

Brittany Pease
Dr. Harper
AH120
9 April 2013

Picture the first day that feels like spring, the breeze is gentle, but still cool with winter's nip, but the sun is radiating heat. The past few months have been dreary in gloom, but today the sky is a vivid blue with few clouds. It is one of those days that staying inside is intolerable, and you must go out and immerse yourself in the great outdoors. On these days there is nothing better than reverting back to being a child and playing around. On this particular day, I decided to blow bubbles with a few friends. After having fun with my friends, a question arose: what if work seemed like play?

The *play ethic* is an ethic in which a person is able to work in a field which excites them, like the mindset kids have when they play with bubbles. In society today too much emphasis is placed on the work ethic. The work ethic places unreasonable emphasis on stature in society, and is fallible in the belief that hard work will bring prosperity. The work ethic is damaging to society; it impedes creativity, and fosters negative competition, while the play ethic encourages creativity and positive competition. This is why the play ethic is superior to the work ethic.

The work ethic hinders creativity. The work ethic often forces people into occupations that they do not want to do, or occupations in which is taking away from their talent. A prime example of this occurs in the tale "Life in the Iron Mills," by Rebecca Harding Davis. In this tale Hugh Wolfe an iron mill worker has a brilliant talent in sculpting. He demonstrates the way he feels about his work in his sculpture, when he sculpts a muscular woman and claims that she is starving (56). The woman is representing what Hugh feels inside. Inside Hugh feels like he is starving because his creative talent is being stifled by his job as an iron mill worker. He feels that this job is keeping him from fulfilling his purpose in life. His purpose is his talent of sculpting, but this potential is being wasted away in his monotonous work. It is Hugh's work ethic that will not let him quit this job. Imagine what Hugh, or anyone with a certain talent could create if they could follow their passion.

The play ethic allows for creativity, because it allows people to stimulate their interest. In the article "Work, Play, and Boredom," by Nick Butler et al. he comments on blurring the line between work and play (330). He states that play inspires creativity, and according to Butler, "Creativity is important because it generates business, and business can only happen because of creativity" (330). In essence, creativity stimulates more production, and also better products. People are more likely to be creative when they are relaxed and working in a realm in which they have talent and interest. In the case of Hugh Wolfe, in "Life in the Iron Mills," he was not given room for his creative talent to blossom. Society is at a loss when it loses people like Hugh to monotonous work. These people have the potential to be ingenious when it comes to their talent, and everyone should be able to play at their passion. Imagine if everyone could do what they are best at: the world would have the best of every product or service, and people would be happy with their lives. When people are not able to do something that they enjoy, they can easily get caught up in other values, such as material valuables and stature. The work ethic encourages a negative competitive environment in which people strive for these items.

The competition that is created by the work ethic negatively impacts people. Instead of people being passionate and all consumed in their work, they spend time worrying about competing with others. Cecelia Tichi writes in "Social Reform and the Promise of Dawn," about

how the lower class competes with each other. She states that Irish immigrants who had low wages fought with Blacks for scarce labor in which they had terrible working conditions (205). Many of these people were probably like Hugh and had other talents, but were forced into this competitive nature, and not given a chance to use their talent, because of the instilled work ethic. The play ethic fosters a positive competitive environment.

The play ethic encourages people to compete in a healthy way. Instead of people competing over money or status people are competing over ideas. Competition of ideas is much more important to society because it is the ideas people have that advance society. Brilliant minds go to waste because of the meaningless competition created over money. There should be more emphasis placed on letting people do what they are talented at, because then we have a competition of the best people, doing what they do best. There is endless potential for what we can do as a human population if everyone explores and plays with their talents, and challenge themselves to be better at what they do. Out of the play ethic positive completion will result and more creative ideas will emerge, because people are excited about what they are doing.

Some may argue that the work ethic is better for various reasons. Some will say that if people are able to *play* all the time then they will not be productive. People who believe in the work ethic believe that work and play need to be kept separate. The truth is that the play ethic encompasses the work ethic. If people are passionate about what they are doing then the majority of time they will also be having fun while doing it, and will work harder at it.

In society today many people are forced to do work that they do not want to do. What if people were able to be in jobs that they actually had fun at? What if work was similar to child's play? The play ethic allows people to do what they love, and this ethic fosters creativity and healthy competition. Imagine a world where people are joyful in their work: inherently people would be more productive. Society would be much further advanced, and a better place for everyone. Everyone should go out and explore their passion, because life is short, and precious time should not be wasted away in work that does not fulfill the spirit.

Works Cited

- Butler, Nick, et al. "Work, Play and Boredom." *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* (2011): 329-335. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 11. Apr. 2013.
- Davis, Rebecca Harding. "Life in the Iron-Mills." *Life in the Iron Mills*. Ed. Cecelia Tichi. Boston: Bedford Books, 1998. 49-74. Print.
- Tichi, Cecelia. "Social Reform and the Promise of Dawn." *Life in the Iron Mills*. Ed. Cecelia Tichi. Boston: Bedford Books, 1998. 203-208. Print.