Historical Context of the Work Ethic
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From a historical perspective, the cultural norm placing a positive moral value on doing a good job because work has intrinsic value for its own sake was a relatively recent development (Lipset, 1990). Work, for much of the ancient history of the human race, has been hard and degrading. Working hard—in the absence of compulsion—was not the norm for Hebrew, classical, or medieval cultures (Rose, 1985). It was not until the Protestant Reformation that physical labor became culturally acceptable for all persons, even the wealthy.

Attitudes Toward Work During the Classical Period

One of the significant influences on the culture of the western world has been the Judeo-Christian belief system. Growing awareness of the multicultural dimensions of contemporary society has moved educators to consider alternative viewpoints and perspectives, but an understanding of western thought is an important element in the understanding of the history of the United States.

Traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs state that sometime after the dawn of creation, man was placed in the Garden of Eden "to work it and take care of it" (NIV, 1973, Genesis 2:15). What was likely an ideal work situation was disrupted when sin entered the world and humans were ejected from the Garden. Genesis 3:19 described the human plight from that time on. "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (NIV, 1973). Rose stated that the Hebrew belief system viewed work as a "curse devised by God explicitly to punish the disobedience and ingratitude of Adam and Eve" (1985, p. 28). Numerous scriptures from the Old Testament in fact supported work, not from the stance that there was any joy in it, but from the premise that it was necessary to prevent poverty and destitution (NIV; 1973; Proverbs 10:14, Proverbs 13:4, Proverbs 14:23, Proverbs 20:13, Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The Greeks, like the Hebrews, also regarded work as a curse (Maywood, 1982, p. 8). According to Tilgher (1930, p. 3), the Greek word for work was *ponos*, taken from the Latin *poena*, which meant sorrow. Manual labor was for slaves. The cultural norms allowed free men to pursue warfare, large-scale commerce, and the arts, especially architecture or sculpture (Rose, 1985, pp. 27-28).

Mental labor was also considered to be work and was denounced by the Greeks. The mechanical arts were deplored because they required a person to use practical thinking, "brutalizing the mind till it was unfit for thinking of truth" (Tilgher, 1930, p. 4). Skilled crafts were accepted and recognized as having

some social value, but were not regarded as much better than work appropriate for slaves. Hard work, whether due to economic need or under the orders of a master, was disdained.

It was recognized that work was necessary for the satisfaction of material needs, but philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle made it clear that the purpose for which the majority of men labored was "in order that the minority, the élite, might engage in pure exercises of the mind—art, philosophy, and politics" (Tilgher, 1930, p. 5). Plato recognized the notion of a division of labor, separating them first into categories of rich and poor, and then into categories by different kinds of work, and he argued that such an arrangement could only be avoided by abolition of private property (Anthony, 1977, p. 15-16). Aristotle supported the ownership of private property and wealth. He viewed work as a corrupt waste of time that would make a citizen's pursuit of virtue more difficult (Anthony, 1977, p. 17).

Braude (1975, p. 6) described the Greek belief that a person's prudence, morality, and wisdom was directly proportional to the amount of leisure time that person had. A person who worked, when there was no need to do so, would run the risk of obliterating the distinction between slave and master. Leadership, in the Greek state and culture, was based on the work a person *didn't* have to do, and any person who broke this cultural norm was acting to subvert the state itself.

The Romans adopted much of their belief system from the culture of the Greeks and they also held manual labor in low regard (Lipset, 1990, p. 62). The Romans were industrious, however, and demonstrated competence in organization, administration, building, and warfare. Through the empire that they established, the Roman culture was spread through much of the civilized world during the period from c500 BC until c117 AD (*Webster Encyclopedia*, 1985, p. 784). The Roman empire spanned most of Europe, the Middle East, Egypt, and North Africa and greatly influenced the Western culture in which the theoretical constructs underlying this study were developed.

Slavery had been an integral part of the ancient world prior to the Roman empire, but the employment of slaves was much more widely utilized by the Romans than by the Greeks before them (Anthony, 1977, p. 20). Early on in the Roman system, moderate numbers of slaves were held and they were treated relatively well. As the size of landholdings grew, however, thousands of slaves were required for large-scale grain production on some estates, and their treatment grew worse. Slaves came to be viewed as cattle, with no rights as human beings and with little hope of ever being freed. In fact, in some instances cattle received greater care than slaves, since cattle were not as capable of caring for themselves as were slaves (Anthony, 1977, p. 21).

