

Pew Research Proposal Form
Union University

Cover Sheet

Name(s) of Applicant(s): Emily Lean

Title of Proposed Project: Helping others pull up their bootstraps: How the history of the Protestant Work ethic has informed perceptions of corporate social responsibility

Primary Discipline: Business

Secondary Discipline(s): None

Has this proposal been submitted to another agency, publication, or program (including for the Union University Research/Study Leave)? Yes

If so, which one(s)? I have applied for the Teaching and Learning Grant due to expenses related to one of the Conferences I'm hoping to attend related to this research.

Location of proposed research: Union University

Desired start date: Fall 2019

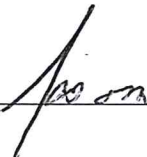

Recommending Scholars and their disciplines:

External: Dr. Darin White, Stanford University

Union: Dr. Bill Nance, Union University

In consultation together, we recommend the approval of the proposal as an acceptable project and affirm that the applicant has the professional wherewithal to accomplish the project satisfactorily.

Chair of your department  Date: 10/8/19

Dean of your school:   Date: 10/6/19

If the chair and/or dean do not recommend the proposal, the applicant should seek a conference to discuss the reasons.

Proposals should be submitted by the applicant in person to the chair of the Research Committee.

PEW RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. Title of the project.

Helping others pull up their bootstraps: How the history of the Protestant Work ethic has informed perceptions of corporate social responsibility

2. Statement of the end product.

I will be submitting a paper for consideration to the International Society of Business, Economics, and Ethics (ISBEE) World Congress which will be taking place in July 2020. This conference is often referred to as the "Olympics of Business Ethics" because it is held only once every four years and attracts leading scholars and practitioners from around the world. The congress consists of a mix of individuals from business, academia, government and other non-for-profit organizations, as well as representatives from major religious groups from around the world.

The *Journal of Management History* has issued a call for papers for a special issue devoted to responsible business, business ethics, and management history. More specifically, the journal has requested contributions that consider: 1) How has responsible management changed over time? How are the practices or processes shaped by their particular social, historical or religious/spiritual contexts? and 2) What role, if any, does religion or spirituality play in the histories and movements of the past? I have already been in contact with the guest editor and will be submitting a paper for this special issue.

My ultimate goal of this line of research is on a much greater scale. I, along with other scholars, intend to apply for a Templeton Grant next fall. We hope with the funding of a large grant that we can do a nationwide survey of current Protestant Work ethic levels and compare them to previous generations. We would also like to see whether there is a difference in the Protestant Work ethic levels between religious and non-religious individuals as well as individual perceptions of corporate social responsibility expectations. Part of our funding request from the Templeton Foundation will include tuition and stipend allowance for a full-time Union University graduate assistant for 18-24 months.

3. Explanation of the scholarly activity.

I. Statement of the Scholarly Activity

In 2011, Dr. David Dockery asked me to participate in his book titled "Faith and Learning." I created the business chapter and dedicated a significant amount of it discussing the concept of Protestant Work ethic and it how it emerged in the early history of the American colonies. I requested and received permission from Dr. Dockery to develop this chapter into journal articles and conference presentations.

The scholarly activity for this project will be to advance the initial work I did with Dr. Dockery by expanding portions of the chapter into a full qualitative paper that will look at the connection between the historical development of the Protestant Work ethic in America and current perceptions of corporate social responsibility. The PEW grant is needed to help fund my conference attendance where I hope to present my work and receive high quality, peer reviews to continue and improve this research.

II. Description of the activity and its goals

This work will involve a qualitative analysis of existing literature to expand our understanding of the Protestant Work ethic as well as look at how the PWE has influenced current perceptions of corporate social responsibility.

The goal is to produce at least one publication and one conference presentation with the intent of laying a foundation to apply for a Templeton Grant for further quantitative research.

III. Theoretical Framework

While most people are familiar with the Protestant Reformation, either through church services or a high school history class, few realize the lasting impact that this religious movement had on the development of commerce in, what was known at the time, the New World or, as it is referred to today, the United States of America. The Protestant Reformation began in the early sixteenth century when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences on a church door in Wittenberg, Saxony (modern day Germany). The Reformation lasted well over a century and eventually led to the formation of many of today's Christian denominations. The Puritans, a group of English Protestants, began an extensive emigration to the New England during this time and by 1640, historians estimate over 20,000 Puritans had settled in the new colonies. This resettlement, stemming primarily from the religious persecution they were facing at the time in their home country of England, led to an enormous shift in financial resources throughout the civilized world and eventually provided the religious, cultural, and economic foundations of modern-day North America.

