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Work Ethic in America: Urban vs. Rural**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 America. The subjects were recruited from Lindenwood University Human Subjects Pool. 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 predicted trends. However, the results did show that International students have a stronger work ethic than American students.

The idea of studying work ethic in modern times was not developed until around the turn of the twentieth century when Max Weber came to America to study Industrialization. Max Weber believed that there was a correlation between the Protestant Religion, Work Ethic and Industrialization in America. As Weber states in his thesis, tireless labor was urged as the best way to have confidence of being one of God's chosen who would get into heaven. They believed that there was a list of people that would be chosen to go into heaven and these were the people who were happy. They noticed that the happy people were the ones who had monetary wealth. So in order to get on this list, the Protestants believed in working hard to gain this wealth and in turn they were working hard to gain entry into heaven. However, all of their monetary wealth was not used upon themselves, they could only use their excess money towards economic investments, therefore recycling their money back into the economy and allowing the economy to grow bigger (Weber, as cited in Baehr & Wells, 2002).

After publishing his work, other people became interested in seeing if this connection between industry, religion, and work ethic were true for people in any country. McClelland

(1961) ended up coming up with a hypothesis pulling away from the religious aspects of Max Weber's study, yet keeping the main component of the correlation between strong work ethic and economic growth. McClelland hypothesized that the need for individual achievement was part of the reason why we have economic growth. Out of this hypothesis he formed the N-ach, the Need for Achievement scale. He believed that some people more than others have a need for achievement and this is what boosts a society's economy (McClelland).

Another prominent psychologist to use the protestant work ethic as a starting point for research was Bellah. Bellah was interested in studying the Tokugawa Religion and its effects on the Japanese society as a result. In his studies he found similarities between the Zen Buddhists and the Protestant Work Ethic of Max Weber. Through this research it is suggested that this correlation between religion and economy might be found in other areas as well (Bella, 1957).

My research comes out of the research conducted by Wentworth and Chell in 1997. They did a study to see if there was a difference in work ethic ideals between Undergraduate students and Graduate students. Wentworth and Chell hypothesized that graduate students would have a stronger work ethic than undergraduate's. However, the results of their study showed the opposite to be true. In their discussion of the research both authors mention demographic research to be a good thing to further study in comparison to this study (Wentworth & Chell, 1997).

As a result I chose to study the demographic work ethic between rural and urban areas based on the environmental differences and the jobs that are available because of this. For example, there are many more technical, computer orientated jobs in a city versus a country town. Likewise there are more physical labor jobs, like farming, mechanics, landscaping, in country towns versus a city. Just as Furnham (1987) was able to predict, I hypothesized that

there will be a difference between the two demographic regions based on the cultural differences of these two areas and the research that has been conducted before me.

Method

Participants

The group of participants involved in this study came from the Lindenwood University Human Subject Pool (HSP). They were students registered in general education courses in anthropology, sociology, and psychology. The students that wanted to participate received one HSP credit per 30 minutes of participation and the professor of their class decided how much the credit was worth in their class. If the students do not wish to participate, then HSP gave them the option of an alternate writing assignment for the same amount of extra credit. This eliminated any coercion. 76 subjects signed up for the study, 26 were International students, and 50 were American students.

Materials

The 19 questions from the survey were taken from the Protestant Work Ethic Scale by Mirels and Garrett (1971). These questions were designed to evaluate a person's opinion of hard work, spending money, and leisure time and how it should be spent. The format of the responses is as follows; 1 strongly disagree to 6 being strongly agree (see Appendix A). I did have to change a few of the questions because they were gender bias.

Out of a possible 114 points, if the person scored high on the work ethic scale, between seventy-five or higher, then they agreed strongly with the Protestant Work Ethic. The participants were also asked to answer a short questionnaire about their gender, work status and leisurely activities (see Appendix B).

Procedure

The survey and questionnaire were given out in the psychology labs on the first floor of Young Hall. There was enough room to seat three subjects at one time. The participants were kept anonymous. If they desired to know the results of the study, they received those answers as aggregate data when the report was finalized.

To start, the participants were asked to read and sign a consent form, so that they would understand that if they did not wish to continue the study, they could terminate at any time without penalty or prejudice. The next thing that they were given was the questionnaire, followed by the survey on work ethic. After they had completed the survey they were given a copy of the consent form they signed as well as a feedback letter with the researcher's contact information on it, and their credit slip for participation.

Results

When I looked at how many Rural and Urban American students I had, I realized that in order to perform any analysis I needed to add a third demographic. This ended up being the addition of a suburban population. I was able to define the category of each subject's demographic location by looking at the web site that each town had. Most of these web sites said whether or not the place was rural or urban or suburban. After separating the three groups I ended up with 18 urban, 17 rural, and 15 suburban subjects. I did not use the International students to conduct this part of the research.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted using SPSS and did not find a strong enough significance ($F_{2,47} = 2.537$, $p = .090$). Upon examination of the mean scores, it revealed trends in the predicted direction; Rural = 79.06, Suburban = 73.87, and Urban = 74.41.

The next calculation that I performed on my data was to compare the scores of the International students with that of the American students. I only had 26 International students and all but a few were urban, so I decided to only compare them to the urban and suburban American scores. I performed an independent t-test and did find significance ($t(56) = 1.981$, $p = .05$). The data was in favor of my prediction, and supported Wentworth and Chell's (1997) findings, that International Students have a stronger work ethic than American students.

Discussion

Although I was not able to reject my null hypothesis regarding the work ethic of urban populations versus rural populations, the work is promising in the fact that I did not have 30 subjects in each group to obtain a normal curve. This study will be followed up with research done using the same instrument in the demographic area of each group, instead of the Lindenwood HSP.

With the questionnaire, I realized that the International students may have not put down the correct town they were from. They may have not realized that I needed the exact location of where they live. I believe that instead some may have put the closest big city that they were from. This could be the reason for all the International students that came up as urban. I realized that if I was in another country and someone asked me where I was from I would say St. Louis. However, my home town is actually two hours northwest of St. Louis. Also, when I do this study again, I also plan to change the questionnaire to determine the person's economic status, because I believe that this can also have an effect on a person's work ethic.

References

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Appendix A
Questionnaire

SUBJECT ID NUMBER _____ (Assigned by Researcher)

1.) Are you MALE FEMALE?

2.) What is your age?

3.) What is the name of the town that you are from? _____

4.) What is the name of the State (Provence) that you are from? _____

5.) What is the name of the Country that you are from? _____

6.) What is your occupation (If you do not have a job, but play a sport in an athletic program, that is okay as well.) and what does it involve? (e.g. personal relations, maintenance, answering phones)

7.) What do you do to relax?

8.) What do you do for fun? (Please be as specific as you can)

9.) Do you think that you will have any problems understanding the survey that follows?

Appendix B 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					
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					
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					
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					
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					
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					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

- 7.) The self-made man is likely to be more ethical than the man 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 man 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.

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

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

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

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

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

17.) If one works hard enough he is likely to make a good life for himself.

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

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

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

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

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

Author Note

I would like to thank all of the people that helped me complete this study. First and foremost to I would like to thank Dr. Nohara-LeClair for helping with analyzing the results. Next I would like to thank Diane Wentworth for getting me the question's for the survey done by Mirles and Garrett (1971), since our library did not have the article that it was published in. I would also like to think Dr. Scupin for his guidance and help with finding the right materials. Finally, thanks to all the HSP students who participated. Without their interest I would not have been able to conduct this research.

If you are interested in this study and would like to contact me, my e-mail address is lindg83@yahoo.com.