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Lindsey D. Geeding
Lindenwood University

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Urban vs. Rural Work Ethic

Lindsey D. Geeding

The present study was conducted in order to see if there were any differences in work ethic between urban and rural areas in the St. Louis, Metropolitan area. The subjects were recruited from the Lindenwood University faculty and students. The subjects were given a questionnaire created by the researcher, and a survey created by Mirles and Garrett (1997). As the results showed, there were not enough participants gathered to show significance. However, the results did show that students seem to have a stronger work ethic than faculty.

The present study was done to try and understand the work ethic ideals of different demographic regions in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. Based on previous research done, I believe that there is a difference between rural, urban, and suburban populations. The reason behind this idea is in the different types of jobs available to each region as well as the resources available to that region. Rural areas produce a lot more agriculture and small business owners, compared to the big cities. It is in the big cities that we find million dollar corporations and businesses that are franchised.

For example, a person who works for a sales company in the city has a schedule that he or she sets up each week with the clients that they will go see. This requires sitting at a desk and filling out time slots and talking to the clients on the phone. The job may also require that you brush up your knowledge of the items that you are selling, which again, requires sitting at your desk and reading the material provided by the company.

The average rural person, however, might own a farm or ranch which requires the physical knowledge of how to handle big animals, to be in tune with the environment (such as the weather), and an endless number of manual tasks such as stacking the feed for the animals in a shed or barn. The differences between the two environments are immense. Just trying to move from one to another can cause a person to have a small form of culture shock. The amenities that are available to a person in either environment are immensely different.

To help understand how the idea of work ethic was cultivated we must first take a look at the history of the Protestant Work Ethic and the many people who have done work in the field.

The idea of work ethic was first made popular by a German professor by the name of Max Weber. Weber came to America in 1905, and noticed the work ethic of the Protestant people. He then put together a thesis that remains popular and debated to this day. Weber believed that the work ethic of Americans had its foundation in the dominant religion of this country, that being the Protestant religions (Weber, as cited in Baehr & Wells, 2002).

One researcher to take note of Weber's thesis was McClelland. McClelland (1961) believed that people had motivation for a reason. There was a reason that a society either did well or not and he thought it depended on what he called the need for achievement factor or N-ach scale. McClelland wanted to test this factor in the individual human being and find out why some people have the drive or motivation to achieve and why some do not.

The first person who wanted an easier way to measure Weber's idea of the Protestant work ethic was Mirels and Garrett. Mirels and Garrett (1971) wanted to create a more efficient way to understand the work ethic of individual people. This caused them to come up with a short, and efficient nineteen question survey that to this day is still used to measure the work ethic of Americans.

A third world country is one that is still in the agricultural state of development and therefore is still in the use of manual labor. A First world country on the other hand is one that has been able to grasp onto the evolution of technology as we know it. This type of country has mostly technologically skilled laborers whose main job is sedentary.

An important international study done by Fernham et al. (2001) showed that the work ethic in Third world countries is stronger than that of a First world country. This mirrors my belief that a rural population in America is going to have a stronger work ethic than that of an urban population.

Another interesting study done by Niles (2001) considered that there might be a difference in work ethic relative to a cultures collectivistic or individualistic stratification. Niles compared the work ethic of Australia to that of Sri Lanka for the fact that Australia is an individualistic country and Sri Lanka is a collectivistic country, which is also not doing well economically. Niles found that the Sri Lankans had just as strong a work ethic as the Australians. However he did discover that the Sri Lankans did not have a strong motivation when it came to the idea of gaining expertise of any activity.

The last international study that I will point out is the research done by Wentworth and Chell (1997). Wentworth and Chell studied a group of college students and found that the international students on campus had a stronger work ethic than that of

the American students. This would also support the findings of the previous studies just mentioned, based on the fact that three percent of the international students were from Korea, and another three percent of the international students were from Taiwan. Neither of these countries has reached First world status. They are in fact considered Second world.

Method

Participants

The participants used for this study came from the faculty and students at Lindenwood University. 120 faculty members were chosen to participate in the study. To save on time with writing down the over 200 faculty member's names and drawing them out of a hat, I just chose the top 120 from the list. As for the students used in the study, 68 were recruited. These students came from three of Dr. Isenhour's classes: Psy 101.11 Interactive Psychology, room Y404, Psy 208.11 Child Psychology, room Y404 and Psy 311.11 Behavior Modification, room Y413. A fourth class was used from Dr. Kelly: Psy 332.11, Psychology of Motivation and Emotion, room Y301.

