP enabled or encouraged. In this respect it is worth noting that the CP participants reported significantly higher levels of activity than the unemployed group. Given that many of the interviewees within the qualitative study described being "stuck at home" and bored whilst unemployed, it might be argued that the most important aspect of participation on CP was, at least for some interviewees, that their time was occupied undertaking various tasks and activities. As discussed in section 8.2, (concerning individual differences within the unemployed sample) it might be argued that the primary psychological benefit of this was simply to reduce opportunities for destructive rumination which might otherwise lead to feelings of unhappiness and depression. Although this may be partially true, it seems unlikely that it was only the *level* of activity that was important for this group. It might, for example be pointed out that the CP group in the present study reported lower levels of activity than the employed group, yet their affective well-being scores were nonsignificantly *higher* than those of the employed group. Moreover, the part-time CP workers reported lower levels of activity than the full-time workers, yet they reported similar levels of affective well-being. (Though it could still be argued that the relationship between amount of activity and well-being is non-linear, and it is only low levels of activity which are associated with low affective well-being).

The respondents from these two managing agencies (*and perhaps this is not typical for CP nationally*) were frequently engaged in activities which they described as being interesting and stimulating. Thus it might be argued that it was the type, rather than (or as well as) the amount of activity which was important.

Indeed, there are a number of further factors relating to the type of activities within the scheme which might be seen as important: that it was seen as being socially useful, "rewarding" or "worthwhile"; that it provided valued social interaction (note that working relationships were the aspect of the scheme with which respondents were most satisfied in the quantitative study); that participants had flexibility to choose their own method of working within their CP roles (another area of CP with which respondents were very satisfied); that the interviewees reported having learned new skills and that they felt more confident since joining the scheme.

Any or all of these factors might be seen as contributing to a possible ameliorative effect of CP on affective well-being. What however is difficult to know is why, if CP did have a positive effect, the negative aspects of the scheme reported by the interviewees, and their strong views about its inadequacies as a government intervention did not detract from these positive aspects?

The foregoing discussion presents a very positive account of the experience of CP for the participants at these managing agencies. However there were some respects in which a much less positive picture emerged. In particular, the interviewees commented that the temporary nature of the scheme, and the uncertainty about the future this created, was its major drawback. The interviewees were particularly concerned that they may simply return to unemployment (or "end up back on the scrapheap" as one interviewee put it) when their CP contract expired.

Moreover, in the quantitative survey, the respondents reported levels of perceived control over situations and events which were much lower than those of the employed sample, and indeed which were comparable with the levels of control reported by the unemployed sample. Differences between the



levels of perceived control of employed and unemployed groups have been reported by O'Brien and Kabanoff (1979) and a longitudinal study by Patton and Noller (1984) revealed a significant decrease in internal locus of control for school leavers moving into unemployment and an increase for those gaining a job. The Patton and Noller study seems to provide strong (though not incontrovertible) evidence for a causal effect of employment status on perceptions of control, and this might be invoked to explain the between group differences within the present study.

However, other studies have failed to demonstrate a relationship between employment status and control (Tiggemann and Winefield, 1984; Winefield and Tiggemann, 1985; Linn, Sandifer and Stein, 1985). A possible explanation for these nonsignificant findings is, as discussed above, in terms of different operationalisations (reflecting implicit conceptualisations) of control in the different studies (ie what was being measured; trait control or state control?). An alternative suggestion is that the effect only occurs in the long term. Feather and O'Brien (1986) in another study of school-leavers found no effect of unemployment on perceived control after one year, but showed that after a second year those who had still not obtained a job reported lower levels of control.

Yet another factor which may have contributed to the nonsignificant findings of the studies mentioned is that they focussed upon school leavers. Hayes and Nutman (1981) describe three important features of school leavers which may lessen the impact of unemployment. Firstly, they have not yet developed an "occupational identity". Secondly, not being breadwinners, they tend to be under less economic pressure than adults, and thirdly, they have recently experienced extended leisure time and may be more practised at filling this time. Any one of these factors *might* be seen as affecting perceptions of control.

In contrast, it could be argued, the present study involved unemployed adults, for whom the contrast between employment and unemployment may be more marked. The results are at least consistent with Patton and Noller's (1984) finding that unemployment does indeed lead to reduced perceptions of control.

But returning to the substantive issue, what of the finding that CP participants reported equivalent levels of control to the unemployed participants (and much lower levels of control than the employed respondents)? How might this be explained? One clue to this might lie in the very generalised operationalisation of control used in the present study (in itself incidentally, a potential weakness of the measure). The items refer, in the broadest terms to having little "control over the direction my life is taking", having "little influence over the things that happen to me" and there being "little I can do to change many of the important things in my life". Given this very broad focus it might be argued that, whilst the CP participants reported being satisfied with the levels of discretion or autonomy in the day-to-day experience of their CP work (see chapter 7), they nevertheless felt that at a global level, they were restricted in the extent to which they were able to influence the course of their lives as a whole. What this explanation seems to bring us back to, is the *importance of future orientation*, and it might be argued that what underpinned these feelings of uncontrollability was the awareness that they might "end up back on the dole" and the uncertainty and insecurity which this created. This hints at the possibility that at some level, or in some ways, these respondents may have still felt that they were "unemployed" (cf Fryer and McKenna, 1987). Whether or not this latter suggestion is accepted, there are two theoretical implications of this type of interpretation. The first is to reinforce the suggestion made at several points earlier in the thesis that future orientation is an underemphasised aspect of the experience of unemployment, and the



second is to raise the possibility that perceptions of control may vary differentially at different levels, which reflect different spheres of life and different time periods. The empirical implication of the latter point, incidentally, is that the type of simple undifferentiated measures of control which have been used hitherto in the field of unemployment research (including the present study) may be too crude to detect this kind of intrapersonal specificity of experience. More sophisticated conceptualisations and operationalisations of perceived control are therefore required.