For the Romans, work was to be done by slaves, and only two occupations were suitable for a free

man—agriculture and big business (Maywood, 1982, p. 8). A goal of these endeavors, as defined by the Roman culture, was to achieve an "honorable retirement into rural peace as a country gentleman" (Tilgher, 1930, p. 8). Any pursuit of handicrafts or the hiring out of a person's arms was considered to be vulgar, dishonoring, and beneath the dignity of a Roman citizen.

Philosophically, both the Greeks and the Romans viewed the work that slaves performed and the wealth that free men possessed as a means to achieve the supreme ideal of life—man's independence of external things, self-sufficiency, and satisfaction with one's self (Tilgher, 1930, p. 9). Although work was something that would degrade virtue, wealth was not directly related to virtue except in the matter of how it was used. The view of Antisthenes that wealth and virtue were incompatible and the view of the Stoics that wealth should be pursued for the purpose of generosity and social good represented extremes of philosophical thought. The most accepted view was that pursuit of gain to meet normal needs was appropriate.

From the perspective of a contemporary culture, respect for workers upon whom the economic structure of a nation and a society rested would have been logical for the Greeks and the Romans, but no such respect was evident. Even free men, who were not privileged to be wealthy and were obliged to work along side slaves, were not treated with any sense of gratitude, but were held in contempt. The cultural norms of the classical era regarding work were in stark contrast to the work ethic of the latter day.

Attitudes Toward Work During the Medieval Period

The fall of the Roman empire marked the beginning of a period generally known as the Middle Ages. During this time, from c400 AD until c1400 AD, Christian thought dominated the culture of Europe (Braude, 1975, p. 6). Woven into the Christian conceptions about work, however, were Hebrew, Greek, and Roman themes. Work was still perceived as punishment by God for man's original sin, but to this purely negative view was added the positive aspect of earnings which prevented one from being reliant on the charity of others for the physical needs of life (Tilgher, 1930, p. 29). Wealth was recognized as an opportunity to share with those who might be less fortunate and work which produced wealth therefore became acceptable.

Early Christian thought placed an emphasis on the shortness of time until the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Any attachment to physical things of the world or striving to accumulate excessive wealth was frowned upon. As time passed and the world did not end, the Christian church began to turn its attention to social structure and the organization of the believers on earth. Monasteries were formed where monks performed the religious and intellectual work of the church (reading, copying manuscripts, etc.), but lay people tended to the manual labor needed to supply the needs of the community.

People who were wealthy were expected to meet their own needs, but to give the excess of their riches to charity. Handicraft, farming, and small scale commerce were acceptable for people of moderate means, but receiving interest for money loaned, charging more than a "just" price, and big business were not acceptable (Tilgher, 1930, p. 33-35).

As was the case for the Greeks and the Romans, social status within the medieval culture was related to the work a person did. Aristotelianism was also evident in the system of divine law taught by the Catholic church during this time (Anthony, 1977, p. 21). A hierarchy of professions and trades was developed by St. Thomas Aquinas as part of his encyclopedic consideration of all things human and divine (Tilgher, 1930, p. 39). Agriculture was ranked first, followed by the handicrafts and then commerce. These were considered to be the work of the world, however, and the work of the church was in a higher category (Rose, 1985, p. 28). The ideal occupation was the monastic life of prayer and contemplation of God (Braude, 1975, p. 6; Tilgher, 1930, p. 41-42). Whether as a cleric or in some worldly occupation, each person embarked on a particular work course as a result of the calling of God, and it was the duty of a worker to remain in his class, passing on his family work from father to son.

In the culture of the medieval period, work still held no intrinsic value. The function of work was to meet the physical needs of one's family and community, and to avoid idleness which would lead to sin (Tilgher, 1930, p. 29, 35). Work was a part of the economic structure of human society which, like all other things, was ordered by God.

Protestantism and the Protestant Ethic

With the Reformation, a period of religious and political upheaval in western Europe during the sixteenth century, came a new perspective on work. Two key religious leaders who influenced the development of western culture during this period were Martin Luther and John Calvin. Luther was an Augustinian friar who became discontent with the Catholic church and was a leader within the Protestant movement. He believed that people could serve God through their work, that the professions were useful, that work was the universal base of society and the cause of differing social classes, and that a person should work diligently in their own occupation and should not try to change from the profession to which he was born. To do so would be to go against God's laws since God assigned each person to his own place in the social hierarchy (Lipset, 1990, p. 62; Tilgher, 1930, p. 47-48).

