

"WHO ARE MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FORMULATION, EVALUATION AND CULTIVATION OF IDEOLOGIES THAN THE NATION'S *EDUCATORS*, INCLUDING *TRAINING PROFESSIONALS*?"

IDEOLOGIES AND MANAGEMENT TRAINING

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Two major research studies recently compared individualistic and communitarian ideologies as alternative value-systems for American managers of the '80s. The hypothesis, confirmed in the two surveys, was that American society and institutions are shifting from the traditional individualistic to a new communitarian ideology. Such a shift raises critical questions — and implications — for management policy, decision making and the training of future managers.

The surveys asked two diverse groups (businessmen and college students) to read statements of the two ideologies and then to indicate which one they (1) prefer, (2) find dominant in the U.S.A. today, (3) expect to dominate in 1985, and (4) believe would be more effective in solving future problems.

Statements of the two ideologies were developed by Martin and Lodge ("Our Society in 1985," *Harvard Business Review*, November 1975) and used in their survey of

businessmen. The same statements, with no verbal changes, were used in the later survey of college students as well as a survey of ASTDers (members of the American Society for Training and Development) — the verbal similarity deemed necessary for statistically valid comparisons.

The first ideology is the traditional American one, springing from English thinkers of hundreds of years ago (John Locke, Adam Smith, etc.), advocating the "work ethic," self-reliance, individualism, pride in self and self-achievement, free competition and as little government interference as possible. Ideology One is stated as follows in the surveys:

"The community is no more than the sum of the individuals in it. Self-respect and fulfillment result from an essentially lonely struggle in which initiative and hard work pay off. The fit survive and if you don't survive, you are probably unfit. Property rights are a sacred guarantor of individual rights, and the uses of property are best controlled by competition to satisfy consumer desires in an open

market. The least government is the best. Reality is perceived and understood through the specialized activities of experts who dissect and analyze in objective study."

The second ideology stresses the ideas of many American thinkers of the past 50 years who advocate the necessity of increased central government planning and control, social responsibility for all individuals within society, cooperation (rather than competition) within society, and the good of the community as a whole society. Ideology Two is stated as follows:

"Individual fulfillment and self-respect are the result of one's place in an organic social process; we 'get out kicks' by being part of a group. A well-designed group makes full use of our individual capacities. Property rights are less important than the rights derived from membership in the community or a group — for example, rights to income, health and education. The uses of property are best regulated according to the community's need, which often differs from individual consumer desires. Government must set the

community's goals and coordinate their implementation. The perception of reality requires an awareness of whole systems and of the interrelationships between and among the wholes. This holistic process is the primary task of science."

Survey Methodologies

Three surveys of ideological preferences will be considered here. In all three, the terms "individualistic" and "communitarian" ideologies were designedly avoided as "loaded" terms, and are here used as a reporting mechanism and for identification purposes only.

The first, and original, survey (already cited) requested readers of *Harvard Business Review (HBR)* to submit their reactions to the four survey questions. About 1,800 *HBR* readers responded. They were mainly top- and middle-management business executives, half of them employed in small to medium-sized businesses (i.e. less than 500 employees), and mostly male (94 percent).

The second survey was aimed at college students and was reported

in the Gifford, Thornton and Jones feature article of *Collegiate News and Views* (Fall 1978). The four-question questionnaire was given, during routine class time, to 2,600 college business students by arrangements with the professors conducting their classes. There was no attempt at any kind of probability sample (nor was there in the *HBR* survey), but in each case regional and other appropriate sample representation seems adequate. In the case of the 2,600 college students, most were age 23 or younger, most male (75 percent), most juniors and seniors in business major fields (72 percent) and their geographical distribution covered proportionately the entire nation.

The third survey involved a probability sample of members of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTDers), conducted by the author. Actual ASTD respondents were selected on a random (probability) system and appear representative. Unlike the *HBR* and college student surveys, the ASTD survey provided

respondents a "no opinion" response category.

Given the difficulty and variabilities in each of the three surveys (and their methods), none claims statistical rigor but all exhibit a high probability of the general validity of findings.

Findings

The findings of the three surveys are summarized in Figure 2. All three groups (*HBR* businessmen, college students and ASTDers) prefer now the traditional and individualistic Ideology One, especially businessmen; all three groups also believe that this ideology is now dominant in the U.S.A. However, all three groups, by wide margins, expect — or are resigned to — the rising tide of the communication Ideology Two and its clearly dominant position by 1985. The question number four summaries (Figure 2: "Ideology believed to be more effective for solving future problems") show that *HBR* businessmen to a great extent and ASTDers to a considerable extent prefer the individualistic Ideology One for the future

Figure 1.

