

WORK AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF HOTEL GENERAL MANAGERS IN HONG KONG

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WORKING PAPER ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the world of work and the ways in which identity is shaped by an individual's occupational role. The work-identity relationship is a fundamental part of an individual's self-image, as the answer to the question "who am I?" invariably includes reference to a particular occupation or working environment.

It is often the case that we view people through a screen of occupational categories, not just in terms of practicing a particular vocation, but as if they were 'physically infused' with the quality of being, for example, a postman or a plumber. The research investigates the ways in which this 'physical infusion' of identity manifests itself among hotel general managers and in so doing explores the less visible aspects of work and identity; the unwritten rules, norms, values, attitudes and beliefs that serve to connect (or disconnect) individuals to particular occupational groups.

The research consists of empirical data collection through in-depth interviews with hotel general managers. Four themes are explored; career routes to becoming a GM, what it is like to be a GM, what it is like to work in this profession in Hong Kong and the culture of the GM profession. This group of managers were selected because their status, and visibility their experience and the level of commitment required to operate at this level means they are particularly informative cases capable of producing significant insights into the culture of the profession and the work-identity relationship.

To date, six interviews have been undertaken.