The major point at which Luther differed from the medieval concept of work was regarding the superiority of one form of work over another. Luther regarded the monastic and contemplative life, held up as the ideal during the middle ages, as an egotistic and unaffectionate exercise on the part of the monks, and

he accused them of evading their duty to their neighbors (Tilgher, 1930, p. 47). For Luther, a person's vocation was equated as his calling, but all calling's were of equal spiritual dignity. This tenant was significant because it affirmed manual labor.

Luther still did not pave the way for a profit-oriented economic system because he disapproved of commerce as an occupation (Lipset, 1990, p. 62; Tilgher, 1930, p. 48). From his perspective, commerce did not involve any real work. Luther also believed that each person should earn an income which would meet his basic needs, but to accumulate or horde wealth was sinful.

According to Weber (1904, 1905), it was John Calvin who introduced the theological doctrines which combined with those of Martin Luther to form a significant new attitude toward work. Calvin was a French theologian whose concept of predestination was revolutionary. Central to Calvinist belief was the Elect, those persons chosen by God to inherit eternal life. All other people were damned and nothing could change that since God was unchanging. While it was impossible to know for certain whether a person was one of the Elect, one could have a sense of it based on his own personal encounters with God. Outwardly the only evidence was in the person's daily life and deeds, and success in one's worldly endeavors was a sign of possible inclusion as one of the Elect. A person who was indifferent and displayed idleness was most certainly one of the damned, but a person who was active, austere, and hard-working gave evidence to himself and to others that he was one of God's chosen ones (Tilgher, 1930, p. 53-61).

Calvin taught that all men must work, even the rich, because to work was the will of God. It was the duty of men to serve as God's instruments here on earth, to reshape the world in the fashion of the Kingdom of God, and to become a part of the continuing process of His creation (Braude, 1975, p. 6-8). Men were not to lust after wealth, possessions, or easy living, but were to reinvest the profits of their labor into financing further ventures. Earnings were thus to be reinvested over and over again, *ad infinitum*, or to the end of time (Lipset, 1990, p. 62). Using profits to help others rise from a lessor level of subsistence violated God's will since persons could only demonstrate that they were among the Elect through their own labor (Lipset, 1990, p. 63).

Selection of an occupation and pursuing it to achieve the greatest profit possible was considered by Calvinists to be a religious duty. Not only condoning, but encouraging the pursuit of unlimited profit was a radical departure from the Christian beliefs of the middle ages. In addition, unlike Luther, Calvin considered it appropriate to seek an occupation which would provide the greatest earnings possible. If that meant abandoning the family trade or profession, the change was not only allowed, but it was considered to be one's religious duty (Tilgher, 1930, p. 61).

The norms regarding work which developed out of the Protestant Reformation, based on the combined theological teachings of Luther and Calvin, encouraged work in a chosen occupation with an attitude of service to God, viewed work as a calling and avoided placing greater spiritual dignity on one job than another, approved of working diligently to achieve maximum profits, required reinvestment of profits back into one's business, allowed a person to change from the craft or profession of his father, and associated success in one's work with the likelihood of being one of God's Elect.

Two Perspectives of the Protestant Ethic

The attitudes toward work which became a part of the culture during the sixteenth century, and the economic value system which they nurtured, represented a significant change from medieval and classical ways of thinking about work (Anthony, 1977, p. 39). Max Weber, the German economic sociologist, coined a term for the new beliefs about work calling it the "Protestant ethic." The key elements of the Protestant ethic were diligence, punctuality, deferment of gratification, and primacy of the work domain (Rose, 1985, p. 29). Two distinct perspectives were evident in the literature with regard to the development of the Protestant ethic.

One perspective was the materialist viewpoint which stated that the belief system, called the Protestant ethic, grew out of changes in the economic structure and the need for values to support new ways of behavior. Anthony (1977, p. 39) attributes this view to Karl Marx. The other perspective, delineated by Max Weber (1904, 1905), viewed changes in the economic structure as an outgrowth of shifts in theological beliefs. Regardless of the viewpoint, it is evident that a rapid expansion in commerce and the rise of industrialism coincided with the Protestant Reformation (Rose, 1985, p. 29).

Bernstein (1988, p. 8), in an argument supporting the materialist viewpoint, enumerated three sixteenth century trends which probably contributed to the support by Luther and Calvin of diligence: (1) a rapid population increase of Germany and Western Europe, (2) inflation, and (3) a high unemployment rate. Probably the most serious of these was the rapid expansion in population. Between 1500 and 1600, the population of Germany increased by 25% and the British population increased by 40% (Bernstein, 1988, p. 9). In the cities, the increases were even greater as people from rural areas were displaced by enclosure of large tracts of land for sheep farming. In addition, the import of large quantities of silver and gold from Mexico and Peru contributed to inflation in general price levels of between 300% and 400%, and even higher inflation in food prices (Bernstein, 1988, p. 9). Along with the growth in population and the inflation problems, unemployment was estimated at 20% in some cities (Bernstein, 1988, p. 10). People without jobs became commonplace on the streets of cities, begging and struggling to survive.