ASTDers' RESPONSES BY NUMBER, PERCENT, SEX AND EMPLOYMENT (N = 223)

	QUESTION 1 I prefer Ideology Number			QUESTION 2 Ideology I believe is now dominant			QUESTION 3 Ideology I expect to be dominant in 1985			QUESTION 4 Ideology I believe more effective for future.		
	I	II	No opinion	I	II	No opinion	I	II	No opinion	I	II	No opinion
Number of Males	109	52	7	68	83	17	52	96	20	93	59	16
Percent of Males	65%	31%	4%	40%	50%	10%	31%	57%	12%	55%	35%	10%
Number Females	25	28	2	33	20	2	22	27	6	17	27	11
Percent Females	45%	50%	5%	60%	36%	4%	40%	49%	11%	31%	49%	20%
Number in For-Profit companies	99	40	5	62	73	9	48	82	14	85	46	13
Percent in For-Profit companies	69%	28%	3%	43%	51%	6%	33%	57%	10%	59%	32%	9%
Number in Government or other	35	38	6	39	32	8	26	42	11	25	39	15
Percent in Government or other	44%	48%	8%	49%	40%	11%	33%	53%	14%	32%	49%	19%
Number of Total Sample	134	80	9	101	103	19	74	123	26	110	86	27
Percent of Total Sample	60%	36%	4%	45%	46%	9%	33%	55%	12%	50%	38%	12%

although resigned to its demise as factual expectation; by contrast, and by similar statistically significant percentage differences, college business students expect and prefer the communitarian Ideology Two for the solution of the nation's future problems. These college students, as the future businesspeople, leaders and policymakers of the nation, would set or hasten our course in the direction of Ideology Two.*

A more specific analysis of ASTDers' preferences, by various categories, is provided in Figure 1. The categories in Figure 1 show tabulated variations in responses by males, females, members of private-sector (for-profit) companies and members of government and other organizations. The differences, statistically significant, noted in Figure 1 approximate essentially the results of similar comparisons in the *Collegiate News* and the *HBR* studies. Readers who wish more detail about the two original studies can, of course, refer to the November 1975 *HBR*

article and the Fall 1978 *Collegiate News and Views* article.

Some typical reasons for preferring Ideology One:

Many respondents in all three surveys added explanations for their personal preferences of ideology. Typical statements favoring Ideology One (drawn mainly from the *HBR* survey) were:

"Ideology One got us, in just 200 years, to be the greatest country in the world."

"Ideology One describes a system which rewards individual competence and productivity. This system, if allowed to function, will produce a society which will be competitive with other countries for the resources required to maintain our high standard of living."

"The primary difficulty with Ideology Two is the role of government as goal setter and coordinator. Government today is unable to lead intelligently or decisively."

"I am living in Denmark where Ideology Two is followed. It doesn't even work here where there is a homogeneous population. It would

never work in the U.S. The desire to excel is stifled by Ideology Two, hence you get a docile and drab society."

Typical reasons for preferring Ideology Two:

An interesting statistic in Figure 2 is the significant increase in the percentage of *HBR* businessmen favoring Ideology Two for the solution of future problems as compared to now (a jump from 30 to 40 percent; the similar jump for ASTDers was from 38 to 45 percent, and for college students the jump was a dramatic one from 40 to 60 percent. A statement in the *HBR* report seems to explain this:

"Many (*HBR*) readers think that the transformation from Ideology One to Two could lead to social disaster, with burdensome government interference causing the disintegration of business and loss of personal freedom. (However) a minority accept the change with cautious optimism, acknowledging that many perplexing problems — including resource shortages, explosive population growth, and environmental degradation — can be resolved only within the framework of Ideology Two."

Other typical statements explaining preference for Ideology Two were:

"Virtually every major crisis (energy, resources, crime, etc.) highlights the crucial need to better identify and improve our relationships. This requires more cooperation; furthermore, as moral creatures, we have an obligation to support and help each other. Some drastically modified form of competition is badly needed!!" (Author's note: This respondent might — or probably is — thinking of the "Japan Inc." system where business, government and nation's citizens cooperate — engage in deliberate collusion and cartel-

*In May, 1979, the author conducted a similar survey of 200 undergraduate students in the School of Business of The American University (Washington, D.C.) in order to compare these student views with the broad national sample represented in the *Collegiate News* survey. These AU business students both expect and prefer Ideology Two for the nation's future by percentage margins essentially the same as reported in the *Collegiate News* survey (Figure 2).

