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Gendered intergenerational transmission of work values?

A country comparison

1. Introduction

Values are internalized social representations or moral beliefs that people appeal to as the ultimate rationale for their actions (Oyserman 2002). Work values, more specifically, refer to individuals' attitudes about how important work is and whether individuals pursue tangible or intangible rewards in their jobs (see Kraaykamp et al., this issue). Empirical research in social sciences has shown that work values predict a variety of work-related outcomes, including vocational aspirations, career choices, decision-making processes such as to look for a job, or to get training, job selection, as well as job satisfaction (e.g. Ros et al. 1999). These work-related outcomes have an impact on the wellbeing of individuals (e.g. Blanchflower and Oswald 2011), and how individuals participate in politics (e.g. Norris 2013) and the society (e.g. Rupasingha et al. 2006). In the current paper, we investigate the transmission of work values within the family. Since youth represents the phase when many critical decisions are made with regard to educational and career choices (see Busemeyer and Jensen 2012), we concentrate on the work values of this particular age group (Krahn and Galambos 2014).

The acquisition of (work) values primarily takes place through socialization in family, groups and society (Cieciuch et al. 2015). Families are ascribed a key role in the process of value acquisition. There are two aspects to the effect of families on the development of values. One regards a genetic explanation and assumes that parent-child value similarities signify a hereditary effect (e.g. Kandler et al. 2016). The second is an environmental explanation and assumes that parent-child value transmission is due to socialization, in which parents both provide contextual opportunities for their children, and act as major role models (e.g. Hitlin 2006). In the present study,

we investigate the latter phenomenon, also known as ‘cultural’ or ‘intergenerational’ transmission (see, e.g., Schönplflug 2001; Trommsdorff 2008; Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2010;). More precisely, we are interested in the intergenerational transmission of work values and how the outcomes of this process depend on the young people’s gender and the cultural context s/he is raised has any effect on the transmission of work values. Even in a region like Europe with otherwise striking similarities at the economic, social and political level, the participation of women in the labor force varies considerably (e.g. Steiber and Haas 2012), arguably giving way to cross-country variation in the work values of men and women as well as how these differences emerge.

This paper addresses two research questions: (1) Are the work values of young people determined by the work values of their parents? (2) Is the transmission of work values conditioned by the young adults’ gender? We utilize data originating from the CUPESSE project (see Tosun et al. 2018) and to further test the generalizability of these questions, we compare and contrast our analyses across four national contexts, with varying cultural, social and economic characteristics; specifically, Denmark, Germany, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

2. Theoretical considerations and hypotheses

The prolific research on the intergenerational transmission of values has mainly focused on parent-child similarity of basic values (Schwartz, 1999; Grusec and Davidov 2007; Roest et al. 2009; Kraaykamp et al. 2013).¹ In contrast to basic human values, work values constitute domain-specific values and refer to the expression of basic values in the work setting (Ros et al. 1999). Despite being a specific type of value, a recent meta-analytical review carried out by Cemalcilar et al.

¹ The set of basic human values comprises self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism.

(2018) with 30 studies conducted in 11 countries supported a positive but medium association ($r = .20, p < .001$) between parent work values and youth work values.

Work related values have been the subject of investigation in different disciplines, including but not limited to psychology, sociology, business and economics. Hence, the literature suggests various conceptualizations and operationalizations of work values (see Sparrow et al. 2010). Research also suggests that different types of work values may influence work and well-being outcomes differently (Arslan 2001). To acknowledge such variation in the definition of work values, and also to allow for an investigation of whether different work values may emerge differently in different contexts, in our analyses we differentiate between four types of work-related values and test our models in four different national contexts with varying cultural, social and economic characteristics; Denmark, Germany, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Specifically, as our dependent variables, we utilize (1) *work centrality*, that is, how important work is relative to family, leisure and personal life, (2) *intrinsic work values*, that relate to intangible rewards related to the process of work, such as having an interesting job, working autonomously, or having a chance of personal growth, (3) *extrinsic work values*, that relate to external rewards, including status recognition, high and stable income, and opportunities for career advancements and (4) *gender-role work values*, which captures more specifically attitudes on the labor force participation of women (see Crompton et al. 2005). Jointly we refer to these four types of work-related values as *work values* and test our hypotheses separately for each of them.