Materials

Each faculty member was given a packet that included a sheet of paper consisting of the cover letter which described each step the faculty member would use in completion of the packet (see Appendix A). The second sheet of paper in the packet was the researcher's copy of the consent form (see Appendix B). After that was the questionnaire designed to distinguish where each subject currently lived, how long, and whether or not the subject thought of them selves as having been raised rural, urban, suburban or other, and what decade they were born in (see Appendix C). The next section in the packet was

the Mirels and Garrett (1971) survey (see Appendix D). This survey consisted of 19 questions orientated towards finding out the subject's opinions about abstract ideals such as time, leisure, and work. The last section in the packet was the subject's copy of the consent form and a feedback letter with the researcher's contact information (see Appendix E). The students received all the same materials as the faculty members; however, there was no need for the cover letter.

Procedure

The first step of the project was to e-mail each faculty member that had been picked to participate in the study in order to notify them that they had a packet waiting for them in their faculty mailbox. Upon obtaining the packet, the cover letter explained to each participant how to proceed with the procedure. The first step that the faculty member's were asked to do was use only a red pen. Then each faculty member was asked to read and sign the researcher's copy of the consent form. The next step the participants were asked to do was fill out the questionnaire. After completion of the questionnaire they were then asked to fill out the survey. When this was done the participants were asked to keep their copy of the consent form and read the feedback letter attached. This feedback letter had the researcher's information with the note that the participants could contact the research at the end of the study for the results. Upon completion of the packet the participants were then instructed to put the finished packet into my research supervisor's mailbox that had been designated in the cover letter of the packet as the drop of location.

The research for the students was conducted a little differently. I first asked both Dr. Kelly and Dr. Isenhour if it would be okay to use their classes to conduct my

research. Both professors agreed. Upon entering the classroom I announced myself as a senior at Lindenwood University who was conducting research for my senior research project. I then asked the student's if they would like to help me out by filling out one of my questionnaire and surveys. I made a point to say that if anyone did not want to take the survey they most certainly did not have to.

The first item that was passed to the students was a copy of the consent form, questionnaire and survey that had been stapled together. After this, the student's copy of the consent form along with a feedback letter was given to each student. When each student returned the packet back to me I immediately tore off my copy of the consent form so that I would not be able to distinguish who took what survey. After every student had completed the survey, I thanked the class room for helping me and departed.

Results

Of the 120 faculty members that were sent research packets, only 25 were completed and returned. This effected the results of the study. When comparing the urban, suburban, and rural populations I had 21, 63, and 9 results respectively. Upon conducting a One Way ANOVA it was discovered that there was no significance between the three, $F_{(2,90)} = .959, p > .05$. The next idea that I wanted to compare was student against faculty. This did come up with a significance $t_{(91)} = .947, p < .05$. Upon looking at the post hoc test, which I had to leave out one survey because it was the only from the 1930's, of Tukey it became apparent that there was a significant difference in the results of the participants born in the 40's and 70's versus that of the participants born in the 80's and 90's. The two younger generations performed better on the survey than the

faculty. The last comparison that I wanted to make was to look at the results of the two genders and compare them. This resulted in no significance, $t_{(91)} = .123$, $p > .05$.

Discussion

Due to the fact that I did not have an ideal sample size of 30 for each group being studied, the results of this study are up for debate. There still needs to be a study conducted upon obtaining 30 participants for each group. Even though I did not have the ideal number of participants I still think that I ended up with some interesting results when looking at the faculty versus the students.

The students outperformed the faculty on the survey and there could be a few explanations for this. The first explanation is that the student's might have been viewing the survey from an individualistic perspective. This means that they could have been reading the questions and viewing themselves in the idea at question. This could raise the score of the survey if people are harder on themselves than they are other people. When looking at the faculty, they could have been looking at the survey from a holistic perspective. This could have lowered the score of the survey if people view the world as needing improvement and development. Considering our economy is in a recession, this could very well be the case.

Another aspect of viewing the survey from an individualistic perspective as a student is the fact that student's at this point in their lives are working for themselves. They are working toward a degree in order to have a better future. This leaves little time to think about the outside world or the community around you. The most important focus for a collage student is their school work and grades. However, on the other hand, for faculty it could be different. Faculty members have already obtained their degrees and

have their career well under way. As faculty they now have the time to reflect on the world around them and they come into contact with it through the students in their classroom and the network of fellow professors they have compiled over the years.