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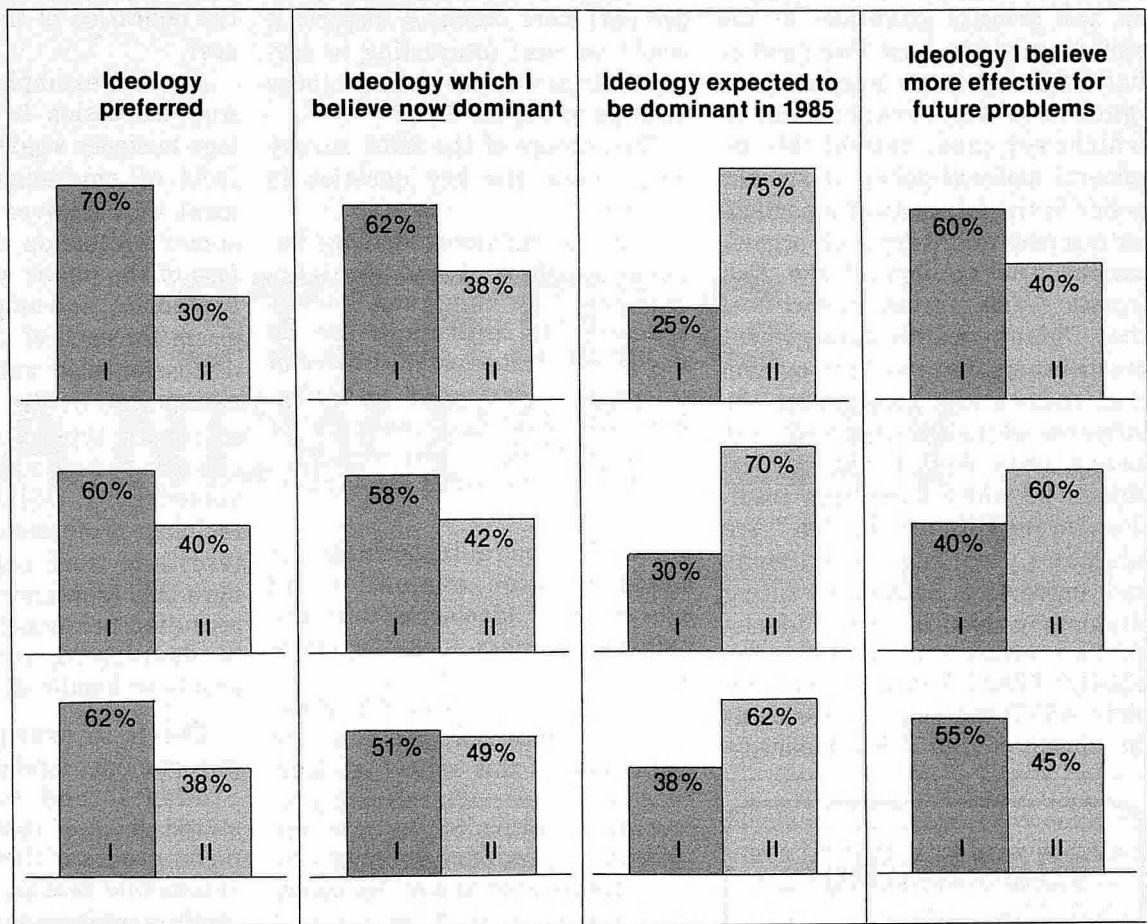
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Figure 2.
Comparing ASTDers with HBR Businessmen and Collegiate News College Students*
 (I and II below refer to "Ideologies" I and II)



*ASTDers, HBR businessmen as in *Harvard Business Review* survey report (November 1975) and College students as in *Collegiate News* (Fall 1978). For visual clarity, percents above are calculated after eliminating "no opinion" responses.

type thinking, *mix some* individualistic competition with *some* familial and social central control — and end up with the kind of high productivity, social order and economic health which characterizes Japan today.)

"To survive in a crowded world with shrinking resources we must depend on large organizations and systems. We must go beyond freedom and dignity. Skinner is right."

"Ideology One leads to befouling life — support earth systems — destruction of life forms that do not contribute to monetary values. If we are not to lose our humanness, Ideology Two must prevail — for it encourages the creative over the destructive."