Our first research question concerns the transmission of work values within family contexts by means of socialization. Parents convey their attitudes, beliefs and values to their children directly through active education as well as indirectly through everyday routines and through the opportunities they provide to their children (Kraaykamp et al. 2013; Döring et al. 2017). In line with the literature on the intergenerational transmission of (work) values (e.g. Schönpflug 2001;

Trommsdorff 2008; Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2010), we expect youth's work values to be associated with the work values of their parents. However, as work values are also likely to be affected by socialization contexts other than the parents (such as peer groups) as *Hypothesis H1*, we expect a moderate association between the work values of young people and their parents.

Our second research question concerns whether the transmission of work values conditioned by the young adults' gender. We utilize two hypotheses to investigate this question. As the employment participation of women started to expand in many countries in the 1980s only, and given that women are still confronted with practical challenges when pursuing a full-time job such as childcare (Steiber and Haas 2012), it is plausible to expect a difference between the work values of women vis-à-vis men (see Gallie, this issue). The social-role approach, the dominant approach to understanding gender-role beliefs, attributes the sources of these beliefs to the different social roles performed by men and women (Eagly and Wood 2013). In the ideology of separate gender roles (traditional family model), women are primarily responsible for the home, child rearing, and maintenance of good relationships. Men, in contrast, are primarily responsible for the financial support of the family. Empirical research has shown that such differences between men and women continue to exist (e.g. Lips and Lawson 2009; see Eagly and Wood 2013 for an overview). Therefore, we hypothesize that young men will have stronger work-related values than young women (*Hypothesis H2*).

While H1 and H2 postulate unconditional relationships between the variables, it appears reasonable to formulate an interaction hypothesis that postulates a conditional relationship between work values, intergenerational value transmission and gender. For example, a study by Roest et al. (2009) shows that parents do not necessarily equally transmit all basic human values, but they do so selectively, caring for their own preferences as well as their respective views on gender. In this context, Boehnke et al. (2007) suggest that values of power and achievement are more likely to be

passed on to sons, whereas values of care are more likely to be transmitted to the daughters in the family. Consequently, *Hypothesis H3* states that the effect of intergenerational transmission on the work values of young people is conditional on their gender.

We do not expect intra-familial value transmission to be independent of the context effects (Boehnke et al. 2007). Socialization is, by definition, a process whereby individuals acquire the values, standards, and customs of the groups and the society they live in and acquire the ability to function in an adaptive way in their social context (Grusec and Davidov 2007). To explore whether the intergenerational transmission of work value, gender and the interaction between both plays out differently in varying country contexts, we test these three hypotheses in four national contexts.

As the four countries differ from each other in multitudes of cultural, socio-economic and political characteristics, we refrain from making specific predictions regarding cultural differences in the transmission of work -related values, with one exception. Among the four types of work values we study, it is most probable to see some effect of culture on the gender-role based work values. The parents' beliefs about work-related gender roles are conceived to be affected by the respective norms in the individual countries. Hult and Svallfors (2002), for example, report that different national production regimes correspond to different levels and patterns of employment commitment among the working population. Likewise, Jaeger (2006, 159) stresses the importance of "frames of reference of what individuals consider to be 'normal' or 'appropriate'" for the formation of attitudes and values (see also Gallie and Alm 2000). More specifically, the gender-role beliefs that are dominant in a culture are influenced by the distribution of gender-related tasks and power distribution (Eagly and Wood 2013). In the ideology of separate gender roles (i.e., the traditional family model), women are primarily responsible for the home, child rearing, and maintenance of good relationships. Men, in contrast, are primarily responsible for the financial support of the family. Hence, in cultures with stronger gender-role beliefs, the type and strength of

values that transmit within the family may depend on the gender of the parent as well as the gender of the child. Accordingly, by contrasting out models across the four cultures, we investigate whether the intergenerational transmission of value, gender and the interaction between both plays out differently in varying country contexts. Among the four countries included in this study, Turkey ranks highest on collectivism (Hofstede et al. 2010). Hence, we expect Turkey to differ from the three European countries, specifically on the gender-role work value.

