CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WORK VALUES IN EUROPE:
MODERNIZATION, GLOBALIZATION, INSTITUTIONALIZATION
AND THEIR MODERATING IMPACT ON THE OCCUPATIONAL
CLASS EFFECT

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Introduction

Many countries have been subject to technical and economic advancements and increasing global competition in recent decades (Kalleberg, 2009). These are aspects of modernization and globalization, both of which are processes that heighten societies’ need for a well-equipped workforce. This requirement encompasses not only the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of workers, embodied for instance in their educational attainment, it also includes the personal motivations that workers have for taking part in the process of labour (Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001). In short, to keep up with modernization and to remain competitive in the global marketplace, societies need workers who have internalized the work values that help to fuel these processes (Ester, Braun & Vinken, 2006).

This chapter examines work values in Europe. As will be outlined in the theory section, we expect modernization and globalization to shape individuals’ work values predominantly through the employment and occupational structure of the country in which they live. In addition, we expect institutional settings to influence people’s work values. These expected country-level determinants are assumed to affect work values net of individual characteristics. We pay explicit attention to individual occupational class. Gallie (2007) suggests that the strength of the effects of occupational class varies between countries; however, theoretical explanations for the moderating effect of country characteristics are lacking in the literature. We take a first step to fill this lacuna by theorizing how modernization, globalization and institutionalization may moderate the influence of occupational class on work values. Our research questions are three: (1) How do European societies differ in their work values? (2) How and to what extent can these differences be explained by modernization,
globalization and institutionalization characteristics of societies, on the one hand, and by occupational class and other individual-level characteristics on the other? (3) To what extent do societal conditions moderate the effect of occupational class?

Theory and hypotheses

Literature on work values usually distinguishes intrinsic (also labelled ‘expressive’) and extrinsic (also labelled ‘instrumental’) work values (e.g., De Witte, Halman & Gelissen, 2004; Gallie, 2007; Gesthuizen & Verbakel, 2011; Kalleberg, 1977; Zanders & Harding, 1995). Intrinsic work values refer to job motivation that emerges from the content of the work itself. They are strongly related to the drive for personal development and are therefore indicated by a tendency to take initiative, the ability to achieve something, having a responsible job, learning new skills, and having a say in one’s work. We label this kind of work values as a preference for personal development. Extrinsic work values refer to job motivation whereby work is regarded as a means to achieve goals outside of the job. They therefore emphasize the importance of favourable terms of employment and working conditions. We subdivide extrinsic work values into two categories: those related to material conditions, including income and job security, and those related to comfortable working conditions, including good hours, generous holidays and not too much pressure.

Societal characteristics: Modernization, globalization and institutionalization

This section sets out our predictions regarding the impact of societal characteristics on work values. The process of modernization is assumed to shape work values via two mechanisms. The first such mechanism is economic modernization, which changes the structure of the labour market. Due to technological progress, societies have faced an increase in the proportion of complex jobs, which are characterized by a requirement for specialized skills and knowledge and high levels of autonomy. Consequently, demand has shifted from low-skilled workers to high-skilled ones, in a process that has also been called ‘skill-biased technological change’ (Levy & Murnane, 1992; Krueger, 1993). In modernized economies, the emphasis on specialized skills and on producing high-quality consumption goods and services signals that the related job features are