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ATTITUDES ABOUT HARD WORK: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE BELIEFS OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT: *Government workers are often criticized for holding views that are at odds with the mainstream. Few studies have empirically tested the congruency between attitudes held by government and private sector workers. Using data from the 2009 International Social Survey Programme that includes individual responses across 32 countries, we examine whether government employees' beliefs about opportunities in society systematically differ from those of private sector workers. We estimate the effect of sector (government/private) and position (supervisor/non-supervisor), among workers in "helping professions," on perceptions of the role of hard work for getting ahead in society. We find that government supervisors and government/private non-supervisors are significantly less likely than private sector supervisors to emphasize the role of hard work for getting ahead. Private sector supervisors believe that hard work is essential for getting ahead. Government workers are less likely to emphasize the importance of hard work and are more inclined to look beyond the individual for explanations of societal success and failure.*

INTRODUCTION

Front-line government officials are often the first, and sometimes the only, contact that the public has with government organizations. While the public may perceive that these officials are simply implementing rules, they actually exercise considerable discretion. This discretion provides officials with the opportunity to shape outputs to the advantage or disadvantage of clients. Government employees normally make

decisions, major and minor, that can determine who gets services, how much they get, and when they get them.

The research investigating the explanations for how government officials choose to use their discretion has identified four categories of determinants. First, the identity of the official is likely to affect his or her behavior. Second, previous interactions with clients shape the behavior of government workers. Third, the incentives and sanctions offered by the agency and the degree of monitoring are important determinants of the behavior of government employees. Fourth, the nature of the task environment of government employees will guide behavior. An additional, less-explored factor is how personal beliefs about justice affect the decision making of employees in the public sector, especially if those with strong beliefs about justice are attracted to government employment or if they adopt different attitudes after working in government.

Experimental evidence from psychology finds that individuals are predisposed to believe that people get what they deserve. This research shows that even in cases where an injustice has occurred, people cling to the “belief in a just world” to varying degrees (Lerner 1982).

One consequence of this belief is that failures are attributed mostly to individual factors (i.e., laziness, bad character, substance abuse) and that people are then viewed as undeserving. We argue that people who believe that hard work is the key to getting ahead are more critical of groups seeking help. Those with particularly strong beliefs about people getting what they deserve hold that if one works hard enough, then he or she can get ahead and avoid requiring assistance from the state. Under this condition, people who fail to succeed are seen as less deserving of government help.

All members of society, including individuals who work in public agencies, hold some beliefs about people getting what they deserve. The job of many individuals working in public agencies is to provide services to the clients of public programs. One possibility is that individuals who choose government employment understand that other factors, beyond the control of any individual, are important determinants of success. Conversely, it may be that an official’s repeated interaction with individuals seeking assistance may alter some officials’ views on deservingness.

An important first step is testing whether government employees’ beliefs about hard work in getting ahead in society systematically differ from those of private sector employees. In this analysis, we focus on individuals in helping professions who interact with clients to provide services. We examine only those occupations in the helping professions where there are similar numbers of government and private sector workers; this allows us to compare the attitudes held by these workers across sectors, controlling for occupation. We then compare the views of “street-level bureaucrats” to their private sector counterparts. Next, we disentangle this relationship to test whether differences exist between non-supervisory and supervisory workers. Finally, we examine whether older and younger workers differ systematically in their views, by work sector and position. Splitting the sample in this way provides us a preliminary test of whether our findings are driven by selection into the government sector versus the experience of working in government.

Using the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), we find statistically significant differences in beliefs about the role of hard work in getting ahead among government and private workers across 32 countries. Our models control for country-level fixed effects, cultural and linguistic commonalities across countries, and individual-level effects such as education level, age, and sex. Overall, we find that *private* sector supervisors hold distinctly different views: they are much more likely than government workers (supervisors and non-supervisors) to believe in the role of hard work in getting ahead. Additionally, our separate analysis of younger workers shows that, relative to younger private sector supervisors, younger government workers and private sector non-supervisors are considerably less likely to emphasize the role of hard work in getting ahead. For older workers, we find that street-level government employees are the only group, relative to private sector supervisors, who are less likely to emphasize the role of hard work.