European cities acted to alleviate the problems of unemployment and begging on the streets by passing laws which prohibited begging. The general perception of the time was that work was available for those who wanted to work, and that beggars and vagrants were just lazy. The reality was that the movement of people into the cities far exceeded the capacity of the urban areas to provide jobs. The theological premise that work was a necessary penance for original sin caused increased prejudice toward those without work. Bernstein (1988) suggested that a fundamental misunderstanding of the economic realities facing the poor contributed to the theological development of the Protestant ethic.

From a marxist view, what actually occurred was the development of a religious base of support for a new industrial system which required workers who would accept long hours and poor working conditions (Anthony, 1977; Berenstein, 1988). Berenstein did not accuse the theological leaders of the Protestant Reformation of deliberately constructing a belief system which would support the new economic order, but proposed that they did misconstrue the realities of the poor and the unemployed of their day.

From the perspective of Max Weber (1904, 1905), the theological beliefs came first and change in the economic system resulted. Motivation of persons to work hard and to reinvest profits in new business ventures was perceived as an outcome primarily of Calvinism. Weber further concluded that countries with belief systems which were predominantly Protestant prospered more under capitalism than did those which were predominantly Catholic (Rose, 1985, p. 30).

The Work Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism

During the medieval period, the feudal system became the dominant economic structure in Europe. This was a social, economic, and political system under which landowners provided governance and protection to those who lived and worked on their property. Centralization of government, the growth of trade, and the establishment of economically powerful towns, during the fifteenth century, provided alternative choices for subsistence, and the feudal system died out (*Webster Encyclopedia*, 1985). One of the factors that made the feudal system work was the predominant religious belief that it was sinful for people to seek work other than within the God ordained occupations fathers passed on to their sons. With the Protestant Reformation, and the spread of a theology which ordained the divine dignity of *all* occupations as well as the right of *choosing* one's work, the underpinnings of an emerging capitalist economic system were established.

Anthony (1977) described the significance of an ideology advocating regular systematic work as essential to the transformation from the feudal system to the modern society. In the emerging capitalist system, work was good. It satisfied the economic interests of an increasing number of small businessmen

and it became a social duty—a norm. Hard work brought respect and contributed to the social order and well being of the community. The dignity with which society viewed work brought dignity for workers as well, and contempt for those who were idle or lazy.

The Protestant ethic, which gave "moral sanction to profit making through hard work, organization, and rational calculation" (Yankelovich, 1981, p. 247), spread throughout Europe and to America through the Protestant sects. In particular, the English Puritans, the French Huguenots, and the Swiss and Dutch Reformed subscribed to Calvinist theology that was especially conducive to productivity and capital growth (Lipset, 1990, p. 63). As time passed, attitudes and beliefs which supported hard work became secularized, and were woven into the norms of Western culture (Lipset, 1990; Rodgers, 1978; Rose, 1985; Super, 1982). Weber (1904, 1905) especially emphasized the popular writings of Benjamin Franklin as an example of how, by the eighteenth century, diligence in work, scrupulous use of time, and deferment of pleasure had become a part of the popular philosophy of work in the Western world.

The Work Ethic in America

Although the Protestant ethic became a significant factor in shaping the culture and society of Europe after the sixteenth century, its impact did not eliminate the social hierarchy which gave status to those whose wealth allowed exemption from toil and made gentility synonymous with leisure (Rodgers, 1978). The early adventurers who first found America were searching, not for a place to work and build a new land, but for a new Eden where abundance and riches would allow them to follow Aristotle's instruction that leisure was the only life fitting for a free man. The New England Puritans, the Pennsylvania Quakers, and others of the Protestant sects, who eventually settled in America, however, came with no hopes or illusions of a life of ease.

The early settlers referred to America as a wilderness, in part because they sought the spiritual growth associated with coming through the wilderness in the Bible (Rodgers, 1978, p. 4). From their viewpoint, the moral life was one of hard work and determination, and they approached the task of building a new world in the wilderness as an opportunity to prove their own moral worth. What resulted was a land preoccupied with toil.