One final set of findings relating to the experience of CP is of particular interest. These findings concern the extent to which the (largely) part-time nature of the CP contract was seen as a positive aspect of the scheme. Within the qualitative study, this was indeed largely perceived as a positive feature of CP insofar as it created flexibility for participants to "do other things" or to fit their CP role around the other commitments, interests and activities in their lives. This finding might be seen as being consistent with the finding that the hours of work were a feature of CP with which respondents in the quantitative study were highly satisfied. However, in reporting their activity level, perceived competence, perceived control, and *overall* satisfaction with the scheme part-timers fared worse (or rated lower) than full-timers. (The only dimension on which there was no difference between part-timers and full-timers, was that of affective well-being).

Again this presents a very confusing picture, and it is difficult to see how these conflicting results can be resolved. Perhaps the least surprising of these findings is that full-timers had higher levels of activity than part-timers, and this does not necessarily have to be seen as conflicting with the qualitative results (see also the discussion above concerning a potential threshold in the relationship between activity and well-being). However, the remaining findings do seem to raise questions about the differences between the qualitative and

quantitative samples, or the conceptualisations/operationalisations of these variables. The only interpretation which seems possible taking the different findings at face value, would be that part-time working *was* a positive aspect of the scheme in some ways (it allowed for considerable flexibility), but that ultimately, a part-time post was not *as good as* a full-time post. On a speculative basis, for example, it might be argued that full-time posts could be seen as being more like "real" jobs, but this suggestion would be to go well beyond the data available from the present study and would require further empirical investigation.

#### 8.4 Conclusions

In many respects the present thesis raises more questions than it answers. Its empirical contribution to the psychological unemployment literature in general (and to the understanding of the experience of CP and individual differences in the experience of unemployment specifically) is not as great as had originally been hoped. Indeed, perhaps the most valuable contribution of the thesis is not empirical at all, but rather that it highlights some important methodological, empirical, conceptual and theoretical weaknesses in the approach which has previously been taken to investigate the experience and consequences of unemployment from a psychological perspective, and to reinforce and elaborate the concerns which have been expressed by a minority of researchers in this field (and which have hitherto been largely ignored). The intention of the author at the outset was to attempt to tackle some of these weaknesses in the empirical work, but as is so often the case, as the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation unfolded, it became apparent that it was far easier to *identify* these weaknesses than to *rectify* them.

Many of the limitations of the study have been pointed out in the text itself, but it may be worthwhile to identify some of the most important of these here and suggest ways in which these might be avoided in future research.



Perhaps the single, most important empirical weakness of the present study lies in the cross-sectional nature of the design adopted, and implications of this for the interpretation of the data collected. In particular, this approach makes it impossible to draw any firm conclusions about the nature of causal relationships between different variables. It is worth pointing out that these difficulties are by no means eliminated if longitudinal designs are used, but that they are certainly reduced, and particularly so if "time series" longitudinal designs (using frequent measurement points, as in diary studies, experience sampling) are adopted. Indeed, the field of unemployment research urgently requires much more work of this type.

A second problematic design feature of the present study was the extent to which the empirical approaches used related to each other, to the aims of the thesis, and to the wider theoretical literature. More specifically, the interview structure and the interviewing style used created difficulties for attempts to relate the findings to: (a) the aims of the thesis (b) the quantitative data and (c) the theoretical literature in the field. In retrospect, it may have been wiser to have adopted an interview structure in which either the conceptual framework (see Chapter 3) or the features of CP (see Chapter 4) formed the basis for discussion. But it was not simply the qualitative work which was lacking in this respect; the questionnaire used could also have been developed in a way which more closely reflected the (implicit) *theoretical* questions being asked and existing empirical evidence from the fields of unemployment, mental health, life events and "stress" research.

Indeed, with respect to the second aim of the thesis, the study would have benefitted greatly from a more careful consideration of the questions being asked before the process of negotiation and discussion with the participating organisations had even started. This groundwork may then have facilitated the

adoption of clearer and more specific criteria for the *evaluation* of CP as an intervention.

Turning to conceptual and theoretical limitations of the thesis, it should be acknowledged that despite the attempt to start with a clear conceptualisation of mental health, the account offered seems to contain some inherent weaknesses. In particular the conceptualisation of affective well-being fails to take into account the empirical distinction which has been demonstrated by a number of workers, between positive and negative affect as separate dimensions of affective (or subjective) well-being (see Diener 1984).

Moreover it seems clear from the difficulties in interpreting the findings that the conceptualisations of activity, and control in this study were far too broad. More specific conceptualisations of these constructs are required in future work which (minimally) should take into account the notion that there may be many different *types* of activity, and many different *levels* at which control may be viewed. Indeed, there were further difficulties with the conceptualisation of control as an intervening variable, and it seems appropriate to suggest that future conceptualisations should be explicit about whether control is being regarded as a trait or as a state, (and the operationalisations of the variable should of course reflect this conceptualisation).

The conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3, although here used only as a guiding framework, rather than a model to be tested, nevertheless also contained some important weaknesses, including the assumption of recursivity in the relationships between the variables, and the omission of a number of variables which might be considered important on theoretical grounds. For example, given the account of mental health developed in Chapter 3, it may have been wise to incorporate other dimensions of mental health. And, given the importance which has been accorded to the role of poverty within at least



some of the theoretical unemployment literature, there should also have been some attempt to assess the impact of financial circumstances alongside the other variables.

Returning to the empirical work in the thesis, it seems that the operationalisation of some of the variables was not entirely satisfactory. In particular the measure of job satisfaction (though very widely used elsewhere) produced enormously positively skewed results, and given the largely nonsignificant findings of the study concerning perceived competence, it must be questionable as to whether this measure could be considered to be an adequate operationalisation of the conceptualisation offered.

It also seems more than possible that there were some important sampling effects at work within the study. Not only is it quite possible that the two managing agencies which agreed to participate were atypical of the CP scheme nationally (they did after all agree to participate in the research), but there may also have been important consequences of self-selection into CP, and response or non-response to the questionnaire survey.

A final weakness of the current study is that all the measures are self-report. Kasl (1978) has criticised such designs, arguing that any relationships discovered may arise from the fact that individuals strive to achieve consistency in their self-reported response patterns (method variance). This suggestion has since been elaborated by Watson and Clark (1984) who have argued that such an effect is not *simply* a methodological artefact, but rather may be one manifestation of a generalised personality trait, negative affectivity. This issue has been mentioned at several points throughout the thesis and requires careful attention in future work.

Despite all of these weaknesses, there were some strengths of the thesis. As noted above, these were largely in the identification (or elaboration - not all of these points were new) of a number of theoretical, conceptual, empirical and methodological weaknesses which have dogged the unemployment literature (and in some cases applied psychology more generally) to date. Specifically, (and most importantly) it was noted that within the unemployment literature, there has been a severe undervaluation of the role of theory. Research in this area has been largely results-centred (rather than theory-driven), with the consequence that "condition-seeking" (Greenwald, Pratkanis, Lieppe and Baumgardner 1986) approaches have led unemployment research into a scientific *cul-de-sac*. Theoretically important and interesting questions such as "What is it about unemployment which leads to distress?" have remained empirically unaddressed, and a single methodological paradigm (large scale questionnaire survey research) has maintained overwhelming dominance. Research methods have been given priority over the choice of research question because instead of viewing empirical research as a means for theoretical development, empirical work has been accorded priority over theory.

Moreover, even *within* the rules of this approach, in the rush to operationalise and "gather facts" there has been insufficient attention paid to the conceptualisation of the independent variable (employment status) and the dependent variable (mental health).

The dominance of nomothetic approaches has led some researchers to treat "the unemployed" as a homogeneous group rather than recognising the wide variations which exist in the experience of unemployment.

Turning to the second contribution of the thesis, it is hoped that it has also highlighted the comparative lack of research in the field of unemployment on



responses to the problem, and identified a number of social, ethical, scientific and policy reasons as to why there should be more research in this area.

Perhaps a third (lesser) contribution of the thesis is to have extended (or at least reinforced) earlier critiques of a number of weaknesses in the theoretical accounts which have been proposed to explain the negative psychological consequences of unemployment. Specifically, these accounts were criticised in terms of their oversimplifications, overgeneralisations, imprecision and unfalsifiability.

Although these are perhaps the most useful contributions of the thesis to the literature, it does also offer some interesting empirical findings which are worthy of further investigation. These specific findings and recommendations for future research have already been identified within the text above and I shall not repeat them again here. However, five more general points relating to future research bear repetition. These are that:

- (a) It is essential that future research in this area should be based on a clear theoretical rationale.
- (b) Research on intervention programmes or other responses to unemployment is urgently required.
- (c) Empirical work should incorporate clear, explicit and differentiated conceptualisations and operationalisations of mental health variables.
- (d) Bearing in mind the difficulties associated with method variance and generalised personality traits such as negative affectivity, exclusive reliance on self-report measures is ill-advised. These should in future be supplemented with non-self-report methodologies.

(e) Bearing in mind the difficulties associated with disentangling relationships between mutually causative variables, cross-sectional (and perhaps even longitudinal panel) designs are no longer justified. There is a need instead for the use of more sophisticated time-series designs.

### **Final Comment**

Although I have suggested above that there is a need for the development of theory in the field of unemployment research, this raises a wider question as to whether there is in fact a need for "a theory of unemployment". Indeed, it seems doubtful that it is helpful to make a distinction between mental health in unemployment and mental health in any other area of a person's life. Perhaps rather than "a theory of unemployment", what is needed is more (and better) theory in unemployment research.



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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE TO EMPLOYEES OF XXXXXXXXX

We are writing to you because you are on Community Programme with XXXXXXXX. The questions in this questionnaire will help us to understand better how people who are on CP feel about work and unemployment. To help us to do this, we need some information about you and the kinds of things you did before joining XXXXXXXX.

SECTION ONE

First of all, some information about you:

1. Age: ..... years
  2. Sex:  
Male ..... Female .....
  3. Marital status:  
Single ..... Married .....  
Widowed/divorced/  
separated .....
  4. Number of children .....
  5. Do you live alone, with your family, or with friends?  
Alone ..... With family .....  
With friends .....
  6. How old were you when you left full-time education? .....
  7. Do you have any educational qualifications?  
None ..... CSE/O-levels .....  
A-levels/Highers ..... City and Guilds .....  
Degree ..... Other .....
  8. Before you came to work for XXXXXXXX, what types of work have you mostly done before leaving school?  
.....  
.....  
.....
  9. How long were you unemployed before starting Community Programme? .....
- The next few questions are about your experiences on the Community Programme (CP).