3. Data and methodology

In this section we provide details on the database used for the analysis and the operationalization of the variables.

3.1. Clarifications on the data

The selection of databases is one of the most important design choices in empirical investigation and warrants enhanced attention (see, e.g., Wenzelburger et al. 2013). Both considerations about data quality and the availability of empirical information for being able to gauge the theoretical constructs of interest are important.

This study relies on data produced by the CUPESSE two-generation survey, which is presented extensively by Tosun et al. (2018). The innovative feature of the CUPESSE data is that comprises responses from both young people (18-35 years) and their parents. Both the youth and parental questionnaires were conducted online in Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom, and face-to-face using paper and pencil in Turkey.² The data collection was carried out throughout spring and fall 2016. We surveyed 1,142 young people and 403 parents in Denmark, 3,279 young

² We ran analyses to rule out that the variation between the data for Turkey and the other countries stems from survey mode effects.

people and 480 parents in Germany, 3,016 young people and 537 parents in Turkey, and 3,004 young people and 499 parents in the United Kingdom. Given the cross-sectional nature of the data, we did not apply imputation techniques for missing data.

3.2. Clarifications on the measurement

3.2.1. Work-related values. Four types of work-related values function as our dependent variables.

Work-centrality is assessed as an additive index of the following four items: “to fully develop your talents, you need to have a job”; “it's humiliating to receive money without having to work”; “work is a duty towards society”; “work should always come first even if it means less spare time”. Respondents could (strongly) (dis)agree with each statement on a scale from 0 to 3. The 4-item index had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67. In the next set of questions, the respondents are asked to determine the importance they attributed to different characteristics of a job, with response options ranging from very unimportant (=0) to very important (=3). *Extrinsic work values*, is assessed by their responses to the two items about how important it is to have a secure job and/or a high income (Cronbach's alpha: 0.61). *Intrinsic work values*, on the other hand, is assessed by their responses to the two items; job allowing me to work independently and job allowing me to develop my creativity (Cronbach's alpha: 0.57). The fourth and final dependent variable, gender-role work values, is operationalized by the following question: “A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family”. The respondents can (very) strongly agree (=3) or disagree (=0) with this statement, a high score suggesting more traditional perspective.

3.2.2. Explanatory variables. We use the parents' responses to the above questions for gauging whether these values may have been transmitted from the parents to their children. We further generate a binary variable, *Female*, for differentiating between the respondents' sex. We also use

the variables to generate interaction terms. Table 1 in the Supplemental Materials presents the descriptive statistics.

3.2.3. Control variables. We control for various factors based on theoretical constraints they may impede upon the expected associations we investigate. Most important, familial influence on youth is likely to decline across adolescence, as other socialization sources, such as peers gain importance (Cemalcilar et al. 2018), and therefore we control for *Age*. The variable *Status* differentiates between respondents being economically inactive (e.g. due to unemployment), in employment, and in education. Further, we need to control for whether the respondents still live with their parents, since this should have an impact on the intensity of the socialization process (*Living with parents*). Another factor we control for is whether the young people surveyed belong to an *Immigration* group. For example, Vedder et al. (2009) observed that, for the majority groups, parent-child value similarity was high, whereas for non-mainstream families, the contextual effect was stronger than within-family influence. *Financial satisfaction* is the measurement we use to include a control for the subjective perception of the economic situation, running from very dissatisfied (=0) to very satisfied (=3). We also take into account whether the respondents have *Caring* responsibilities (including children of minor age) and how they characterize their relationship with their parents (*Relation Mother*; *Relation Father*), ranging from “very bad” (=0) to “very good” (=4). Parents transmit values also through the opportunities they provide to their children (see Kraaykamp et al. 2013; Döring et al. 2017). Therefore, we control for the economic condition of the respondents during their childhood (*Economy childhood*).

4. Presentation and discussion of findings

Considering the measurement level of the dependent variables and their distributional properties, we fit linear regression models, separately for the four operationalizations of work values. Model 1 presents the analyses concerning intergenerational transmission of work values (H1) and gender main effects (H2). Model 2 adds the two-way interaction terms for gender and intergenerational value transmission (H3). By comparing the models across the four countries, we make inferences about whether value transmission differs across different national contexts. We summarize the findings for the focal variables in Table 1. For a presentation of the full models, including the effects of the control, please see the supplementary Tables 2-5.