When significant numbers of Europeans began to visit the new world in the early 1800's, they were amazed with the extent of the transformation (Rodgers, 1978, p. 5). Visitors to the northern states were particularly impressed by the industrious pace. They often complained about the lack of opportunities for amusement, and they were perplexed by the lack of a social strata dedicated to a life of leisure.

Work in preindustrial America was not incessant, however. The work of agriculture was seasonal,

hectic during planting and harvesting but more relaxed during the winter months. Even in workshops and stores, the pace was not constant. Changing demands due to the seasons, varied availability of materials, and poor transportation and communication contributed to interruptions in the steadiness of work. The work ethic of this era did not demand the ceaseless regularity which came with the age of machines, but supported sincere dedication to accomplish those tasks a person might have before them. The work ethic "was not a certain rate of business but a way of thinking" (Rodgers, 1978, p. 19).

The Work Ethic and the Industrial Revolution

As work in America was being dramatically affected by the industrial revolution in the mid-nineteenth century, the work ethic had become secularized in a number of ways. The idea of work as a *calling* had been replaced by the concept of public usefulness. Economists warned of the poverty and decay that would befall the country if people failed to work hard, and moralists stressed the social duty of each person to be productive (Rodgers, 1978). Schools taught, along with the alphabet and the spelling book, that idleness was a disgrace. The work ethic also provided a sociological as well as an ideological explanation for the origins of social hierarchy through the corollary that effort expended in work would be rewarded (Gilbert, 1977).

Some elements of the work ethic, however, did not bode well with the industrial age. One of the central themes of the work ethic was that an individual could be the master of his own fate through hard work. Within the context of the craft and agricultural society this was true. A person could advance his position in life through manual labor and the economic benefits it would produce. Manual labor, however, began to be replaced by machine manufacture and intensive division of labor came with the industrial age. As a result, individual control over the quantity and methods of personal production began to be removed (Gilbert, 1977, p. 3).

The impact of industrialization and the speed with which it spread during the second half of the nineteenth century was notable. Rodgers (1978, p. 19) reported that as late as 1850 most American manufacturing was still being done in homes and workshops. This pattern was not confined to rural areas, but was found in cities also where all varieties of craftsmen plied their trades. Some division of labor was utilized, but most work was performed using time-honored hand methods. A certain measure of independence and creativity could be taken for granted in the workplace. No one directly supervised home workers or farmers, and in the small shops and mills, supervision was mostly unstructured. The cotton textile industry of New England was the major exception.

Rodgers (1978, p. 20) described the founding, in the early 1820's, of Lowell, Massachusetts as the

real beginning of the industrial age in America. By the end of the decade, nineteen textile mills were in operation in the city, and 5,000 workers were employed in the mills. During the years that followed, factories were built in other towns as competition in the industry grew. These cotton mills were distinguished from other factories of the day by their size, the discipline demanded of their workers, and the paternalistic regulations imposed on employees (Rodgers, 1978, p. 20). Gradually the patterns of employment and management initiated in the cotton mills spread to other industries, and during the later half of the nineteenth century, the home and workshop trades were essentially replaced by the mass production of factories.

In the factories, skill and craftsmanship were replaced by discipline and anonymity. A host of carefully preserved hand trades—tailoring, barrel making, glass blowing, felt-hat making, pottery making, and shoe making—disappeared as they were replaced by new inventions and specialization of labor (Rodgers, 1978, p. 25). Although new skills were needed in some factories, the trend was toward a semi-skilled labor force, typically operating one machine to perform one small piece of a manufacturing process. The sense of control over one's destiny was missing in the new workplace, and the emptiness and lack of intellectual stimulation in work threatened the work ethic (Gilbert, 1977, p. 6). In the secularized attitudes which comprised the work ethic up until that time, a central component was the promise of psychological reward for efforts in one's work, but the factory system did little to support a sense of purpose or self-fulfillment for those who were on the assembly lines.

The factory system also threatened the promise of economic reward—another key premise of the work ethic. The output of products manufactured by factories was so great that by the 1880's industrial capacity exceeded that which the economy could absorb (Rodgers, 1978, pp. 27-28). Under the system of home and workshop industries, production had been a virtue, and excess goods were not a problem. Now that factories could produce more than the nation could use, hard work and production no longer always provided assurance of prosperity.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the industrial system continued to dominate work in America and much of the rest of the world. Technology continued to advance, but innovation tended to be focused on those areas of manufacture which had not yet been mastered by machines. Little was done to change the routine tasks of feeding materials into automated equipment or other forms of semiskilled labor which were more economically done by low wage workers (Rodgers, 1978).