RESEARCH ON GOVERNMENT WORKERS' ATTITUDES

Understanding similarities and differences between the attitudes and beliefs of government workers and the general public has been rarely examined in the field of public administration. In fact, few scholars have directly investigated whether employees in the public sector hold views that are similar or different from the attitudes and beliefs of workers in the private sector.¹ Goodsell (1983) offers his view of government employees as “ordinary people,” who hold very similar beliefs to those of the general public, based on a relatively small sample of responses on opinion surveys. Meier (1975) analyzes the views of federal executives and compares their attitudes with those of the general population. After controlling for standard demographic characteristics (age, sex, race, and education), he finds no significant differences in preferences of presidential candidates, political party identification, civil rights concerns, or attitudes toward the Vietnam War. Similarly, Seitz (1978) found that public sector employees classified themselves as about as liberal as the general public. Lewis (1990) examines the attitudes of federal workers and the general public. Lewis concludes that government employees hold similar views on government; however, they are more concerned about individual rights than workers in the private sector. In their analysis of differences in political behavior and attitudes, Corey and Garand (2002) provide evidence that government employees have higher levels of ideological identification, political knowledge, satisfaction with democracy, support for government activity, and social capital than private sector employees, even after controlling for demographic characteristics and political ideology. Both Meier (1975; 1985) and Lewis (1990) find that public-sector employees in supervisory positions hold views that differ from the general population more often than front-line workers. Specifically, Lewis (1990) finds that government supervisors are significantly more likely to support First Amendment protections and oppose laws that restrict personal behavior. In addition, top government employees hold slightly less traditional views about women. The research discussed above compares the attitudes of government workers and the general public and provides us with an empirical foundation for our analyses. The findings

in these studies suggest that in numerous contexts employees in the public sector do hold different views across a variety of attitudes.

Beliefs About the Role of Hard Work

Our beliefs about the “justness” of the world inform our understanding of the stratifications we see in society. If the world is a just place, how can we explain the variations in achievement that we observe? Scholars contend that individuals’ attitudes concerning inequities in a society are influenced by the larger culture, individuals’ own social and economic status, and contemporary political issues (Kluegel and Smith 1986). Kluegel and others have argued that beliefs about opportunity are critical components of any social system in that they involve judgments about the legitimacy and openness of the society (Feagin 1975; Kluegel and Smith 1981; Kluegel and Mateju 1995). When success or failure in a society is attributed to hard work, ability, or motivation, then the poor or wealthy are seen as deserving of their position. Research on attitudes about opportunity and inequality generally reveals that individuals believe success is driven by either individual or structural factors (Feagin 1975). Individual explanations focus on characteristics of the wealthy or poor. Characteristics that lead to getting ahead (success) might include hard work and ability, whereas factors that explain low status (poverty) might include laziness, poor work ethic, and lack of ability. Relying on individualistic explanations for why some people do not succeed locates the causes and responsibility for inequalities on the individual and makes it easier to blame the victim (Smith 1985). For example, in the mind of someone who relies on individualistic explanations for societal differences, the poor deserve their misfortunes because of their laziness.

Findings from research on the United States demonstrate that the dominant belief systems in this society tend to stress individual explanations for success (Kluegel and Smith 1986). Some scholars argue that this belief system serves to legitimate inequality in the United States, since success and failure are viewed in strictly individualistic terms (Offe 1976; Therborn 1980). Research from the United States has shown the strong tendency for Americans to blame the poor personally for their poverty (Huber and Form 1973; Feagin 1975; Hochschild 1981; Kluegel and Smith 1986). Lack of effort, motivation, ability, and self-control are the most popular explanations for poverty among Americans (Feagin 1975; Hochschild 1981). Likewise, this research shows that Americans believe that the rich are more likely to be hard workers, willing to take risks, and to have exceptional abilities.

We are not the first to highlight the link between views on hard work and deservingness; for example, Lane (1959), Hochschild (1981; 1996), and Lamont (2000) conducted hundreds of detailed interviews of both white and African-American working-class and lower-middle-class individuals. In these interviews, they asked about the respondent’s views on the determinants of economic success and poverty as well as their personal “values” and life stories. This research consistently finds that Americans hold a strong belief that effort, hard work, and good deeds will ultimately pay off. This reinforces the belief that people get what they deserve, and conversely, what they get they must deserve (good or bad) (Lane 1959; Hochschild 1981; 1996; Lamont 2000; Benabou and Tirole 2005).

Previous research has also linked attitudes about hard work and the role of luck in society to a series of social outcomes such as provision of government benefits, the structure of taxation, and the role of government in private markets. Benabou and Tirole (2006) find that countries where individuals hold that luck is an important determinant of success are more supportive of the social welfare state. Additionally, Alesina and Angeletos (2005) find that different beliefs about fairness and the role of luck in determining income inequality are influential in determining the extent of redistributive policy chosen by society. Finally, previous research has found that attitudes about the role of hard work are directly related to class conflict and support for redistributive policy (Morin 2012). Maynard-Moody and Musheno conclude that public sector street-level workers formulate identities for their clients. These workers sometimes give in to favoritism, stereotyping, and routinizing and use the rules to discourage and harass citizens (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003, 151; Lipsky 1980, xii). The clients who face the harshest treatment are those whom the government employee has deemed unworthy or undeserving. These judgments guide and rationalize the actions of the employee. So, a client deemed undeserving receives “the least possible service and the greatest possible punishment” (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003, 151). Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) provide the example of a vocational rehabilitation counselor that does not stop at using the rules to deny a client benefits but exceeds their authority and blacklists the client to make sure she does not receive future benefits.