[Table 1 about here]

An investigation of Table 1 supports our reasoning regarding the intergenerational transmission of work-related values (H1), for all four types of work values and for all countries (see coefficients for Model 1). Yet, the strength of the association between parent-child work values varies for the specific value tested, and the country. In general, the transmission of work-centrality and gender-role work values is stronger than the extrinsic and intrinsic work values. The effect size is greatest for respondents from the United Kingdom where a one-unit increase in the parents' values increases the young respondents' values by 0.5 units (Model 1). The weakest effects is for intrinsic work values for Denmark (.11 units).

When inspecting Model 1 and Model 2 fitted for each of the four countries, our findings do not suggest a systematic gender main effect (H2) nor a systematic interaction effect of gender and parent work value (H3). Overall, females do not significantly differ from males concerning their attitudes on the importance of work. Below, we discuss the findings for specific work-values.

For *Work Centrality*, we obtain a positive and significant coefficient for *Female* (H2) as well as the interaction term for gender and intergenerational transmission (H3) for the respondents

from the United Kingdom. The results can be interpreted as follows: a one-unit increase in the parents' values for *Work Centrality* leads to an increase in the youth's values for *Work Centrality* by 0.6 units when the respondents are men. Female respondents have 0.3-unit higher values on *Work Centrality* if their parents indicated that they do not value *Work Centrality* at all. When a respondent is female, the effect of the parents' *Work Centrality* on the *Work Centrality* of the young adults decreases by 0.2 units. Put differently, in the United Kingdom, the effect of the intergenerational transmission of *Work Centrality* is conditioned by the effect of gender; the effect of transmission is weaker if the respondent is a female (see Figure 1). When comparing the model fit statistics obtained for the four countries, we can see that the explanatory power of the model is best for the United Kingdom as indicated by the adjusted R² values.

[Figure 1 about here]

Turning to *Extrinsic Work Values*, we obtain similar findings to the previous outcome variable. For all countries, we can observe positive and significant coefficients for the parents' *Extrinsic Work Values*. The gender variable fails to produce coefficients at conventional levels of significance for all countries, but in the United Kingdom. The regression results reported in Table 1 show that *Female* produces a positive and significant coefficient and the interaction term between gender and the parents values' produces a negative coefficient, which is significant at the 10%-level. The effect of the interaction effect can be interpreted analogous to the previous one: the effect of intergenerational value transmission on *Extrinsic Work Values* is weaker in the case of female respondents.

The regression results for *Intrinsic Work Values*, deviate from the previous findings to the extent that the coefficient for intergenerational transmission is only significant at the 10%-level and even insignificant in Model 2 fitted with data for Denmark. For the other countries, we continue

to observe positive and significant coefficients for the parents' *Intrinsic Work Values*. Respondents in Denmark are also the only ones for which we obtain a significant (and negative) coefficient for female respondents. The coefficient tells us that female respondents have lower values than men do, if their parents scored low on *Intrinsic Work Values*.

The regression results of the fourth outcome variable as shown in Table 1 confirm our reasoning that intergenerational transmission matters for explaining the values of the variable *Gender-Role Work Values*. However, gender now also produces significant and negative coefficients for respondents from all four countries: young women have lower scores on that outcome variable than young men. This is the first time we can confirm the reasoning underlying H2. Yet it should be noted that in the models that include the interaction terms the coefficients of *Female* are insignificant, and so are the coefficients of the interaction terms themselves. This means that the effect of gender is direct, and it also does not moderate the effect of intergenerational value transmission. The lack of a systematic difference across countries with varying levels of collectivism and traditionalism suggest a micro-level, individual difference effect rather than a macro-level contextual effect. It is interesting that male respondents (in all four countries) rather than females reported higher gender-role work values.

