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Abstract

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Ideologies about Work: Comparing Hospitality and Business Students and Managers

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A little explored factor posited as underlying most managerial and organizational variables is work ideology. Work ideologies are surveyed to begin to show their ability to be studied and that patterned differences may be discovered. The author surveys several samples of students and managers pursuing careers in either the hospitality industry or business to show patterned differences in work ideologies and to note these implications.

While increasingly acknowledged as important, relatively little is actually known about the fundamental beliefs of organizational members. These beliefs, singularly and in combination, are commonly postulated as underlying and influencing the plethora of variables that have been discovered to more directly affect organizational behavior[1]. Members' attitudes toward supervision and motivation for performance, for example, probably reflect their value-laden beliefs about work itself. Work ideologies are constellations of beliefs about why people engage in work activities. The significance of this exploratory study is primarily threefold. First, it may begin to rectify the minimal attention given to those beliefs which underlie a wide range of other conceptualization and research ranging from motivation to social ethics. Second, it initiates the empirical study of work ideologies. Third, attracting and retaining personnel continues to be an issue for hospitality organizations. Thus, ideas which undergird human resource practices and give leads to enhanced employment practice have a pragmatic importance.

Work Ideologies Date to Greek Times

An ideology is a system or pattern of beliefs that molds the thoughts and behavior of its bearers.[2] While the term is sometimes used to refer to a formal philosophy--conscious and systematic--this is properly an intellectual ideology.[3] Lived ideology, a patterned, though not necessarily internally consistent set of beliefs shared by some grouping of persons which includes what passes for common sense, is non-formal and typically unconscious, rooted in social structure, and used to serve some group interests.[4] Lived ideology is so much a part of everyday life that it is largely unnoticed and unidentifiable.[5] Ideology, as an epistemological-ontological complex, as Abercrombie,

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et al., note, "has given rise to more analytical and conceptual difficulties than almost any other [notion] in the social sciences."[6] Regardless, ideology seemingly has much potential as a construct that thematically undergirds much other explanation of everyday life.

There are no doubt a reasonably large number of value-laden beliefs that have "made a difference" to organizational members over the course of history.[7] Some constellations of belief, however, focus members' attention and orientation to and interest in work itself. They are probably determinate of member behavior on the job in a holistic fashion, not only coloring members' work efforts, but also their relationship to associates, superiors, and subordinates.[8]

There seems to be at least four major sets of such beliefs, or lived ideologies, that are work-relevant--appearing successively in the record of the western world.[9] The early Greek distinction between work and labor noted that work was something a person did for him or herself as a person--an expression of the personality of a free person. Payment or service for or to others was not an issue for work. Labor, however, was activity someone did for some other-directed purpose, i.e., out of loyalty to a master or for money or some other reason. Labor for the early Greeks was the burden of the non-free person. In that society, a person worked, paid or not, but labor was something to be avoided.

It was in chapter three in the book of Genesis that a work ideology was first stated that was to last for over 20 centuries. God punished man for his original sin by banishing him from the Garden of Eden and condemning him to labor, hard and never-ending labor ("By the sweat of your brow will you eat"). In a phrase, work was to be understood as a moral punishment.

In medieval times, an alternative work ideology appeared. Calvin noted that chapter two of Genesis had been unduly overlooked. There it states that before the fall Adam and Eve were "tilling the Garden." Calvin then reasoned that work was natural to man and not just the consequence of sin, and further that only by showing achievement in the work of the world could one be sure of heavenly predestination. The result was the Protestant ethic, in which work became good and ennobling--the natural expression of man's humanity. The resulting ideology, put simply, is that work is a moral imperative.

Calvin's work ethic and its ideology seemed adequate enough to explain the psychology of work until the money economy matured in the industrial era. It was then that people first sensed and then widely believed that a job was the primary access to the means (money) now required to do what they really wanted to do. Work became something neither good nor evil, but simply an instrumentality, a way to acquire the money to live. The third major work ideology thus states that work is a practical necessity.