Given the previous research on the attitudes of government workers and the beliefs about the role of hard work in getting ahead, we offer the following hypotheses. We hypothesize that government workers will be less likely to emphasize the role of hard work, owing either to selection into government work or the effects of regular interaction with those who need help. The belief that hard work is not sufficient for getting ahead could be because individuals choosing to work in government possess a greater sensitivity to barriers to getting ahead. Conversely, it could be that repeated evidence that hard work does not equate with success may alter a government employee’s beliefs about who is deserving and modify their views on the role of hard work in getting ahead.

Next, we hypothesize that supervisory employees, regardless of sector of employment, will be more likely to emphasize the role of hard work in getting ahead. Kluegel and Smith (1986) find that one’s own social and economic status influence perceptions of stratification. People who obtain higher positions within the organization (i.e., supervisors) will be more likely to attribute success, especially their own, to their own effort. Meier (1975; 1987) and Lewis (1990) both find that government supervisors (compared to non-supervisors in government and the general public) hold distinct views on social and political issues. The direction of the relationship between employment and the role of hard work is less clear for non-supervisors working in the private sector. It is unclear whether the effect for private sector non-supervisors will be positive on views of hard work due to the sector of employment, or negative views due to their employment position (non-supervisor).

Finally, we understand that not all government employees work in agencies that directly provide services to clients. Given this, we recognize that occupational

differences may drive views on deservingness and hard work, and therefore we focus our analyses on workers in organizations (government or private) who provide services. Miller and Garran (2007) argue that human service workers, regardless of sector, are ethically obligated to work for a society of fairness and social justice and to provide culturally responsive services to all clients, ensuring equal access and quality. By limiting our analysis to individuals working in these professions, we control for this client orientation. This approach provides a stronger and more direct test for our hypotheses regarding sector and position.

DATA

We use data from the 2009 Social Inequality Module of the ISSP.² The ISSP is a collaboration between 48 member countries beginning in 1984. The ISSP conducts survey modules on topics ranging from work orientation to social inequality. We utilize the Social Inequality IV data module. Using an early release of the U.S. data brings our sample to 34 countries and 49,222 respondents; however, limiting our sample to workers between the ages of 25 and 61 reduces our sample to 28,879 respondents in 32 countries.³

The fundamental research question in this article is whether workers in government and private sectors have different attitudes about the role of hard work and whether those attitudes differ by supervisory or non-supervisory positions within sector. In order to test our hypotheses, we examine workers in “helping” occupations (1) who are sufficiently represented in the sample (an occupation had to have 50 or more observations) and (2) have some representation in both government and private sector (each sector represented at least 30% of the occupation). By matching our sample in this way, we are better able to make comparisons between workers who are reasonably likely to work in either government or private sector.⁴ Secondly, our selection of occupations in government hews closely to our theory; we hypothesize that workers in “helping” professions are less likely to ascribe individual failure in cases of hardship.

We note that our results do not depend on selecting a matched sample. In Appendix A, we provide the results of our models with the full sample and find substantively similar and statistically significant results, although the effects sizes are somewhat smaller. In Appendix C, we provide a list of all the occupations included in the analysis; nearly all the workers in this analysis fall into one of the following general occupations: health services, teaching, social services, protective services, and office clerks.

Dependent Variable: Role of Hard Work in Getting Ahead

Throughout our analysis, we seek to explain differences in responses to the question, “How important is hard work in getting ahead?” We are particularly interested in the attitudes about hard work held by government and private sector workers. The responses to the hard work question range from one to five, “not important at all” to “essential,” respectively. Table 1 presents the distribution of our dependent variable. Ninety-five percent of respondents believe that hard work plays an “essential,”

TABLE 1
Distribution of Responses to Role of Hard Work in
Getting Ahead (All Countries, 2009), Matched Sample

<i>Hard Work</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative</i>
Not important at all	44	1.00	1.00
Not very important	218	4.89	5.88
Fairly important	914	20.51	26.39
Very important	1,867	41.86	68.26
Essential	1,415	31.74	100.00
Total	4,459	100.00	

Notes: Sample includes workers ages 25–61 years old. All results are weighted by country and demographic-specific survey weights, when available.

Data: International Social Survey Programme 2009 (ISSP Research Group 2012).

“very important,” or “fairly important” role in getting ahead, although twice as many respondents say that hard work is very important as compared to fairly important. There is considerable variation among respondents who say hard work is essential, very important, and fairly important; there is also a small, but non-trivial, number of respondents who believe that hard work is not important. We also note that there is significant variation among countries in the role of hard work in getting ahead. In Appendix B, we provide the average hard work score by country along with each country’s standard deviation (organized so that the country with the highest hard work score is at the top). The between-country differences on the belief in hard work are considerable: New Zealand has the highest average score (4.59), with the US⁵ second (4.49), followed closely by Taiwan (4.47); Denmark (3.26) and Belgium (3.50) have the lowest average scores.

The median response on hard work in New Zealand is “essential,” whereas in Denmark it is “fairly important.” We also note that those countries with the highest average scores also have the smallest standard deviations, indicating a relatively homogeneous belief about hard work within those countries. Throughout our analysis, we use all five categories of hard work.