In 1905, Max Weber, a well-known German philosopher, was the first to link the economic success of the United States to the religious background of its early settlers in his combined series of essays entitled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In this seminal work, Weber shows his admiration for countries such as America and idealizes the toughness and strong personality of the peoples such cultures produce. He identifies the differences between the United States and certain European nations as a difference based upon religious tradition. Whereas the rigorous Protestant foundation in America instilled a notion of self-discipline among its citizens, other European denominations were prone to "instill a discipline of authoritarian submissiveness" (Riesebrodt, 2005, 41).

There are several hypotheses as to why the Protestant Reformation created such a disparity in the economic development between North America and continental Europe. At least four primary sets of changes have been suggested as creating the conditions favorable to the financial growth and innovation witnessed in the New World: "1) by stimulating religiously based persecution and migration, the Protestant Reformation redistributed human capital and rearticulated commercial networks; 2) by decreasing the number of religious holidays and lengthening the average work day, the Protestant Reformation increased the effective supply of labor; 3) by dissolving monastic properties and abolishing monastic orders, the Protestant Reformation changed the structure of landholding and avenues of social mobility; and 4) by [stimulating bureaucratic] reforms, the Protestant Reformation contributed to the formation of less predatory and more predictable forms of government" (Gorski, 2005, 168).

Often considered one of the most widespread effects of the Protestant Reformation on development of commerce in North America was the considerable increase in the supply of labor. One explanation for the unprecedented boost in productivity has been attributed to the substantial reduction in the number of religious holidays. An English observer, writing in 1624, estimated that the saints' days in combination with various other nonworking holidays consumed no less than five months of the annual calendar in Spain (Hill, 1967). In addition to the increase in work days, there was a shift in the manner with which work was performed. Ascetic Protestants, or Puritans, not only worked more hours per day, but also tended to labor harder during those hours than their European counterparts (Gorski, 2005).

This industriousness on the part of the Puritan citizenry was due in part to the belief that economic success in one's work was an indication of God's blessing and thus one's predestined status as a rightful member of the church. Neither attending church services nor taking sacrament could establish one's salvation and as such individual members of the Puritan church were left with the personal responsibility of discovering for themselves the signs of their preordained status. If financial success through hard work and perseverance were achieved, for example, these believers could then interpret their wealth as a sign that they were favored by the almighty God. They held that nothing occurred simply by chance and because God would only help those whom He had predetermined should receive His salvation and therefore His blessing, they were extraordinarily motivated toward hard work (Kaelber, 2005a) and

achieve its resulting wealth. An individual's work was no longer just a job to be done but rather a personal calling to be fulfilled. When viewed in this light, Protestant workers did not toil because they felt that they had to but because they wanted to. They worked to please God, not themselves.

Although it eventually lost its religious meaning, this Protestant philosophy toward work eventually shaped an attitude among its people in which a responsibility to be financially productive became the norm (Riesebrodt, 2005). A routine of hard work became institutionalized within the culture. Such an attitude towards achieving success in one's business life, Weber argues is not "...something which occurs naturally. It cannot be directly produced either by high wages or by low wages, but has to be the product of a long, slow 'process of education' " (Weber, 2002, 17). The Protestant Work ethic, or PWE as it is more commonly referred to among academics, is inherent within many a North American psyche and has been studied to such an extent that managerial scholars now relate it to a kind of personality trait or belief system that an individual might possess. Although there is no specific, agreed upon definition of the term, the broader meaning of PWE generally refers to a person's attitude regarding the moral value of work, self-discipline, individual responsibility over one's economic well-being, a negative attitude toward leisure activities, an emphasis on productivity, the consideration of hard work as an almost religious duty, the desire for punctuality, honesty, the opinion that idleness and the wasting of money is a sin, a willingness to forgo immediate pleasure in order to reach long-term goals, and an internal locus of control (the view that other people or outside forces are not to be blamed for one's personal faults or misfortunes). Various scales have been created to measure this trait. Many of today's large organizations actually screen prospective employees for PWE because it is generally viewed as a favorable characteristic to possess and can thus improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

IV. Brief examination of scholarly literature or context of the activity within your discipline

The last major work on Protestant Work ethic by van Hoorn and Maseland (2013) found support for Weber's thesis that Protestantism causes a stronger work ethic. Their results show that the influence is stronger at the societal level than at the individual meaning that the individual does not necessarily need to be Protestant in order to feel the effects of a PWE. Moreover, van Hoorn and Maseland determined that the psychological harm of unemployment was 40% worse for Protestants than for the general population which establishes "the contemporary relevance of Weber's insights on a specific Protestant work ethic more than a century after their inception" (p. 10). In other words, a Protestant work ethic won't necessarily make you rich but it will certainly make you unhappy if you are not.