The Work Ethic and Industrial Management

Management of industries became more systematic and structured as increased competition forced factory owners to hold costs down. The model of management which developed, the *traditional model*, was

characterized by a very authoritarian style which did not acknowledge the work ethic. To the contrary, Daft and Steers (1986, p. 93) described this model as holding "that the average worker was basically lazy and was motivated almost entirely by money." Workers were assumed to neither desire nor be capable of autonomous or self-directed work. As a result, the *scientific management* concept was developed, predicated on specialization and division of jobs into simple tasks. Scientific management was claimed to increase worker production and result in increased pay. It was therefore seen as beneficial to workers, as well as to the company, since monetary gain was viewed as the primary motivating factor for both.

As use of scientific management became more widespread in the early 1900's, it became apparent that factors other than pay were significant to worker motivation. Some workers were self-starters and didn't respond well to close supervision and others became distrustful of management when pay increases failed to keep pace with improved productivity (Daft and Steers, 1986, p. 94). Although unacknowledged in management practice, these were indicators of continued viability of the work ethic in employees.

By the end of World War II scientific management was considered inadequate and outdated to deal with the needs of industry (Jaggi, 1988, p. 446). At this point the behaviorist school of thought emerged to provide alternative theories for guiding the management of workers. Contrary to the principles of scientific management, the behaviorists argued that workers were not intrinsically lazy. They were adaptive. If the environment failed to provide a challenge, workers became lazy, but if appropriate opportunities were provided, workers would become creative and motivated.

In response to the new theories, managers turned their attention to finding various ways to make jobs more fulfilling for workers. *Human relations* became an important issue and efforts were made to make people feel useful and important at work. Company newspapers, employee awards, and company social events were among the tools used by management to enhance the job environment (Daft and Steers, 1986, p. 168), but the basic nature of the workplace remained unchanged. The adversarial relationship between employee and employer persisted.

In the late 1950's *job enrichment* theories began to provide the basis for fundamental changes in employer-employee relationships. Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) identified factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and personal growth which, when provided as an intrinsic component of a job, tended to motivate workers to perform better. Factors such as salary, company policies, supervisory style, working conditions, and relations with fellow workers tended to impair worker performance if inadequately provided for, but did not particularly improve worker motivation when present.

In 1960, when the concepts of theory "X" and theory "Y" were introduced by McGregor, the basis

for a management style conducive to achieving job enrichment for workers was provided (Jaggi, 1988, p. 446). Theory "X" referred to the authoritarian management style characteristic of scientific management but theory "Y" supported a *participatory* style of management.

Jaggi (1988, p. 446) defined participatory management as "a cooperative process in which management and workers work together to accomplish a common goal." Unlike authoritarian styles of management, which provided top-down, directive control over workers assumed to be unmotivated and in need of guidance, participatory management asserted that worker involvement in decisionmaking provided valuable input and enhanced employee satisfaction and morale. Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1984) described participatory management as a system which would open the way for the work ethic to be a powerful resource in the workplace. They stated, however, that the persistence of the traditional model in American management discouraged workers, even though many wanted to work hard and do good work for its own sake.

The Work Ethic in the Information Age

Just as the people of the mid-nineteenth century encountered tremendous cultural and social change with the dawn of the industrial age, the people of the late twentieth century experienced tremendous cultural and social shifts with the advent of the information age. Toffler (1980) likened these times of change to waves washing over the culture, bringing with it changes in norms and expectations, as well as uncertainty about the future.

Since 1956 (Naisbitt, 1984, p. 2) white-collar workers in technical, managerial, and clerical positions have outnumbered workers in blue-collar jobs. Porat (1977), in a study for the U.S. Department of Commerce, examined over 400 occupations in 201 industries. He determined that in 1967, the economic contribution of jobs primarily dealing with production of information, as compared with goods-producing jobs, accounted for 46% of the GNP and more than 53% of the income earned. Some jobs in manufacturing and industry also became more technical and necessitated a higher level of thinking on the job as machines were interfaced with computers and control systems became more complex.

Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1984) contrasted the work required of most people during the industrial age with the work of the information age. Industrial age jobs were typically low-discretion, required little decisionmaking, and were analyzed and broken into simple tasks which required very little thinking or judgement on the part of workers. Information age jobs, in contrast, were high-discretion and required considerable thinking and decisionmaking on the part of workers (Miller, 1986, p. 63). In the workplace characterized by high-discretion, the work ethic became a much more important construct than it was during

the manipulative era of machines. Maccoby (1988) emphasized the importance, in this setting, of giving employees authority to make decisions which would meet the needs of customers as well as support the goals of their own companies.