Conceptually, the five-point hard work scale represents a continuum of beliefs about the role of hard work in getting ahead. The estimation strategy we employ assumes a continuous latent measure that can be estimated based on information on the rank-orders of the response of the survey participant. This latent measure implies that the role of hard work reflects an individual’s attitude about the reasons for differential success in society. For example, those who believe that hard work plays an essential role in getting ahead may assign blame to individual failure, and may be less willing to provide social supports for the less fortunate. Consequently, we are interested in how supervisory and non-supervisory workers in government and private sectors differ on this measure. It is possible that the “hard work” variable simply reflects an individual’s willingness to work hard and the relationship between their

personal effort and success (we control for work hours in all our multivariate analyses that follow to rule out this alternative explanation).

Key Variables: Sector and Position

We hypothesize that government workers will be less likely to emphasize the role of hard work, owing to selection into government work and/or to the effects of regular interaction with those who need help. Our second hypothesis is that supervisory workers, regardless of sector of employment, will be more likely to emphasize the role of hard work in getting ahead: supervisory workers may be more likely to see their success as personal, and to attribute it to their own effort.

In our matched sample of occupations (across all 32 countries), 46.6% of respondents report working in government, while 32.5% report working in the private sector, with the remainder working in self-employment, non-profits, or publicly owned firms. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported working in a non-supervisory capacity. Consequently, 34.5% of our sample work as non-supervisors in government.⁶

Control Variables

In our multivariate analyses, we control for individual-level characteristics, including age and education (measured in years), gender, and an indicator variable if the respondent identifies herself as Protestant. We also include a set of country-level controls; for example, whether the individual lives in an Anglophone country or if the majority religion is Protestant. Several studies find a positive correlation between individuals' religiosity, particularly the Protestant ethic, and their beliefs about justice (Rubin and Peplau 1975). Using the World Values Survey and controlling for individuals' socioeconomic characteristics, Guiso et al. (2003) find that being religious has a positive association with believing that success in life depends more on hard work than on luck and circumstances. However, Alesina and Glaeser (2004) find that Scandinavian countries have similar level of Protestantism as the U.S., but almost opposite views about the determinants of individuals' economic fate. In regards to our inclusion of Anglophone as a control, we posit that numerous aspect of Anglophone countries' history and culture could be associated with stronger beliefs in the role of hard work in getting ahead. These factors may include a colonial history, higher levels of economic development, common law regarding property rights, and a shared culture. Finally, we control for the weekly hours that the respondent works for pay outside the home.⁷

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 are mostly self-explanatory, with indicators taking a value of one when the person has that attribute. For example, "government" is equal to one when the respondent identifies herself as being employed by the government. We also generate a series of interactions for supervisory position and government employment. In the regressions that follow, the omitted category is private sector supervisors.

TABLE 2
 Individual-Level Descriptive Statistics: Matched
 Sample, International Social Survey Programme Data
 (All Countries, 2009)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Supervisor	0.25	0.43	0	1
Non-supervisor	0.75	0.43	0	1
Government worker	0.47	0.50	0	1
Private worker	0.33	0.47	0	1
Government supervisor	0.12	0.33	0	1
Government non-supervisor	0.34	0.48	0	1
Private supervisor	0.07	0.25	0	1
Private non-supervisor	0.26	0.44	0	1
Other	0.21	0.41	0	1
Weekly work hours	38.48	11.34	1	96
Male	0.29	0.45	0	1
Age	42.89	10.24	25	61
Age ² /1000	1.94	0.89	0.63	3.72
Education	14.00	3.54	0	26
Protestant	0.26	0.44	0	1
OECD	0.71	0.45	0	1
Anglophone	0.21	0.41	0	1
Inequality	33.44	6.66	22.8	52.3
Hard work	3.98	0.90	1	5

Notes: $N = 4,459$. Sample includes workers ages 25–61 years old. All results are weights by country and demographic-specific survey weights, when available.

In Table 3, we present our multivariate analysis of the role of employment sector and position on a person's belief about the role of hard work. Since our dependent variable is a five-point non-interval scale, we estimate our results using an ordered probit model. Regression errors are likely correlated within country; to mitigate this source of heteroskedasticity, we cluster our standard errors by country. Column 1 consists of our base specification where we estimate government/private sector and supervisor/non-supervisory effects separately on the role of hard work. We find that employment in government is associated with significantly lower beliefs about the role of hard work in getting ahead, while the effect of being a supervisor is indistinguishable from zero. We note that these results are different from the results in Appendix A (full sample $N = 28,483$). Those results indicate no effect for government employment, and a positive effect for supervisors. Using the matched sample clarifies an important difference between the sectors: the full sample has many private sector supervisors who have no counterpart in government.