10. How many hours a week do you work? .....
11. What is your job title? .....
12. Name of the project .....
13. What type of work do you do on the project? .....
- .....
- .....
14. How long have you been on CP with XXXXXXXX? (in months) .....
15. Have you done any training while you have been on Community Programme?
- Yes ..... No .....
- If yes, what training was/is it? .....
- .....
- .....
16. Is there any other training that you would like to have?
- Yes ..... No .....
- If yes, what training would you like? .....
- .....
- .....
17. What do you like most about your job? .....
- .....
- .....
19. What do you dislike most about your job? .....
- .....
- .....
20. Is the work you do of benefit.....
- to you?
- Yes ..... No .....
- to the community?
- Yes ..... No .....

The following questions are about different aspects of your Community Programme project. For each item, please say how satisfied or dissatisfied you feel with each aspect of the job by circling the appropriate number. For example, if you are extremely satisfied with an aspect you should circle a 5. If you are not sure, then circle a 3. If you are extremely dissatisfied, circle a 1.

		Extremely dissatisfied		Not sure		Extremely satisfied
<b>How satisfied are you with:</b>						
1.	The physical working conditions .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The freedom to choose your own method of working .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Your fellow workers .....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The recognition you get for good work .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Your immediate boss.....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Your rate of pay .....	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The opportunity you have to use your abilities .....	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The amount of responsibility you are given .....	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The way the project is managed .....	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The attention paid to suggestions you make .....	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Your hours of work .....	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The amount of variety in your job .....	1	2	3	4	5
13.	The amount of training .....	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Taking everything into consideration, how do you feel about the job as a whole? .....	1	2	3	4	5



**SECTION TWO**

This section is concerned with your plans for when you finish Community Programme.

1. Do you have any definite plans yet for when you finish at XXXXXXXXXX?

Yes ..... No .....

2. Are you hoping to get a full-time job when you finish here?

Yes ..... No .....

If YES, what sort of work do you hope to get? .....

.....

.....

Have you made any job applications yet?

Yes ..... No .....

Have you yet managed to get a job?

Yes ..... No .....

If NO, do you intend to do any of the following?

Part-time job (please specify) .....

.....

Voluntary or unpaid work (please specify) .....

.....

Other (please specify) .....

.....

3. Do you think that being on Community Programme has helped you in making your plans?

Yes ..... No .....

Unsure .....

The next section asks about how busy and committed your time is. Please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number.

		Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
1.	My time is filled with things to do .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Things I have to do keep me busy most of the day .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Time often lies heavy on my hands ....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I spend quite a lot of time just relaxing .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Most weeks my life is packed with things to do .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I don't have enough time in the week to fit in all the things I want to do .....	1	2	3	4	5



### SECTION THREE

This section is about some of the things that people say about themselves. Thinking about yourself, please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number.

		Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
1.	I'm a useful person to have around ....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I can do things as well as most other people .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Many times we might just as well decide what to do by tossing a coin ....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I feel I have a number of good qualities .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I can do just about anything I really set my mind to .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Many times I feel I have little influence over the things that happen to me .....	1	2	3	4	5
7.	When I do something I always do it well .....	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking .....	1	2	3	4	5
9.	There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life .....	1	2	3	4	5
10.	When I make plans I'm almost certain I can make them work .....	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I'm the sort of person who can usually get things done .....	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Sometimes I feel I'm being pushed around in life .....	1	2	3	4	5

## SECTION FOUR

These questions are about how you have felt in general over the last few weeks? Put a tick next to the answer which best describes how you have felt over the last few weeks. Have you recently:

1. been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?
 

better than usual	.....	same as usual	.....
less than usual	.....	much less than usual	.....
2. lost much sleep over worry?
 

not at all	.....	no more than usual	.....
rather more than usual	.....	much more than usual	.....
3. felt that you are playing a useful part in things?
 

more so than usual	.....	same as usual	.....
less useful than usual	.....	much less useful than usual	.....
4. felt capable of making decisions about things?
 

more so than usual	.....	same as usual	.....
less so than usual	.....	much less capable	.....
5. felt constantly under strain?
 

not at all	.....	no more than usual	.....
rather more than usual	.....	much more than usual	.....
6. felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?
 

not at all	.....	no more than usual	.....
rather more than usual	.....	much more than usual	.....
7. been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?
 

more so than usual	.....	same as usual	.....
less so than usual	.....	much less than usual	.....
8. been able to face up to your problems?
 

more so than usual	.....	same as usual	.....
less able than usual	.....	much less able	.....
9. been feeling unhappy and depressed?
 

not at all	.....	no more than usual	.....
rather more than usual	.....	much more than usual	.....
10. been losing confidence in yourself?
 

not at all	.....	no more than usual	.....
rather more than usual	.....	much more than usual	.....
11. been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?
 

not at all	.....	no more than usual	.....
rather more than usual	.....	much more than usual	.....
12. been feeling reasonably happy all things considered?
 

more so than usual	.....	about same as usual	.....
less so than usual	.....	much less than usual	.....