As high-discretion, information age jobs provided opportunities for greater self-expression by workers, people began to find more self-fulfillment in their work. Yankelovich and Harmon (1988, p. 238-239) reported that a significant transformation in the meaning of the work ethic resulted. Throughout history, work had been associated with pain, sacrifice, and drudgery. The previously mentioned Greek word for work, *ponos*, also meant "pain." For the Hebrews as well as for the medieval Christians, the unpleasantness of work was associated with Divine punishment for man's sin. The Protestant ethic maintained that work was a sacrifice that demonstrated moral worthiness, and it stressed the importance of postponed gratification. With the information age, however, came work which was perceived as good and rewarding in itself. Most workers were satisfied with their work and wanted to be successful in it (Wattenberg, 1984, pp. 303-305).

According the Yankelovich and Harmon (1988), the work ethic of the 1980's stressed skill, challenge, autonomy, recognition, and the quality of work produced (p. 239). Autonomy was identified as a particularly important factor in worker satisfaction with their jobs (p. 240). Motivation to work involved trust, caring, meaning, self-knowledge, challenge, opportunity for personal growth, and dignity (Maccoby, 1988, p. 35; Walton, 1974, p. 229). Workers were seeking control over their work and a sense of empowerment and many information age jobs were conducive to meeting these needs. As a result, the work ethic was not abandoned during the information age, but was transformed to a state of relevance not found in most industrial age occupations.

Even though the information age was well established by the 1980's and 1990's, not all jobs were high-discretion. Some occupations continued to consist primarily of manual labor and allowed minimal opportunity for worker involvement in decisionmaking. In addition, authoritarian forms of management continued to be utilized and the potential of the work ethic was wasted. Statistics reported by Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1984) indicated that by the early 1980's, 43% of the workforce perceived their jobs as high-discretion and 21% of the workforce perceived their jobs as low-discretion (p. 63). The high-discretion workers were likely to be better educated, to be in white-collar or service jobs, and to have experienced technological changes in their work. The low-discretion workers were more likely to be union members, to be in blue-collar jobs, and to be working in positions characterized by dirt, noise, and pollution.

The Work Ethic and Empowerment

As a result of the rapid changes associated with the Information Age workplace, codified and systematized knowledge not limited to a specific organizational context was important during the 1980's and 1990's (Maccoby, 1983). Higher levels of education became necessary along with skills at solving problems, managing people, and applying the latest information to the tasks at hand. With increased education, higher expectations and aspirations for careers emerged.

Young people, in particular, entering the workforce with high school and college educations, expected opportunities for advancement (Maccoby, 1983; Sheehy, 1990). They anticipated that talent and hard work would be the basis for success rather than chance or luck. In essence, information age workers expected application of a positive work ethic to result in rewards, and they sometimes became impatient if progress was not experienced in a relatively short period of time (Sheehy, 1990).

For workers who acquired positions of supervision or ownership, motivation to accomplish personal goals through success in the organization enhanced the expression of work ethic attributes. Barnard (1938) identified the process of persons in an organization coordinating their activities to attain common goals as important to the well-being of the organization. One of the essential elements for this process was the creation and allocation of satisfaction among individuals (Barnard, 1938).

Further explanation for organizational behavior was provided by a model developed by Getzels and Guba (Getzels, 1968). The major elements of the model were institution, role, and expectation which formed the normative dimension of activity in a social system; and individual, personality, and need-disposition which constituted the personal dimension of activity in a social system (Getzels, 1968). To the extent that a person's work ethic beliefs influenced personality and need-disposition, the observed behavior of that individual within the context of the workplace would be affected. Particularly in the high-discretion workplace of the information age, role and expectations found within the workplace would tend to be reinforced by a strong work ethic.

Other Changes in the Workplace

Besides changes in the jobs people performed, changes in the levels of education required for those jobs, and changes in the extent to which people were given control or empowerment in their work, the workforce of the 1980's and 1990's reflected a larger number of women and a reduced number of workers older than 65. Changes in gender and age of workers had a significant impact on the culture of the later twentieth century and influenced the pattern of work related norms such as the work ethic.

Rodgers (1978, pp. 182-209) told of the growing restlessness of women in the late 1800's and the

early 1900's. As the economic center of society was moved out of the home or workshop and into the factory, women were left behind. Some women became operatives in textile mills, office workers, or salesclerks, and increased numbers were employed as teachers (Sawhill, 1974, p. 90). Women comprised a relatively small percentage of the workforce, however, and their wages were about half that of men. Those who labored at housework and child-rearing received no pay at all and often were afforded little respect or appreciation for what they did.