Column 2 includes a set of interactions between sector and position; the omitted category is private sector supervisors. We find a significant difference between supervisory workers in the private sector and other types of workers (government

TABLE 3
Ordered Probit of the Importance of Hard Work in Getting Ahead,
All Countries Matched Sample

<i>Variables</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Private non-supervisor		-0.133 (0.101)	-0.122 (0.100)	-0.199* (0.082)
Government supervisor		-0.279** (0.091)	-0.255** (0.083)	-0.229** (0.076)
Government non-supervisor		-0.228* (0.108)	-0.199* (0.098)	-0.220** (0.073)
Other	-0.032 (0.076)	-0.137 (0.107)	-0.126 (0.107)	-0.272** (0.079)
Government worker	-0.136* (0.055)			
Supervisor	0.015 (0.056)			
Weekly work hours	0.008** (0.002)	0.008** (0.002)	0.008** (0.002)	0.003+ (0.002)
Male	-0.001 (0.045)	0.002 (0.047)	0.001 (0.047)	-0.015 (0.053)
Age	-0.003 (0.014)	-0.003 (0.014)	-0.003 (0.014)	0.001 (0.015)
Age ² /1000	-0.010 (0.165)	-0.012 (0.166)	-0.007 (0.163)	-0.054 (0.175)
Education	0.011 (0.008)	0.012 (0.008)	0.013+ (0.008)	0.011+ (0.007)
Protestant	-0.060 (0.126)	-0.063 (0.126)	-0.028 (0.107)	-0.008 (0.046)
Anglophone	0.694** (0.143)	0.699** (0.142)	0.629** (0.137)	1.158** (0.038)
Inequality			0.009 (0.009)	
Constant	0.857* (0.339)	0.756* (0.368)	1.082** (0.376)	0.782* (0.336)
Country dummies	No	No	No	Yes
<i>N</i>	4,459	4,459	4,459	4,459
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.0295	0.0298	0.0308	0.0707

Notes: Sample includes workers ages 25–61 years old. All results are weighted by country and demographic-specific survey weights, when available. Standard errors in parentheses and clustered by country.

Data: International Social Survey Programme 2009 (ISSP Research Group 2012).

Significance levels, ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.1$.

supervisors and non-supervisors); we find no statistically significant difference between non-supervisory private sector workers and supervisory private sector workers. In government, each of the groups (supervisor and non-supervisor) is less likely to emphasize the importance of hard work relative to private sector supervisors. In column 3, we include a measure of income equality for the country (the gini coefficient)

and find a positive, but statistically insignificant, effect of the gini coefficient on beliefs about the role of hard work.⁸

In specification 4, we include country dummy variables and find results similar to those in specifications 2 and 3. However, we now find a statistically significant difference between private sector non-supervisory workers and private sector supervisors. This implies that once country-level fixed effects are accounted for, private sector supervisors' attitudes are statistically different from each classification of workers in our analysis. As we discuss in more detail later, this may imply that private-sector supervisors may be the most outspoken proponents of the role of hard work. In this model, government supervisors, private non-supervisors, and government non-supervisors were less likely than private supervisors to believe in the importance of hard work. We also note that joint tests of hypotheses indicate that government and private non-supervisors and government supervisors are not statistically different from one another.

To isolate the effect of sector and position in our analysis, we control for the number of hours the respondent works on the job. In every specification, hours worked are positively and significantly related to views about the role of hard work. Even after controlling for country-level differences (model 4), we find a marginally significant effect of hours worked at $\alpha=.10$, while still finding statistically significant difference by sector and position on the role of hard work in getting ahead.⁹ Those who work more hours are more emphatic about the role of hard work in getting ahead, whereas government workers and private non-supervisors deemphasize the role of hard work.

In addition to the sector and supervisory-level variables, our country-level controls provide interesting insights on the beliefs about the role of hard work in society. Across all specifications, individuals living in Anglophone countries are significantly more likely to believe in the importance of hard work. In specification 4, we find that none of the demographic characteristics of the respondent have an association with the belief in hard work. We fail to reject the null hypothesis that sex, age, and age-squared have no effect on a respondent's belief that hard work plays an important role in getting ahead. Education has only a marginally statistically significant ($\alpha=.10$) effect on the role of hard work: more education is associated with a stronger belief in the role of hard work.

The results presented in Table 3 support our main hypothesis that government workers (both supervisors and non-supervisors) are less likely than private sector supervisors to believe in the importance of hard work in getting ahead. As noted above, joint tests of hypotheses indicate that government and private non-supervisors and government supervisors are not statistically different from one another. This indicates that these groups (public sector employees and private non-supervisors) have similar attitudes about the role of hard work. Our interpretation is that private sector supervisors hold distinct views about the role of hard work.