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This research needs to be conducted again in order to say for sure that there is or is not a difference in work ethic between the three demographic areas. The survey that was used also needs to have an introduction telling the participant's whether or not they should be viewing each question from either a holistic or individualistic perspective. Another aspect of the research that should be taken into consideration is the founding's of each rural community. Some rural community's in America have popped up over the landscape due to good farming ground or because a factory has decided to be built there and people come for the jobs. These factors could change the way a person views life in general.

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Appendix A

Lindsey D. Geeding
Lindenwood University
November 4, 2008

Lindenwood Faculty
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, MO 63301

Attn: Professor Faculty

Hello, my name is Lindsey Geeding, and I am a senior here at Lindenwood University. For my senior research project I am studying the work ethic of urban, rural, and suburban populations. I have chosen the faculty members for my study here because you all have the same type of profession, which will be a good control for my study.

I would greatly appreciate your help in collecting the data for this research project. In this packet I have enclosed two consent forms, questionnaire, survey, and feedback letter. If you would be so kind as to fill out the first consent form, questionnaire and survey with a **red pen**, and then deposit them back into Dr. Nohara-LeClair's mail box, she has agreed to deliver the results to me anonymously. The second copy of the consent form and the feedback letter are yours to keep for your records. I need to have the results back by Monday November 11th.

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact me at my lionmail account, ldg096@lionmail.lindenwood.edu. You may also call my professor in charge of my research Dr. Nohara-LeClair at x4371. Thank you so much for your time and valued opinion.

Sincerely,

Lindsey D. Geeding

Appendix B

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Informed Consent Form

I, _____ (print name), understand that I will be taking part in a research project that requires me to complete a short survey and questionnaire about work ethic and motivation. I understand that I should be able to complete this project within 10 minutes. I am aware that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or prejudice. I should not incur any penalty or prejudice because I cannot complete the study. I understand that the information obtained from my responses will be analyzed only as part of aggregate data and that all identifying information will be absent from the data in order to ensure anonymity. I am also aware that my responses will be kept confidential and that data obtained from this study will only be available for research and educational purposes. I understand that any questions I may have regarding this study shall be answered by the researcher(s) involved to my satisfaction. Finally, I verify that I am at least 18 years of age and am legally able to give consent.

_____ Date: _____
 (Signature of participant)

_____ Date: _____
 (Signature of researcher obtaining consent)

Student Researchers' Name and Number:

Lindsey D. Geeding

ldg096@lionmail.lindenwod.edu

Supervisor:

Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair

Course Instructor

(636)-949-4371

mnohara-leclair@lindenwood.edu

Appendix C

Appendix D

Survey

Please circle the number that corresponds to the word you agree with.

1.) Most people spend too much time in unprofitable amusements

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

2.) Our society would have fewer problems if people had less leisure time.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

3.) Money acquired easily (e.g., through gambling or speculation) is usually spent unwisely.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

4.) There are few satisfactions equal to the realization that one has done his best at a job.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5.) The most difficult college courses usually turn out to be the most rewarding.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6.) Most people who don't succeed in life are just plain lazy.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

7.) The self-made person is likely to be more ethical than the person born to wealth.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

8.) I often feel I would be more successful if I sacrificed certain pleasures.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

9.) People should have more leisure time to spend in relaxation.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

10.) Any one who is able and willing to work hard has a good chance of succeeding

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

11.) People who fail at a job have usually not tried hard enough.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

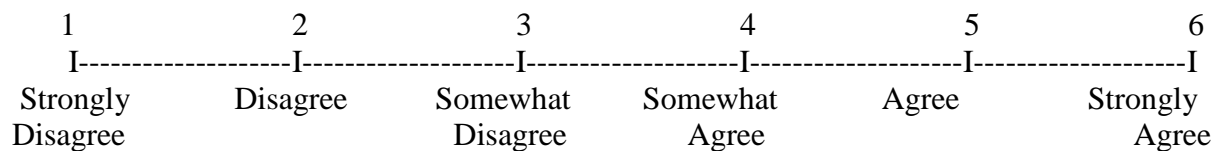
12.) Life would have very little meaning if we never had to suffer.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

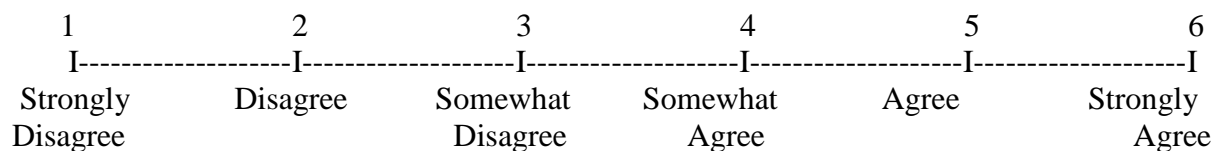
13.) Hard work offers little guarantee of success.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I-----I-----I-----I-----I-----I					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