The doctrine of a "livelihood as the source of a person's value, and a sign of God's favor, wreaks havoc on people's lives when that livelihood is gone" (Luzer, 2013). The PWE has even been argued to be the cause of the rise of the crystal meth epidemic in small town America (Reding, 2009). The distance between the haves and have-nots is often compounded with a philosophy strongly related to PWE that charity encourages laziness and welfare abuse. If the foundation of the American capitalist marketplace is based on Protestant work values, what then does that mean for those members of a society desperately in need of help? This is when corporate social responsibility should come into place for those communities surrounding the profitable organization. To date, no research has looked at the connection between PWE and corporate social responsibility. This work will not build upon the work of prior studies but rather will become the introductory paper to this field of study.

4. An essay (500 - 1000 words) describing how the Christian faith relates to your understanding of your discipline and how it relates to this scholarly endeavor.

Maintaining and promoting a Christian worldview in business is more than just practicing ethics at work, and the Bible has a distinct opinion on the need for and value of work. By understanding the impact of our region's religious history, it is not surprising that many of the world's great Christian business leaders have

risen out of North American marketplaces. The prominence of such Christian business leaders is not atypical, and it is important to note that even in a world of condemning media headlines, “a strong Christian culture, supported by a guiding mission statement and nurtured by the founder and current leaders, is possible” (Lester & Padelford, 2002, 342). Moreover, it is not unexpected to see a pattern of hard work reflected among many of the success stories, a manifestation perhaps of our austere Protestant beginnings. One very serious concern for Christian leaders and managers is the matter of social responsibility.

As responsible members of their community, should Christian business leaders donate a portion of their organization's profit at all? Making charitable gifts with excess money is not as easy a decision as some might think. Business leaders have a responsibility not only to the church but also to the employees who work for their company and the families who depend upon them. As Chewning, Eby, and Roels (1990, p. 240) argue, "Moral choices do not always involve choices between one thing that is wrong and another that is right. Often choices are between two or more rights." Should profits be used to increase wages, cut prices, reinvest in capital equipment, or increase the owner's dividends? The morally superior alternative is not completely clear. To whom do these leaders owe a greater social responsibility?

Another issue is the growing social needs many communities require that their governments either will not or cannot afford to meet. John Langan, a Jesuit priest, made this prediction:

In societies as different as the United States and Poland, the United Kingdom and Mexico, greater reliance is steadily being put on the private sector to meet a wider variety of personal and social needs. This ensures that even more of the vexing problems of contemporary societies will come to be ethical problems for business (Langan, 1990, 81-82).

In terms of this particular project, understanding our protestant beginnings can help us to understand our current perceptions of corporate social responsibility. Regardless of what new or unpredictable difficulties are thrown before us, our duty is to ensure that we tackle these problems in such a way that others may see Christ in us. By understanding our history, looking to our peers as examples, knowing what the Bible says about our condition, and incorporating as much of this wisdom as possible into every aspect of our learning, Christian businessmen and women will be better prepared to meet the challenges and needs an ever-changing marketplace.

5. A time frame for the completion and a plan for the dissemination of the project.

This project will begin during the fall semester of 2019. The ISBEE World Congress requires abstract submission by November 30, 2019 with full papers due by May 15, 2020. The *Journal of Management History* requires papers to be submitted by January 2020 with final revisions due January 2021.

The Templeton Grant application is due August 2020. This portion of the research will take place over at least two years with various conference and publication outlets to be determined at that time.

6. A brief budget.

The proposed budget for this project includes \$1,000 for conference expenses and a \$3,500 stipend.

7. A current curriculum vitae.

See next page.

8. Two letters of recommendation should be submitted directly to chair of the Research Committee.

Letters have been requested from Dr. Darin White from Samford University and Dr. Bill Nance from the McAfee School of Business

Works Cited

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