In order to determine the magnitudes of the estimated effects, we calculate the marginal effect on the probability of responding to each category of hard work. In Table 4, we present the marginal effects of the independent variables on the likelihood that a respondent indicated that hard work was "very important" or "essential" (categories 4 and 5, respectively). We present these marginal effects because these outcomes represent approximately three-fourths of the responses in the ISSP data.¹⁰

TABLE 4
Marginal Effects of Independent Variables for Predicted Probabilities of “Very Important” and “Essential,” Matched Sample

<i>Variables</i>	<i>All</i>		<i>Age 25–35</i>		<i>Age 45–61</i>	
	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Essential</i>
Private non-supervisor	0.003** (0.001)	-0.067* (0.026)	0.006** (0.002)	-0.129** (0.043)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.026 (0.029)
Government supervisor	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.075** (0.023)	-0.008 (0.014)	-0.131** (0.041)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.032 (0.040)
Government non-supervisor	0.005** (0.001)	-0.075** (0.024)	0.010** (0.002)	-0.109** (0.041)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.051+ (0.030)
Other	0.001 (0.002)	-0.090** (0.024)	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.152** (0.036)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.047 (0.031)
Weekly work hours	-0.000+ (0.000)	0.001+ (0.001)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.001 (0.001)
Male	0.001 (0.002)	-0.005 (0.018)	-0.000 (0.004)	0.001 (0.029)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.013 (0.027)
Age	-0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.005)	0.004 (0.008)	-0.029 (0.056)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.020 (0.056)
Age-squared/1000	0.002 (0.006)	-0.019 (0.061)	-0.075 (0.138)	0.499 (0.922)	-0.002 (0.006)	0.203 (0.518)
Education	-0.000+ (0.000)	0.004+ (0.002)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.006 (0.005)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.003 (0.003)
Protestant	0.000 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.016)	0.005** (0.001)	-0.057+ (0.030)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.015 (0.020)
Anglophone	-0.161** (0.013)	0.430** (0.012)	-0.189** (0.021)	0.433** (0.022)	-0.173** (0.016)	0.522** (0.015)
<i>N</i>	4,459	4,459	1,227	1,227	2,101	2,101

Notes: Sample includes workers ages 25–61 years old. All results are weighted by country and demographic-specific survey weights, when available. Standard errors in parentheses and clustered by country.

Data: International Social Survey Programme 2009 (ISSP Research Group 2012).

Significance levels, ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.1$.

The marginal effects suggest that holding all else constant, government supervisors and non-supervisors are nearly identical in their belief in the role of hard work in getting ahead. Being a government supervisor or non-supervisor reduces the probability that an individual responds that hard work is “essential” to getting ahead by 7.5% and increases the probability of a government non-supervisor responding that hard work is “very important” by .45%. Government supervisors are more likely to say it is “fairly important” (not shown). In all cases, the results are relative to private supervisors. A similar story holds for private non-supervisors, although the effect size is smaller. The results show a significant decrease in the likelihood of responding that hard work is “essential” for getting ahead for all employment types and sectors, relative to private sector supervisors.

Despite the insignificance of age in our models, we examine whether older and younger workers differ systematically in their views by work sector and position. Splitting the sample in this way provides us a preliminary test of whether our findings are driven by selection into the government sector versus the experience of working in government. We expect that private sector supervisors will hold the strongest beliefs about hard work when they are young and that these views will moderate as the employees grow older, primarily because of their experiences dealing with clients over a long period of time.¹¹ While we would prefer data on job tenure, it is not available. Instead, we use age and assume that it is a reasonable proxy for job tenure; this will be the case provided that sector choice is somewhat stable.

We split the sample into two groups (younger workers age 25–35 years old, and older workers age 45–61) and re-estimate model 4 from Table 3 on each group of workers separately. These results are reported in the last four columns of Table 4. In the models for younger workers, we find that all of our previous results hold: government supervisors and non-supervisors as well as private sector non-supervisors are statistically less likely to emphasize the role of hard work relative to private sector supervisors.¹²

Our estimates for older workers tell a considerably different story. Older government supervisors and private non-supervisors are indistinguishable from private sector supervisors in their beliefs that hard work is essential for getting ahead. However, older government non-supervisors are statistically less likely than older private sector supervisors to believe that hard work is essential (at the .10 level). We believe this provides some evidence for the hypothesis that workers select into sector and position, and that this selection is related to their beliefs about the role of hard work; however, over time, older government supervisors and private sector non-supervisors develop attitudes that are indistinguishable from private sector supervisors. A competing explanation is that younger workers today are quite different from younger workers 20 years ago, and that a cohort effect is driving the differences. Unfortunately, our data do not allow us to test these competing hypotheses.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we investigate how individuals' employment sector (public and private) and position within the organization (supervisor and non-supervisor) predict individuals' views on the role of hard work in getting ahead. We find that individual perceptions of the importance of hard work in getting ahead differ across government and private sectors, and that these differences also vary across job position. Our estimates control for both sector and position and the various combinations. We find that government supervisors are significantly less likely to believe in the importance of hard work for getting ahead, relative to private sector supervisors. A similar story holds for non-supervisory workers (relative to private sector supervisors), regardless of sector. These results hold after controlling for hours worked to eliminate the effects of individual work effort on their belief about the role of hard work.