In more recent times, as education has spread and more than a marginal existence could be aspired to, people in advanced economies began to think of tasks in new ways. In the "secular city," work was packaged by employers, as jobs and positions and access to most

meaningful tasks came only through employment. Then work took on quite a different meaning; psychological maturity was nurtured through achievement and skillful performance. Meaningful work was believed to be required. Work became a psychological necessity, having come full circle to the early Greeks; but now the free person was a laborer in an institutionalized society.

Thus, in recorded western history, there have evolved four major configurations of beliefs explaining work to people: work as a moral punishment (work for sin), work as a moral imperative (live to work), work as a practical necessity (work to live), and work as a psychological necessity (work to grow). When held by organizational members, these four ideologies act to influence thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Work ideologies are postulated as impacting a wide range of factors, e.g., pervasive emotions on the job, attitudes toward supervision, financial remuneration and company policies, and life priorities.[10] Ideologies as sets of value-laden beliefs no doubt influence all aspects of perceptual and motivational sets.

If work ideologies are potentially useful, how might they be empirically investigated?

Survey Is Choice for Information Gathering

The choices for a small exploratory study seemed to be between either rich data from a small sample of persons (a case) or a lot of more selective data from a variety of respondents (a survey). The former strategy holds the possible defect that in any case situation members' ideologies might be homogeneous; therefore, it seemed safer to elect the second strategy. This choice also seems consistent with several scholars who are critical of existing management research which neglects deeper, substantive issues such as alienation, power, values, ideology, and culture.[11] Ideally, of course, a range of respondents would be represented in such a survey. Consequently a questionnaire was designed with three criteria in mind. That is, the initial instrument should be short and simple and possess reasonable face validity.

For the questionnaire a large number of simple descriptive statements were devised for each of the four ideologies and randomly presented to six faculty associates who sorted the statements according to each labeled ideology. These associates were then asked to select those statements that "best represented" each ideology. To check face validity, four graduate students were given a shuffled deck of cards, each with one statement, and asked to create four congruent piles. Four statements for each ideology were selected by at least three students, and these became the final questionnaire items. These 12 statements were thus randomly ordered. Appendix A lists these items.

Responses to the statements were in terms of five levels of agreement, from agree strongly to disagree strongly. In all administrations of the instrument, respondents were asked to indicate their personal reactions to each statement.

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Table 1
Age, Education, and Work Experience in Years

	Age	Education	Work Experience
Business			
Freshmen (n=78)	18.6	12.5	0.6
Juniors (n=63)	21.8	15.0	1.3
Graduates (n=48)	25.8	16.6	4.8
Managers (n=51)	46.6	16.4	23.5
Hospitality			
Freshmen (n=88)	18.5	12.4	0.8
Juniors (n=59)	21.5	15.1	2.3
Graduates (n=35)	28.6	16.7	5.9
Managers (n=88)	43.5	16.3	22.7

During 1990 and early 1991, the survey instrument was administered to eight convenience samples. All respondents participated voluntarily. Three samples were students in required business management courses at a well-known eastern university at the freshman, junior, and first-year graduate levels. Three samples were from students at a major hospitality school, again drawn from required hospitality management courses at the freshman, junior, and first-year graduate levels. In addition, managers in two executive development programs were sampled, one for mid-level hospitality managers, the other for mid-level managers from a variety of industries except for hospitality. Table 1 provides data on the average age, education, and work experience of these samples. As can be readily seen, the hospitality and business samples are very similar in terms of the three common demographic variables utilized.

The data of this exploratory investigation are the mean scores by sample for each ideology. The range of possible scores was from 3 (low) to 15 (high). Table 2 presents the self-perceived scores for each sample for each ideology.