## SECTION FIVE

People look for different things in what they do, whether it's a paid job, training or voluntary work of some kind. When you think about activities like these (not just a job), please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly disagree		Not sure		Strongly agree
1. I do my best work when the task is difficult .....	1	2	3	4	5
2. I try hard to improve on my past performance at what I do .....	1	2	3	4	5
3. I take risks and stick my neck out to get a job done well .....	1	2	3	4	5
4. I try to avoid taking on extra responsibilities .....	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to do things better than other people .....	1	2	3	4	5
6. I work hard at whatever I do .....	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel most satisfied when I put a lot of effort into something .....	1	2	3	4	5
8. I take pride in doing a task as well as I can .....	1	2	3	4	5
9. I tend to be happier when I am working harder .....	1	2	3	4	5
10. My opinion of myself goes down when I am being lazy .....	1	2	3	4	5
11. I like to use my time as productively as possible .....	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am good at setting my own goals for myself .....	1	2	3	4	5
13. I often put off doing things that I don't enjoy .....	1	2	3	4	5
14. It is important to me to make my own plans .....	1	2	3	4	5
15. I often find it difficult to get started on a task .....	1	2	3	4	5
16. I like to organise my own daily routine .....	1	2	3	4	5
17. I find it easy to structure my own time .....	1	2	3	4	5
18. I prefer to have targets set for me .....	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am not very good at initiating things .....	1	2	3	4	5

Still thinking about activities that you might do in a paid job, on a training course or in voluntary work, how important are each of the following?

		Not at all important				Extremely important
<b>How important is it to have:</b>						
1.	The chance to use my skills to the maximum .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The chance to achieve something that I personally value .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The opportunity to make my own decisions .....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The opportunity to learn new things .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Work that is challenging .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The chance to extend my range of abilities .....	1	2	3	4	5

This last section is concerned with how you feel about jobs and about unemployment. Please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

		Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
1.	Even if I could find plenty to do when unemployed, I'd prefer to have a job .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Having a job is very important to me .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The most important things that have happened to me have involved my job .....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Having a job gives me some kind of point to life .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I hate being on the dole .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I get bored without a job .....	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Being unemployed is about the worst thing that ever happened to me .....	1	2	3	4	5

(Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP**



**APPENDIX B**

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO PAST EMPLOYEES OF XXXXXXXXX**

We are writing to you because you were recently on Community Programme with XXXXXXXXX. The questions in this questionnaire will help us to understand better how people who have been on Community Programme feel about work and unemployment. To help us to do this, we need some information about you and the kinds of things you did before joining XXXXXXXXX.

**SECTION ONE**

First of all, some information about you:

1. Age: ..... years
  2. Sex:  
Male ..... Female .....
  3. Marital status:  
Single ..... Married .....  
Widowed/divorced/  
separated .....
  4. Number of children .....
  5. Do you live alone, with your family, or with friends?  
Alone ..... With family .....  
With friends .....
  6. How old were you when you left full-time education? .....
  7. Do you have any educational qualifications?  
None ..... CSE/O-levels .....  
A-Levels/Highers ..... City and Guilds .....  
Degree ..... Other .....
  8. Before you came to work for XXXXXXXXX, what types of work have you mostly done since leaving school?  
.....  
.....  
.....
  9. How long were you unemployed before starting Community Programme? .....
- The next few questions are about your experiences while on the Community Programme (CP).

10. How many hours a week did you work? .....
11. What was your job title? .....
12. Name of the project .....
13. What type of work did you do on the project? .....  
 .....  
 .....
14. How long were you on CP before you left XXXXXXXX? (in months) .....
15. Did you receive any training while you were on Community Programme?  
 Yes ..... No .....
- If yes, what training was it? .....  
 .....  
 .....
16. Was there any other training that you would also have liked to have?  
 Yes ..... No .....
- If yes, what would you have liked? .....  
 .....  
 .....
17. Would you consider working for XXXXXXXX again if you had the chance?  
 Yes ..... No .....
- If no, why not? .....  
 .....  
 .....
18. What did you like most about your job? .....  
 .....  
 .....
19. What did you dislike most about your job? .....  
 .....  
 .....
20. Was the work you did of benefit  
 - to you?  
 Yes ..... No .....
- to the community?  
 Yes ..... No .....

The following questions are about different aspects of the Community Programme project you worked on. For each item, please say how satisfied or dissatisfied you felt with each aspect of the job by circling the appropriate number. For example, if you



were extremely satisfied with an aspect you should circle a 5. If you are not sure, then circle a 3. If you were extremely dissatisfied, circle a 1.

		Extremely dissatisfied		Not sure		Extremely satisfied
1.	The physical working conditions .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The freedom to choose your own method of working .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Your fellow workers .....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The recognition you got for good work .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Your immediate boss .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Your rate of pay .....	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The opportunity you have to use your abilities .....	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The amount of responsibility you were given .....	1	2	3	4	5
9.	The way the project was managed .....	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The attention paid to suggestions you made .....	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Your hours of work .....	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The amount of variety in your job .....	1	2	3	4	5
13.	The amount of training .....	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Taking everything into consideration, how did you feel about the job as a whole? .....	1	2	3	4	5

## SECTION TWO

This section is concerned with your experience since leaving Community Programme.

1. How long ago did you leave XXXXXXXXX?

Less than 3 months	.....	Less than 6 months	.....
Between 6 & 12 months	.....	More than a year	.....

2. Do you use XXXXXXXXX as a reference when applying for jobs?

Yes	.....	No	.....
-----	-------	----	-------

3. Have you had a paid job of any kind since you left XXXXXXXXX?

Yes	.....	No	.....
-----	-------	----	-------

If yes:

How many jobs have you had since leaving XXXXXXXXX? .....