We investigate the relative importance of selection into sector and position as compared to adaptation within sector/position by estimating results separately for

younger and older workers. For younger workers, the role of hard work in getting ahead is statistically significant for each sector/position; for older workers, we find no effect. These results indicate that older private sector supervisors may become less convinced about the importance of hard work over time, while younger private sector supervisors hold the strongest beliefs about the role of hard work in getting ahead. This may be due to the fact that all of the respondents in our sample have regular contact with clients, which we argue can moderate views on the role of hard work. These findings, although tenuous, provide evidence for both selection and adaptation. However, since we cannot observe the same individuals over time, another perfectly plausible explanation is a cohort effect where younger private sector workers are different from their older counterparts.

Our research finds that beliefs about the role of hard work differ by sector and position. These findings are in conjunction with previous research showing the relationship between beliefs about hard work and luck and important social outcomes (Benabou and Tirole 2005; Alesina and Angeletos 2005; Morin 2012) lead us to conclude that government workers' beliefs about hard work are likely to influence their decision making in systematic and predictable ways, ultimately influencing how they do their jobs and which citizens receive benefits. It is critical to understand how government workers explain the injustices they see in society, and how they use their discretion to address these differences. Maynard-Mooney and Musheno (2003) find that public sector employees derive identities for themselves and their clients that serve to help them make decisions regarding the deservingness of a client, whether the individual deserves benefits, a break, or stiffer penalties. If a government employee believes that hard work is essential for getting ahead, they may place responsibility for inequalities on individuals, and end up "blaming the victim," rather than addressing the hardship and providing services to those who are less fortunate. It appears that private sector supervisors emphasize individual characteristics for getting ahead in society (particularly the younger cohort). For private sector supervisors, hard work is essential for getting ahead. Government workers are less likely to believe that hard work is important for getting ahead, and are more inclined to look beyond the individual for explanations for societal success and failure.

NOTES

1. Two fields of study in public administration have examined the degree of congruence between the attitudes and motivations of government employees and the public. The theory of representative bureaucracy rests on the assumption that there is congruence between the attitudes of minority and female government workers and minority or female clients, which can lead to the employees advocating for the clients. Several studies have confirmed this congruence (Dolan 2000; 2002; Meier 1975; Meier and Nigro 1976; Bradbury and Kellough 2008; Salzstein 1979). Additionally, there are numerous studies that highlight possible differences in motivations between private sector and public sector employees (Rainey, Backoff, and Levine 1976; Perry and Wise 1990; Perry 1996; Vandenabeele, Hondelghem, and Steen 2004; Lewis and Frank 2002).

2. Details on the ISSP can be found at <http://www.gesis.org/en/issp/issp-home/>.

3. Estonia was dropped from the analysis, as they did not ask whether the respondent held a supervisory role. The Czech Republic was also dropped from our sample since they did not classify any respondents as government workers. The majority of the other reductions in the sample are missing responses for the same demographic question. We also reduce the sample by limiting our analysis to individuals whose age is between 25 and 61 years old.

4. Our matched sample limits occupations to only those who are adequately represented in each sector; splitting the sample in this way still allows us to estimate unbiased parameter effects on the role of hard work on sector and position while controlling for occupation. We evaluate the attitudes of workers who are reasonably likely to work in either sector, thereby making the analysis more robust. For example, there is no reason to suspect that a heterogeneous group of private sector workers with no counterpart in government should serve as a valid point of comparison for attitudes about the importance of hard work. Additionally, our matched sample recognizes that there are many different types of government occupations. Workers in the occupations we examine interact with clients and therefore we expect their sector of employment or their work experiences to influence their attitudes on hard work.

5. Concerns that responses to the hard work measure by U.S. respondents drive our results are unfounded. Separate analysis focusing exclusively on the U.S. does indicate a strong effect of both public sector employment and supervisory employment in the U.S. However, our main findings hold even when U.S. respondents are removed from the sample. Additionally, in our preferred specification we include country-level dummy variables as controls.

6. Supervisors answer yes to “Does the respondent supervise others at work.” A small number of cases (272 out of 4,459; approximately 6%) were missing responses to the supervisor question. We used multiple imputation to assign missing values rather than drop those observations from the sample. Estimates that drop observations due to missing values are nearly identical in terms of parameter estimates and levels of statistical significance.

7. In most countries, weekly hours are reported as the “usual hours” worked on the primary job. In other countries, hours worked are reported as “actual hours” worked in the previous week on all jobs. Given the differences in how this question is asked, the estimated variance in hours worked will differ by country; to cope with this, we cluster the standard errors. In 13.9% of cases we impute work hours for observations that are missing this measure.

8. We test other measures of social and economic inequality, such as an individual’s perception of inequality, differences between the desired level of inequality and actual levels, and social position in society; none of these variables were related to hard work, nor did they alter our findings.

9. Views about the role of hard work in getting ahead might predict weekly work hours; if this is the case, then endogeneity would provide biased estimates. It may be that people who believe hard work is the most important predictor of getting ahead choose to work additional hours. To address this concern, we also estimated the models excluding weekly work hours; our results remain virtually the same as those reported here. In addition, we do not find a significant difference in our estimates for public supervisors and non-supervisors. However, we recognize that this is a limitation of our analyses.