It was not until World War II and the years following that women began to enter the workplace in great numbers. In 1900 women made up 18% of the nation's workforce, but by 1947 they comprised 28% of the workforce (Levitan & Johnson, 1983, p. 5). By 1980 42.5% of the nation's workers were women (Stencel, 1981, p. 48). In 1990 the number of women workers was approaching 50% of the workforce, and Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) reported that women held 39.3% of all executive, administrative, and management jobs. Due to the increase in the number of women working outside the home, their attitudes about work have become a significant influence on the work ethic in the contemporary workplace.

Comparisons of attitudes of men and women in the workplace have shown that men tended to be more concerned with earning a good income, having freedom from close supervision, having leadership opportunities, and having a job that enhanced their social status. Women were inclined to seek job characteristics which allowed them to help others, to be original and creative, to progress steadily in their work, and to work with people rather than things (Lyson, 1984, p. 140). Women, more than men, also tended to seek personal benefits such as enjoyment, pride, fulfillment, and personal challenge (Bridges, 1989, p. 206).

Another trend which shaped the workforce of the later twentieth century was an increase in the number of older workers who retired from their jobs. Statistics reported by Quinn (1983, pp. 87-89) showed that in 1950, persons 65 years old and older comprised 45.8% of the workforce as compared to 18.4% in 1981. Part of this trend can be explained by the continued shift away from agriculture and self-employment—occupations which traditionally had high older worker participation rates. In addition, increased provision for retirement income, as a result of pensions or other retirement plans, has removed the financial burden which necessitated work for many older adults in the past.

Deans (1972, pp. 8-9) noted a trend on the part of younger workers to view work differently than older workers. He found less acceptance, among young people entering the workforce, of the concept that hard work was a virtue and a duty and less upward striving by young workers compared to that of their parents and grandparents. Yankelovich (1981) reported findings which contradicted the view that younger workers were less committed to the work ethic, but he did find a decline in belief that hard work would pay

off (p. 39). This was a significant shift because pay and "getting ahead" were the primary incentives management used to encourage productivity during the industrial age. If economic reward had lost its ability to motivate workers, then productivity could be expected to decline, in the absence of some other reason for working hard (Yankelovich, 1981, pp. 42-44). Within this context, the work ethic, and a management style which unfettered it, was a significant factor for maintaining and increasing performance.

Influences Shaping the Contemporary Work Ethic

The work ethic is a cultural norm that places a positive moral value on doing a good job and is based on a belief that work has intrinsic value for its own sake (Cherrington, 1980, p.19; Quinn, 1983, p. 89; Yankelovich & Immerwahr, 1984, p. 64). Like other cultural norms, a person's adherence to or belief in the work ethic is principally influenced by socialization experiences during childhood and adolescence. Through interaction with family, peers, and significant adults, a person "learns to place a value on work behavior as others approach him in situations demanding increasing responsibility for productivity" (Braude, 1975, p. 134). Based on praise or blame and affection or anger, a child appraises his or her performance in household chores, or later in part-time jobs, but this appraisal is based on the perspective of others. As a child matures, these attitudes toward work become internalized, and work performance is less dependent on the reactions of others.

Children are also influenced by the attitudes of others toward work (Braude, 1975, p. 135). If a parent demonstrates a dislike for a job or a fear of unemployment, children will tend to assimilate these attitudes. Parents who demonstrate a strong work ethic tend to impart a strong work ethic to their children.

Another significant factor shaping the work attitudes of people is the socialization which occurs in the workplace. As a person enters the workplace, the perceptions and reactions of others tend to confirm or contradict the work attitudes shaped in childhood (Braude, 1975, pp. 135-136). The occupational culture, especially the influence of an "inner fraternity" of colleagues, has a significant impact on the attitudes toward work and the work ethic which form part of each person's belief system.

Among the mechanisms provided by society to transfer the culture to young people is the public school. One of the functions of schools is to foster student understanding of cultural norms, and in some cases to recognize the merits of accepting them. Vocational education, for example, has as a stated goal that it will promote the work ethic (Gregson, 1991, p. 334; Miller, 1985, pp. 91-94). Reubens (1974, p. 328) listed "inculcation of good work attitudes" as one of the highest priorities for high school education. In the absence of early socialization which supports good work attitudes, schools should not be expected to completely transform a young person's work ethic orientation, but enlightening students about what the work

ethic is, and why it is important to success in the contemporary workplace, should be a component of secondary education.

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