How long after leaving XXXXXXXXX did you find the first job?

Before leaving	.....	1-3 months	.....
Less than a month	.....	More than 3 months	.....

4. What are you doing now? Are you employed, unemployed, in further education or what?

Employed	.....	Full-time further education	.....
----------	-------	-----------------------------	-------

Unemployed, seeking work	.....	Unemployed, not seeking work	.....
--------------------------	-------	------------------------------	-------

Retired	.....	Voluntary work	.....
---------	-------	----------------	-------

If employed:

What job are you doing? .....

How long have you been in this job? (in months) .....

What does your job involve? .....

.....

How many hours a week do you normally work? .....

Do you think that having been on Community Programme helped you in getting this job?

Yes	.....	No	.....
-----	-------	----	-------

Not sure	.....		
----------	-------	--	--

Is the type of work you do now related to the work you did with XXXXXXXXX?

Yes	.....	No	.....
-----	-------	----	-------

Not sure	.....		
----------	-------	--	--



If not employed:

Are you looking for a full-time job?

Yes ..... No .....

Are you currently doing any training or education?

Yes ..... No .....

If yes please specify .....

Are you currently doing any kind of voluntary or unpaid work?

Yes ..... No .....

If yes please specify .....

Do you have any other main interest or activity which you spend a lot of time doing?

Yes ..... No .....

If yes please specify .....

The next section asks about how busy and committed your time is. Please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number

		Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
1.	My time is filled with things to do .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Things I have to do keep me busy most of the day .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Time often lies heavy on my hands ....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I spend quite a lot of time just relaxing .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Most weeks my life is packed with things to do .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I don't have enough time in the week to fit in all the things I want to do .....	1	2	3	4	5

### SECTION THREE

This section is about some of the things that people say about themselves. Thinking about yourself, please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number.

		Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
1.	I'm a useful person to have around ....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I can do things as well as most other people .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Many times we might just as well decide what to do by tossing a coin ....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I feel I have a number of good qualities .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I can do just about anything I really set my mind to .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Many times I feel I have little influence over the things that happen to me .....	1	2	3	4	5
7.	When I do something I always do it well .....	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking .....	1	2	3	4	5
9.	There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life .....	1	2	3	4	5
10.	When I make plans I'm almost certain I can make them work .....	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I'm the sort of person who can usually get things done .....	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Sometimes I feel I'm being pushed around in life .....	1	2	3	4	5



## SECTION FOUR

These questions are about how you have felt in general over the last few weeks? Put a tick next to the answer which best describes how you have felt over the last few weeks. Have you recently:

- |     |   |       |                             |       |
|-----|---|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1.  | been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?    |       |                             |       |
|     | better than usual                                     | ..... | same as usual               | ..... |
|     | less than usual                                       | ..... | much less than usual        | ..... |
| 2.  | lost much sleep over worry?                           |       |                             |       |
|     | not at all  | ..... | no more than usual          | ..... |
|     | rather more than usual                                | ..... | much more than usual        | ..... |
| 3.  | felt that you are playing a useful part in things?    |       |                             |       |
|     | more so than usual                                    | ..... | same as usual               | ..... |
|     | less useful than usual                                | ..... | much less useful than usual | ..... |
| 4.  | felt capable of making decisions about things?        |       |                             |       |
|     | more so than usual                                    | ..... | same as usual               | ..... |
|     | less so than usual                                    | ..... | much less capable           | ..... |
| 5.  | felt constantly under strain?                         |       |                             |       |
|     | not at all  | ..... | no more than usual          | ..... |
|     | rather more than usual                                | ..... | much more than usual        | ..... |
| 6.  | felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?         |       |                             |       |
|     | not at all  | ..... | no more than usual          | ..... |
|     | rather more than usual                                | ..... | much more than usual        | ..... |
| 7.  | been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities? |       |                             |       |
|     | more so than usual                                    | ..... | same as usual               | ..... |
|     | less so than usual                                    | ..... | much less than usual        | ..... |
| 8.  | been able to face up to your problems?                |       |                             |       |
|     | more so than usual                                    | ..... | same as usual               | ..... |
|     | less able than usual                                  | ..... | much less able              | ..... |
| 9.  | been feeling unhappy and depressed?                   |       |                             |       |
|     | not at all  | ..... | no more than usual          | ..... |
|     | rather more than usual                                | ..... | much more than usual        | ..... |
| 10. | been losing confidence in yourself?                   |       |                             |       |
|     | not at all  | ..... | no more than usual          | ..... |
|     | rather more than usual                                | ..... | much more than usual        | ..... |
| 11. | been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?      |       |                             |       |
|     | not at all  | ..... | no more than usual          | ..... |
|     | rather more than usual                                | ..... | much more than usual        | ..... |
| 12. | been feeling reasonably happy all things considered?  |       |                             |       |
|     | more so than usual                                    | ..... | about same as usual         | ..... |
|     | less so than usual                                    | ..... | much less than usual        | ..... |

## SECTION FIVE

People look for different things in what they do, whether it's a paid job, training or voluntary work of some kind. When you think about activities like these (not just a job), please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