Table 2 summarizes the findings of our analysis, broken down by hypotheses and work values. We obtained the most consistent and compelling results for H1, which was confirmed for all countries for three out of four measurements of work values. H2 was confirmed once for the United Kingdom; in addition, we found some evidence for it for the determinants of *Extrinsic Work Values* in the United Kingdom and *Intrinsic Work Values* in Denmark. Only for *Work Centrality* and – to a weaker degree – for *Extrinsic Work Values* in the United Kingdom we found support for H3. Overall, however, the cross-country variation was much less marked than we anticipated. Most remarkably, the effect of intergenerational transmission is robust across different measurements of

work values and across countries with marked cultural differences regarding the participation of women in the labor market.

[Table 2 about here]

As we can infer from Tables 2-5 in the Supplemental Materials, some of the control variables have significant effects on work values. *Age* has a negative effect on work centrality and extrinsic work values for respondents in Denmark. As they age, they are less likely to place work in the center of their lives (hence are likely to also value other domains of life, such as family or leisure activities), and are less likely to seek a secure and high paying job. *Living with parents* has a positive effect on the work centrality and intrinsic work values of respondents in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the same control variable has a negative effect for work-centrality and gender-role work values of respondents in Turkey. *Financial Satisfaction* decreases the level of work values, with a significant effect for work-centrality for respondents in the United Kingdom, extrinsic work values in Denmark and the United Kingdom and intrinsic work values in Germany. Finally, another control variable that has some significant effect is having *Caring Responsibilities*. Respondents in Turkey with caring responsibilities are less likely to have higher intrinsic work values and respondents in Germany and the United Kingdom with caring responsibilities agree more with a traditional understanding of the division of work between men and women. Overall, the control variables have more effect on the work values of respondents in the United Kingdom. Yet, it is possible that many of these control variables signify the direct or indirect effects of other background variables (such as parenting style, living conditions while growing up) that may impede upon young individuals work values. Furthermore they are likely to call for the remaining portion of variance to be explained in understanding how young people acquire work values.

5. Conclusions

Are the work values of young people determined by the work values of their parents? Is the transmission of work values conditioned by the young adults' gender? Having run a series of analyses, we are now in a position to answer these questions. Regarding the first research question, we can firmly state that young adults' work values are determined by the work values of their parents. We found this for three measurements of work values and regardless of the country context. Turning to the second research question, we can state that we found some evidence for a gender effect – both direct and indirect –, but our results did not reveal a pattern that is robust across the different measurements of work values and/or country contexts. From this, it follows that the effect of gender is less prominent than we anticipated, and this finding even holds true for a country like Turkey where gender differences are most marked. Having said that, we found gender effects in all countries for the fourth measurement of work values in the sense of a traditional understanding of women being responsible for the household and men being the breadwinners. Finding a gender effect for that measurement is plausible since it also represents the most gendered of all outcome variables used for the analyses. The findings revealed that women hold views on their roles in labor markets that are more modern than men's, regardless of the respective country context. Overall, however, individuals in countries that are more 'gender-defamilized' (Saxonberg 2013) do not hold markedly different attitudes on work values than individuals in countries that are 'familized' (on the concept, see Esping-Andersen 1999). As we could see, the values of individuals in countries as different as Denmark and Turkey, for instance, do not vary as much as one would have anticipated.

What are the broader implications of our findings? First, as extant research suggest, work values are functional in determining the status of individuals' as being partially or fully economically dependent. This means that work values are relevant for explaining the socioeconomic status of individuals. However, it is also possible that gender and country contexts

matter when using work values as explanatory variables in models that seek to predict labor market outcomes. Second, having learned about the robust effect of socialization within families (see also Evans and Shen 2010), policy approaches to promote the (self-)employment of young people need to take into consideration the family context and include the parents in their outreach activities. However, designing such a policy – similar to other types of policy (e.g. Chupein and Glennerster 2018) – is not straightforward for multiple reasons. One of them is the question of how and when to reach out to parents in an attempt to influence the educational and careers choices of their children. Another is the risk of stigmatizing certain families by inviting them to collaborate with state institutions in an attempt to improve their children’s chances on the labor market. Therefore, the design of such a policy intervention needs to take into consideration a broad evidence base (see Haskins 2018) and should be based on a cost-benefit analysis that adopts a broad perspective on the respective cost and benefit parameters.

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