10. Note that the marginal effects are based on estimates from the 5 category model: not important at all (1), not very important (2), fairly important (3), very important (4), essential (5). For simplicity, we provide the marginal effects for the last two categories. Marginal effects are average marginal effects (AME), not marginal effects at the mean (MEM).

11. It is important to remember that our sample consists of individuals working in the “helping” professions, so all of our respondents have regular client interaction.

12. Government supervisors comprise 9.6% and 13.3% of the older sample. Supervisors in the private sector make up 6.5% and 6.4% of the younger and older sample, respectively.

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APPENDIX A: ORDERED PROBIT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HARD WORK IN GETTING AHEAD, ALL COUNTRIES FULL SAMPLE

<i>Variables</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Private non-supervisor		-0.127** (0.029)	-0.128** (0.029)	-0.156** (0.024)
Government supervisor		-0.103* (0.052)	-0.101+ (0.052)	-0.088* (0.039)
Government non-supervisor		-0.118** (0.045)	-0.116** (0.044)	-0.116** (0.032)
Other	0.050 (0.032)	-0.040 (0.037)	-0.042 (0.038)	-0.073** (0.028)
Government worker	-0.021 (0.043)			
Supervisor	0.109** (0.025)			
Weekly work hours	0.008** (0.001)	0.008** (0.001)	0.008** (0.001)	0.004** (0.001)
Male	-0.067** (0.025)	-0.063** (0.024)	-0.063** (0.024)	-0.044+ (0.023)
Age	-0.002 (0.009)	-0.001 (0.009)	-0.000 (0.009)	-0.005 (0.007)
Age ² /1000	-0.023 (0.096)	-0.034 (0.096)	-0.033 (0.097)	0.025 (0.081)
Education	-0.004 (0.008)	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.007)	0.008* (0.003)
Protestant	-0.054 (0.098)	-0.054 (0.097)	-0.051 (0.094)	0.036 (0.030)
Anglophone	0.502** (0.088)	0.503** (0.088)	0.478** (0.098)	0.566** (0.015)
Inequality			0.002 (0.005)	
Constant	0.721** (0.205)	0.643** (0.208)	0.722** (0.221)	0.799** (0.160)
Country dummies	No	No	No	Yes
<i>N</i>	28,483	28,483	28,483	28,483
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.0183	0.0181	0.0182	0.0450

Notes: Sample includes workers ages 25–61 years old. All results are weighted by country and demographic-specific survey weights, when available. Standard errors in parentheses and clustered by country.

Data: International Social Survey Programme 2009 (ISSP Research Group 2012).

Significance levels, ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; + $p < 0.1$

**APPENDIX B: COUNTRY-LEVEL SUMMARY
STATISTICS OF HARD WORK VARIABLE
MATCHED SAMPLE (SORTED FROM LARGEST
TO SMALLEST)**

<i>Country</i>	M	SD
New Zealand	4.59	0.61
United States	4.49	0.56
Taiwan	4.47	0.55
Philippines	4.46	0.70
Portugal	4.37	0.80
Bulgaria	4.32	0.94
Australia	4.29	0.79
South Korea	4.29	0.77
Cyprus	4.24	0.71
Hungary	4.21	0.79
Croatia	4.20	0.82
China	4.19	0.85
Norway	4.09	0.74
United Kingdom	4.05	0.75
Latvia	4.04	0.83
Poland	4.04	0.72
Japan	4.02	0.89
Slovenia	4.00	0.89
Slovak Republic	3.99	0.80
Sweden	3.99	0.68
Chile	3.88	0.98
Estonia	3.87	0.95
Austria	3.83	0.88
Israel	3.83	1.04
Argentina	3.80	0.92
Spain	3.79	1.09
Finland	3.74	0.81
Switzerland	3.63	0.87
Ukraine	3.57	1.08
France	3.52	0.96
Belgium	3.50	0.81
Denmark	3.26	0.96
Total	3.99	0.90

Notes: Sample includes workers ages 25–61 years old. The means are weighted by country and demographic-specific survey weights, when available.

APPENDIX C: OCCUPATIONS INCLUDED IN MATCHED SAMPLE

<i>ISCO-88 Code</i>	<i>Name</i>
222	Health Professionals
223	Nursing and Midwifery Professionals
231	College, University, and Higher Education
233	Primary and Pre-primary Education Teachers
235	Other Teaching Professionals
244	Social Science and Related Professionals
322	Modern Health Associate Professionals
323	Nursing and Midwifery Associate Professionals
332	Pre-primary Education Teaching Associate
344	Customs, Tax and Related Government Associate
346	Social Work Associate Professionals
410	Office Clerks
414	Library, Mail and Related Clerks
419	Other Office Clerks
513	Personal Care and Related Workers
516	Protective Service Workers
916	Garbage Collectors and Related Laborers

Note: ISCO-88 is the International Standard Classification of Occupations, developed by the International Labour Organization.