	Strongly disagree		Not sure		Strongly agree
1. I do my best work when the task is difficult .....	1	2	3	4	5
2. I try hard to improve on my past performance at what I do .....	1	2	3	4	5
3. I take risks and stick my neck out to get a job done well .....	1	2	3	4	5
4. I try to avoid taking on extra responsibilities .....	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to do things better than other people .....	1	2	3	4	5
6. I work hard at whatever I do .....	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel most satisfied when I put a lot of effort into something .....	1	2	3	4	5
8. I take pride in doing a task as well as I can .....	1	2	3	4	5
9. I tend to be happier when I am working harder .....	1	2	3	4	5
10. My opinion of myself goes down when I am being lazy .....	1	2	3	4	5
11. I like to use my time as productively as possible .....	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am good at setting my own goals for myself .....	1	2	3	4	5
13. I often put off doing things that I don't enjoy .....	1	2	3	4	5
14. It is important to me to make my own plans .....	1	2	3	4	5
15. I often find it difficult to get started on a task .....	1	2	3	4	5
16. I like to organise my own daily routine .....	1	2	3	4	5
17. I find it easy to structure my own time .....	1	2	3	4	5



18. I prefer to have targets  
set for me ..... 1 2 3 4 5
19. I am not very good at  
initiating things ..... 1 2 3 4 5

Still thinking about activities that you might do in a paid job, on a training course or in voluntary work, how important are each of the following?

How important is it to have:

		Not at all important				Extremely important
1.	The chance to use my skills to the maximum .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The chance to achieve something that I personally value .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The opportunity to make my own decisions .....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The opportunity to learn new things .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Work that is challenging .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The chance to extend my range of abilities .....	1	2	3	4	5

This last section is concerned with how you feel about jobs and about unemployment. Please say how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

		Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
1.	Even if I could find plenty to do when unemployed, I'd prefer to have a job .....	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Having a job is very important to me .....	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The most important things that have happened to me have involved my job .....	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Having a job gives me some kind of point to life .....	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I hate being on the dole .....	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I get bored without a job .....	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Being unemployed is about the worst thing that ever happened to me .....	1	2	3	4	5

(Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.



## APPENDIX C

### ITEMS IN MEASURES AFTER FACTOR ANALYSES AND RELIABILITY ANALYSES

#### PERCEIVED COMPETENCE

1. I'm a useful person to have around.
2. I can do things as well as most other people.
3. I feel I have a number of good qualities.
4. I can do just about anything I really set my mind to.
5. When I do something I always do it well.
6. I'm the sort of person who can usually get things done.

#### PERCEIVED CONTROL

1. Many times I feel I have little influence over the things that happen to me.
2. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.
3. There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life.
4. 'Sometimes I feel I'm being pushed around in life.

#### SELF MOTIVATION

1. I am good at setting my own goals for myself.
2. It is important to me to make my own plans.
3. I like to organise my own daily routine
4. I find it easy to structure my own time.
5. I prefer to have targets set for me.
6. I am not very good at initiating things.

#### WORK COMMITMENT

1. I work hard at whatever I do.
2. I feel most satisfied when I put a lot of effort into something.
3. I take pride in doing a task as well as I can.
4. I tend to be happier when I am working harder.
5. I like to use my time as productively as possible.

#### ACTIVITY LEVEL

1. My time is filled with things to do.
2. Things I have to do keep me busy most of the day.
3. Time often lies heavy on my hands.
4. I spend quite a lot of time just relaxing.
5. Most weeks my life is packed with things to do.
6. I don't have enough time in the week to fit in all the things I want to do.

## **GROWTH NEEDS**

How important is it to have:

1. The chance to use my skills to the maximum
2. The chance to achieve something I personally value
3. The opportunity to make my own decisions
4. The opportunity to learn new things
5. Work that is challenging
6. The chance to extend my range of abilities

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT**

1. Even if I could find plenty to do when unemployed, I'd prefer to have a job
2. Having a job is very important to me
3. The most important things that have happened to me have involved my job
4. Having a job gives me some kind of point to life
5. I hate being on the dole
6. I get bored without a job
7. Being unemployed is about the worst thing that ever happened to me



## APPENDIX D

### FACTOR ANALYSIS:

#### WORK COMMITMENT/EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT

Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation.

#### ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX:

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2
EMPCOM7	.80881	
EMPCOM6	.80420	
EMPCOM4	.75039	
EMPCOM2	.74948	
EMPCOM5	.70728	
EMPCOM1	.69258	.30528
EMPCOM3	.64405	
WORKCOM3		.77791
WORKCOM2		.75131
WORKCOM4		.70842
WORKCOM6		.69686
WORKCOM1		.61991

N.B. Factor loadings below 0.3 are not shown.

**FACTOR ANALYSIS: COMPETENCE, GROWTH NEEDS, WORK  
COMMITMENT**

**& SELF MOTIVATION**

**Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation.**

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
EST1	.77631			
EST2	.75844			
EST5	.70341			
EST11	.70286			
EST4	.67045			
EST7	.60406			
WORKCOM1	.55310		.44589	
SELFMOT1	.43273			.41265
SKILL4		.77814		
SKILL6		.74658		
SKILL5		.72910		
SKILL1		.70765		
SKILL2		.70071		
SKILL3		.67020		
WORKCOM4			.76973	
WORKCOM2			.65756	
WORKCOM6			.57530	
WORKCOM3		.36117	.56630	
SELFMOT5				.77404
SELFMOT6				.72450
SELFMOT3				.60861
SELFMOT7			-.36164	.50562
SELFMOT8	.31160			.39010

N.B. Factor loadings below 0.3 are not shown

ITEMS WORKCOM1 AND SELFMOT1 WERE DISCARDED.