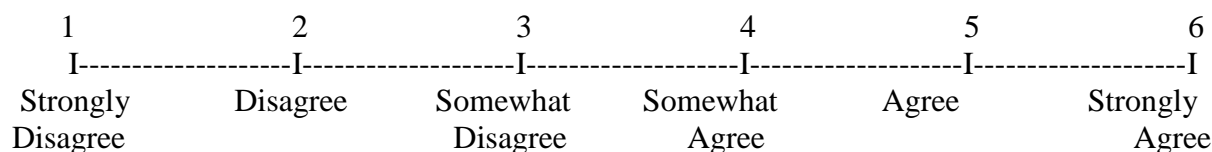
14.) The credit card is a ticket to careless spending.



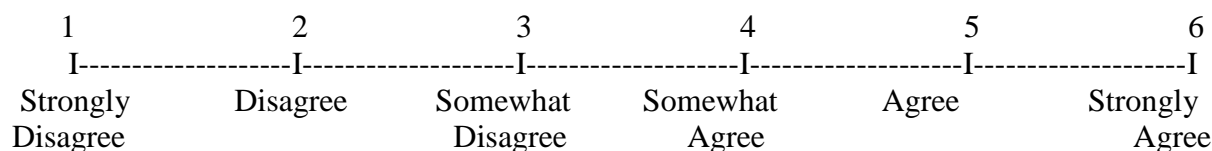
15.) Life would be more meaningful if we had more leisure time.



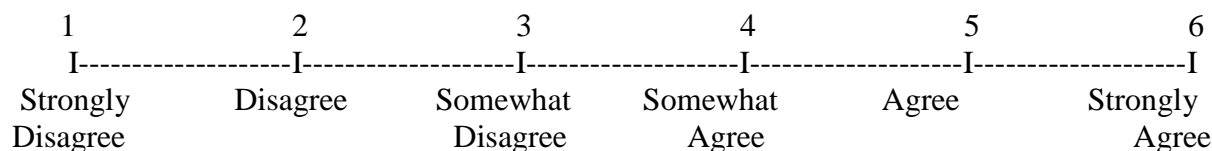
16.) The person who can approach an unpleasant task with enthusiasm is the person who gets ahead.



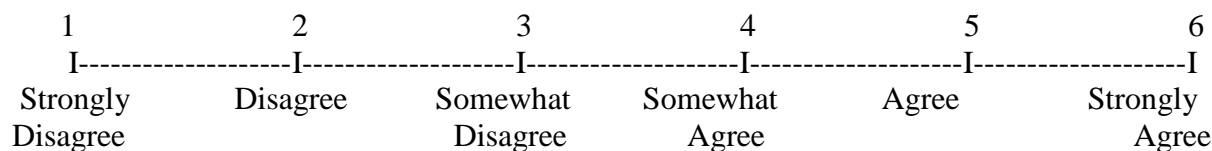
17.) If people work hard enough they are likely to make a good life for themselves.



18.) I feel uneasy when there is little work for me to do.



19.) A distaste for hard work usually reflects a weakness of character.



Appendix E

Feedback Letter

Thank you for participating in my study. This study was conducted to see if there are any differences in urban, suburban, and rural work ethic. The questionnaire was used in order to determine if there were also any differences in work ethic involving the decade you were born in and how you perceive yourself to have been raised.

Please note that I am not interested in your individual results; rather, I am only interested in the results of a large group, of which you are now a part of. No identifying information about you will be associated with any of the findings; therefore I will not be able to give you the results of your specific participation.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any portion of this study, please do not hesitate to bring them up now or in the future. My contact information is found at the bottom of this letter. If you are interested in obtaining a summary of the findings of this study at a later date, please contact me and I will make it available to you at the completion of this project.

Thank you again for your valuable contribution to this study.

Sincerely,

Principal Investigator:

Lindsey D. Geeding ldg096@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Supervisor:

Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair 636-949-4371 (mnohara-leclair@lindenwood.edu)

Author Note

I would like to thank Dr. Nohara-LeClair for all her help in completing this research project. I would also like to thank Dr. Kelly and Dr. Isenhour for the use of their classrooms for my research. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Scupin for his advice and help in conducting this research.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research report please contact me by e-mail at ldg096@lionmail.lindenwood.edu or lindg83@yahoo.com.