

Abstract

Title: At the End of the Rainbow – Post-winning life among Swedish lottery winners

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This thesis is based upon empirical data from a quantitative survey among 420 Swedish lottery winners and from qualitative interviews with fourteen individual lottery winners. By examining how winners of large lottery prizes manage and experience their situation after winning, this thesis illustrates how sudden wealth affects people's behaviours and sense of self. The choices that lottery winners make in this situation can be understood as a reflection of how people prioritize and value different aspects of life: work, leisure, consumption, economic security etc. A special focus has been on the lottery winners' work commitment after the windfall, contributing to the previous knowledge on work attitudes and of people's appreciation of internal versus external rewards from work.

The thesis consists of five papers that employ different research questions and thus illuminate the main issue of post-winning life from various theoretical vantage points. *Paper I* presents a basic account of how people relate to paid work after a lottery win. It also gives some indication of which groups of workers are more inclined than others to reduce the time they spend on work. *Paper II* explores this issue further, exploring the hypothesis that respondents who perceive difficulties in balancing their work and family life would be especially apt to devote less time to work. In *paper III*, finally, I investigate the relationship between lottery winners' socio-economic status and working conditions, on the one hand, and their commitment to work, on the other hand.

Results from these three studies establish that only a minority of the lottery winners have spent less time at work since the windfall. Compared with winners of relatively lower prizes, however, winners of larger lottery prizes showed significantly higher incidence of having shortened their working hours or having taken periods of unpaid leave after the windfall. In addition to this finding, the different analyses showed that women, winners without children still living at home, blue-collar workers and workers who do not perceive that they have "good" colleagues, were more inclined to work shorter hours than winners of the respective reference groups. Considering the option to take periods of leave, it was instead the winners living without a partner and winners who perceived that their work place did not offer much opportunity for further training that were especially singled out. Older lottery winners, winners who felt that their jobs were physically strenuous, and winners who did not perceive that they could control their working hours, were, finally, more likely to cease work entirely.

Papers IV and V, finally, illustrate how lottery winners conceive of the money that they have won as a "special" kind of money. Both papers address issues of how the prize money should be managed, notions governed by norms about consumption and saving. By managing the money properly, the lottery winners avoid the many risks associated with the win and can instead enjoy the feelings of freedom and security it also brings.

Keywords: consumption, identity, lottery winning, money, work

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

Post-winning life among Swedish lottery winners

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Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i sociologi vid sociologiska institutionen, Göteborgs universitet, som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden läggs fram fredagen den 11 mars 2011 kl 10.15 i sal Sappören, Sprängkullsgatan 25, Göteborg.