FACTOR 1 - COMPETENCE  
 FACTOR 2 - GROWTH NEEDS  
 FACTOR 3 - WORK COMMITMENT  
 FACTOR 4 - SELF MOTIVATION



## APPENDIX E

### MULTIPLE REGRESSIONS FOR PATH ANALYSIS: UNEMPLOYED SAMPLE

#### 1. PREDICTORS OF ACTIVITY

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
AGE	.06	.52	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	.28	2.20	*
GENDER	.31	2.93	**
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	-.23	-1.90	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	.16	1.30	n.s.
WORK COMMITMENT	-.20	-1.41	n.s.

Multiple R = .49

\* p < 0.05

F = 3.77

\*\* p < 0.01

p < .001

\*\*\* p < 0.001

## 2. PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED CONTROL

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
AGE	-.01	-.06	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	.01	.07	n.s.
GENDER	-.18	-1.63	n.s.
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.17	1.34	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	-.17	-1.31	n.s.
WORK COMMITMENT	-.17	-1.16	n.s.

Multiple R = .37

F= 1.90

p< .1

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001

### 3. PREDICTORS OF AFFECTIVE WELL-BEING

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.01	.14	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	-.03	-.20	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	.62	.44	n.s.
WORK COMMITMENT	.08	.58	n.s.
GENDER	.22	2.03	*
AGE	-.05	-.42	n.s.
CONTROL (R)	.42	3.78	***
ACTIVITY	-.30	-2.52	*

Multiple R = .53

F= 3.37

p< .01

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001



#### 4. PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED COMPETENCE

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.00	.02	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	.12	1.23	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	.31	3.15	**
WORK COMMITMENT	.43	4.07	***
GENDER	-.03	-.37	n.s.
AGE	.16	1.96	n.s.
ACTIVITY	.04	.46	n.s.
CONTROL	-.09	-1.15	n.s.

Multiple R = .77

\* p<0.05

F= 12.67

\*\* p<0.01

p< .0001

\*\*\* p<0.001

## MULTIPLE REGRESSIONS FOR PATH ANALYSIS: EMPLOYED SAMPLE

### 1. PREDICTORS OF ACTIVITY

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
AGE	.23	1.93	*
GROWTH NEEDS	.20	.20	n.s.
GENDER	.27	2.19	*
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	-.05	-.44	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	.11	.90	n.s.
WORK COMMITMENT	.09	.09	n.s.

Multiple R = .53

\* p<0.05

F= 4.04

\*\* p<0.01

p< .01

\*\*\* p<0.001

## 2. PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED CONTROL

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
AGE	.06	1.59	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	-.03	.13	n.s.
GENDER	-.03	-.03	n.s.
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.09	.01	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	-.29	-.14	n.s.
WORK COMMITMENT	.02	-.19	n.s.

Multiple R = .22

F= .64

p= .70

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001



### 3. PREDICTORS OF AFFECTIVE WELL-BEING

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.14	1.04	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	-.21	-1.51	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	-.11	-.68	n.s.
WORK COMMITMENT	.25	1.66	n.s.
GENDER	.05	.36	n.s.
AGE	.02	.18	n.s.
CONTROL (R)	.30	2.35	*
ACTIVITY	-.16	-1.17	n.s.

Multiple R = .45

\* p < 0.05

F = 1.87

\*\* p < 0.01

p < .1

\*\*\* p < 0.001

#### 4. PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED COMPETENCE

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.13	1.06	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	.21	1.65	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	.35	2.41	*
WORK COMMITMENT	-.09	-.66	n.s.
GENDER	-.07	-.57	n.s.
AGE	.09	.75	n.s.
ACTIVITY	.16	1.26	n.s.
CONTROL	-.12	-1.10	n.s.

Multiple R = .59

F= 3.97

p< .001

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001

## MULTIPLE REGRESSIONS FOR PATH ANALYSIS: CP SAMPLE

### 1. PREDICTORS OF ACTIVITY

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
AGE	.20	3.47	***
GROWTH NEEDS	.07	1.11	n.s.
GENDER	.15	2.54	*
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	-.05	-.79	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	.19	2.96	**
WORK COMMITMENT	.12	1.75	n.s.

Multiple R = .39

F= 8.00

p< .0001

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001



## 2. PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED CONTROL

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
AGE	.07	1.13	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	-.06	-.85	n.s.
GENDER	-.02	-.42	n.s.
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.07	1.19	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	-.38	-6.15	***
WORK COMMITMENT	.12	1.68	n.s.

Multiple R = .41

F= 8.88

p< .0001

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001

### 3. PREDICTORS OF AFFECTIVE WELL-BEING

Predictor Variables	Beta	t	p
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.00	.02	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	-.06	-.87	n.s.
GROWTH NEEDS	.02	.23	n.s.
WORK COMMITMENT	-.25	-3.46	***
GENDER	.06	.93	n.s.
AGE	-.02	-.24	n.s.
CONTROL (R)	.20	3.05	**
ACTIVITY	-.07	-1.12	n.s.

Multiple R = .37

F= 5.32

p< .0001

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001

#### 4. PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED COMPETENCE

Predictor	Beta	t	p
EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT	.08	1.50	n.s.
SELF MOTIVATION	.28	5.05	***
GROWTH NEEDS	.18	3.27	**
WORK COMMITMENT	.32	5.50	***
GENDER	.08	1.59	n.s.
AGE	.02	.42	n.s.
ACTIVITY	.09	1.78	n.s.
CONTROL	.01	.18	n.s.

Multiple R = .66

\* p<0.05

F= 24.15

\*\* p<0.01

p< .0001

\*\*\* p<0.001