Examination of Table 2 reveals several interesting patterns. For all samples, the earliest historical ideology, work as a moral punishment, was very clearly the lowest ranked ideology. Work as moral imperative was the next lowest ranked by all samples, except the business managers and the graduate hospitality students. Three undergraduate samples, business freshmen and juniors, and hospitality freshmen, ranked work as a practical necessity over work as a psychological necessity--in contrast to all the other samples. Perhaps

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Table 2
Self-Perceived Scores for Each Sample

	Work is a moral punishment	Work is a moral imperative	Work is a practical necessity	Work is a psychological necessity
Business				
Freshmen (n=78)	6.15	9.75	10.63	10.33
Juniors (n=63)	6.20	8.73	9.60	9.46
Graduates (n=48)	5.30	9.44	9.46	10.45
Managers (n=51)	5.18	8.94	8.76	12.18
Hospitality				
Freshmen (n=88)	6.07	9.64	10.78	9.90
Juniors (n=59)	5.85	9.39	9.60	11.49
Graduates (n=53)	6.13	9.69	9.24	12.39
Managers (n=88)	4.17	8.64	9.67	12.21

this reflects some combination of recessionary times, their younger ages, and modest work experience. It is reasonably clear that age and work experience are generally associated with ranking work as a psychological necessity higher. Of interest is that the hospitality samples absolute rankings in terms of work as a psychological necessity are higher than the business samples, with the exception of freshmen. Also of interest is the declining ranking of work as a practical necessity as the sample either gets older or has more work experience--with the exception of hospitality managers. Whether this and the other pattern exceptions are due to the character of the samples or are associated with some other sample attribute are, of course, empirical questions for the future.

The findings are only preliminary. The convenience samples are unlikely to be either fully representative or large enough. One purpose of the study was to initiate inquiry into work ideologies--to demonstrate that work ideologies might be investigated in an efficie nt manner. The fact that patterned responses were found suggests at minimum that such work is feasible. Of course, much remains to be done, not the least of which is to sample a broad range of practitioners and to show the relationship between configurations of work ideologies and less distal attitudinal and behavioral variables.

Implications Exist for Hospitality Management

The patterns of work ideologies observed, however, may have several possible implications for hospitality management. The trends

in this post-industrial period toward humanizing work and enriching jobs seem to be appropriate ones--for managers as well as workers. Hospitality firms should probably carefully examine their human resource policies and practices to see which work ideology is assumed and modify them in line with emerging ideological realities.

At least the college-level respondents will be looking for jobs with more challenge and responsibility than is now typical for career entrants. The design of reward and control systems especially will have to reflect the actual evolving pattern of work ideologies of workers and not those attributed to them. No doubt all four work ideologies will be more or less represented among the members of any organization. This would caution against supervisory practices that exemplify any "one best way" or are overly "top down." Employee unions that mostly emphasize wages and working conditions could be starting to misrepresent their constituents and hence jeopardize their political base. The work ideologies of those about to enter the work force suggest that if firms do not keep adapting their practices that they might lose a significant level of commitment and energy. These interpretations, however, are offered very tentatively, for the findings reported are at best only suggestive. Any implications for management will have to be conditioned by the results of much more adequate research. It does seem likely that patterned differences among work ideologies associated with several other macro factors, e.g., industry and organizational culture, occupation, as well as employee demographics and personal variables, will be found.

Regardless of either its imprecision or its incompleteness, however, this exploratory study has demonstrated both the general feasibility of investigating work ideologies as well as some of the systematic differences such inquiry can reveal. Managerial experience, education, social class, and other "macro" variables must not be underestimated in attempts to understand the psychology of hospitality employees. While this study has merely broken the ground for a unique type of belief inquiry, it now does seem like a fruitful phenomenon to pursue. The promise of work ideology's integrative potential for other behavioral and system variables, likewise, augers further study.

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Appendix A

Items utilized in work ideology questionnaire

Work is a moral punishment:
* In a world unspoiled by man's sins, work would be unnecessary (as in the biblical garden of Eden).
* Escaping from work would be like release from slavery.
* Work is the punishment for being human.

Work is a moral imperative:
* Commitment to work and achievement in work is the mark of an ethical person.
* I live to work.
* Work is natural to people.

Work is a practical necessity:
* Work is simply a practical necessity.
* A person will work just hard enough and long enough to get money to maintain a standard of living.
* I work to live.

Work is a psychological necessity:
* I work in order to develop my potential.
* Work is necessary for psychological health.
* People are motivated to work by the intrinsic satisfaction available.

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