"Ideology Two seems more and more viable and effective. It seems to work more frequently and more broadly. Fifteen years ago I

couldn't imagine writing this! I guess this reflects my judgment that the former over-dominance of Ideology One has led to its own decline."

"Ideology One is essentially a mythical view fostered by America's romanticized past."

"As society grows more complex, the percentage of 'unfit' will increase, resulting in enforced distribution of resources."

"Ideology Two is inevitable. Too many people (many 'unfit') and not enough resources."

"Ideology Two is essentially the one prevailing in the Western European countries governed by Social Democratic Parties. Its successes are obvious: there is an absence of destructive social tensions, a much lower crime rate than in the U.S., a dedication to community goals, participation of

workers in management. The economic results are even more spectacular — the general level of employment, income, health, and social services is impressive. There are no slums, and the sustained increase in per capita GNP has made possible a vast array of services, including subsidized performing arts, efficient public transportation, prompt street cleaning."

Summary and Conclusions

It is not within the scope of this article to defend or criticize either Ideology One or Two (despite the personal urge to do so). Rather the emphasis here is on the *significance* of the findings in the surveys to managers, educators and training professionals. One critical finding in the surveys is that the next generation of the nation's leaders is tilting strongly in favor of the

communitarian Ideology Two. This raises questions, especially for university educators and training professionals, which deserve explicit and priority attention: Is the shift toward Ideology Two good or bad? Should it be encouraged, ignored or discouraged and, in whichever case, should this be general national policy or specific policy in the interests of a particular business or government organization? The authors of the *Collegiate News* survey report feel that "Many middle-management businesspersons are of the opinion that today's students, under the influence of their professors, have swung away from the ideological objectives which have been traditional in the U.S. for decades." Are educators, training departments and university professors tilting students in the direction of Ideology Two, either consciously or implicitly? Figure 2 (last column) depicts ASTD training professionals far closer to the *HBR* business-

men's Ideology One than the college students' Ideology Two. It should be noted that the majority of the students surveyed (over 80 percent) were *business* majors; it would be most interesting to survey their professors and add these findings to Figure 2.

The authors of the *HBR* survey report raise the key question in this way:

"When a traditional ideology becomes incoherent and loses acceptance, the community loses direction. Its institutions are no longer legitimate and the powerful are suddenly drained of authority. A community that is unmindful of its ideology is apt to be misled by it. This is a problem for Americans."

Who are more responsible for the formulation, evaluation and cultivation of ideologies than the nation's *educators*, including *training professionals*, university professors and the news media? Since this is a rhetorical question, the main point of this article is clear: educators, especially *training professionals*, must begin to make "ideology" part of their business, think thoroughly about the meaning, practical implications and ultimate value of various ideologies, make these ideological questions an *explicit* and routine agenda-item in the training department's daily business, and, finally, innovate action (rather than *reaction*) regarding the impact of ideologies. For example, business consultants hear daily the complaint of line business managers that recruited college graduates, even from business schools, are illiterate in the areas of economics, the function of profits, and even the meaning of "profits" (expressed as dollar gross versus profits as a ratio to sales or equity, etc.). They typically mistake increases in gross profit dollars (highly publicized in the news media) with critical *decreases* in the really meaningful financial ratios of profits-to-sales and profit-to-equity. And, of course, such college graduates are unaware of the impact of real profits upon the decisions of investors, lenders, suppliers and key personnel vital

to the very survival of a particular business entity. Should company training departments be designing training programs to fill this gap in the education of their future leaders?

Another example: the most cursory discussion in class with college business students on the subjects of environmental improvement or employee safety or consumer protection or general welfare of the public at large arouses immediate, and unqualified, enthusiasm for each of the above; such discussion also exhibits their unawareness of the mind-bending *costs* (and typical inefficiencies) of the government programs involved (EPA, OSHA, etc.). Should training professionals, in the interests of their organizations, ignore this ignorance on the part of recruited personnel or should they be developing educational programs to handle it?

The classic example is, of course, government regulation in general. Students tend to support the stated goals of each such government program (better air, fewer automobile deaths, cleaner water, product safety, government audits, etc.) but, again, they are illiterate in the economics (costs, tax impact, bottom-line profit effects) of the very programs they support. Should training professionals be designing programs to handle this educational gap? Whether the right answer to such questions is affirmative or negative, our thesis here is that training professionals must, at least, address the ideology issue explicitly, place it on the agenda for training department meetings and develop clearly-stated policies regarding it. (So should business schools; but that's another matter, the responsibility of university business schools.)

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