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Ann Am Acad Pol Soc Sci. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2020 March 01.

Published in final edited form as:

Ann Am Acad Pol Soc Sci. 2019 March ; 682(1): 43–59. doi:10.1177/0002716218822291.

Work Values in the United States: Age, Period, and Generational Differences

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Abstract

This article examines how processes of aging, generational shifts, and changes over historical time periods shape differences in work values in the United States. Our analyses of data from the General Social Surveys and the International Social Survey Program show that changes over historical time periods are most consistently responsible for temporal differences in work values. In particular, during recent periods Americans tend to place greater importance on jobs that provide security, high income and opportunities for advancement; this is consistent with a narrative that these job rewards have become more difficult to attain recently and are thus more problematic for workers. Some differences in work values are also attributable to aging or life course processes, especially the greater importance placed on high income during the mid-life years when family responsibilities are generally greatest. By contrast, we find few differences in work values among members of different generations or cohorts. We also find that people from less advantaged social origins and those with greater labor market resources are more likely to value economic rewards.

Keywords

work values; age; period and cohort effects; central life interest

INTRODUCTION

Work values reflect the importance people place on work and its various facets. They are central to theories of work motivation that highlight reasons that people work and the kinds of rewards and benefits that influence their job satisfaction (Kalleberg, 1977). Work values also provide insights into workers' goals and aspirations (e.g., Goldthorpe et al., 1968). Americans, for example, traditionally place great importance on the search for job security and the belief in opportunity (Bernstein, 1997).

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ENDNOTES

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A key research question is how work values differ over time and among people of different ages or generations. Such temporal differences shed light on social transformations in the conceptions and ideologies of work that characterize a society, as well as on changes that individuals undergo during their life courses. These questions are complex: at a given point in time, age- and generation-related differences in work values cannot be distinguished from one another, while over-time differences may be due to cohorts or generations, aging, time periods, or some mixture of the three sources.

First, ever since Mannheim identified the "problem of generations" (1952 [1927]), social scientists have sought to identify generationally- or cohort-distinctive values that reflect the shared experiences of people who are born at the same time and mature together. Recent speculation about the distinctive work values of Millennials (e.g., Pfau, 2016; Quiggin, 2018) is reminiscent of similar questions raised by scholars about previous generations such as Generation X, the Baby Boomers, the Greatest and Silent Generations, and so on (see e.g., Lorence, 1987; Howe and Strauss, 1991).

Second, variations in work values may be due to experiences linked to aging, such as developmental or situational life course dynamics that recur over time periods and across generations. People of different ages vary during their life courses in their psychological adjustments to work and other social roles, producing dissimilarities in their needs from—and attachments to—work and what they feel is important to obtain from jobs (e.g., Kalleberg and Loscocco, 1983).

Third, differences in work values could also be due to the specific social, economic and cultural features of the time periods in which people live. Different historical periods are characterized by particular society-wide ideals about work and by differential opportunities to obtain intrinsic and extrinsic job rewards due to varying economic conditions and the ways in which work is structured; these characteristics of an historical period are also likely to affect what people come to see as important about work.

This complexity underlying temporal differences in work values helps to explain important gaps and inconsistencies in our understanding of how these work-related attitudes come about. For example, in contrast to widespread speculation about generational differences in work values, a meta-analysis of twenty published and unpublished studies concluded that few differences among generations exist, and those that do are as likely to be attributable to life course stage as to generation (Costanza et al. 2012).

Our overarching research question, then, is about the extent to which processes of aging, generational shifts, and changes across time periods are responsible for observed differences in work values in the United States. A second research question asks how indicators of inequality in social origins and labor market resources help to account for differences in work values. Our analyses are based on data from the General Social Surveys and the International Social Survey Program.

We begin with an overview of general theoretical approaches to explaining temporal differences in work values, and then state hypotheses related to cohort/generational, aging/life course and time period differences, as well as to some mechanisms related to social

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class, resources and origins. We adopt a multi-dimensional view of work values, considering both the importance people place on work generally as well as on specific work facets such as earnings, security, advancement, and intrinsic qualities that make working meaningful (e.g. opportunities to exercise autonomy and to help others and society). Thereafter we discuss our data and methods, present and summarize our findings, and discuss their implications for theory and research.

EXPLAINING TEMPORAL DIFFERENCES IN WORK VALUES

People differ in their work values because they reside in diverse social settings and have different individual needs and dispositions (see Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977). Sociological theories of work values emphasize the significant influences of social contexts in shaping and altering preferences. Their explanations of time-related differences in work values are rooted in two sets of theories. Roughly, these can be distinguished by whether the locus of mechanisms shaping work values lies *outside* of and/or prior to work lives, or *inside* work contexts, reflecting experience acquired during working careers.[1]

Theories that emphasize the importance of a person's experiences *outside the work context* for work values focus on socialization in the family of origin, learning during education, and other factors arising before labor force entry. Social backgrounds shape the importance people place on work, while both human and social capital help people to obtain work that is consistent with these work values. Such theories point to group affiliations, circumstances and experiences outside of work that influence the importance people assign to job facets and prompt them to try to select jobs with particular attributes (and employers to select workers who hold certain values).

The significance attached to particular aspects of jobs and work itself differs among social classes (Kohn, 1969), reflecting variations in social norms and cultures as well as in the opportunities people have to realize economic and non-economic rewards from jobs. Work values shaped by these early influences become increasingly stable in the years after high school (Johnson, 2001). Several other articles in this issue of the *Annals* (e.g., Sümer, Pauknerova and Vancea; Schuck and Shore) rely on this account of work values in explaining how parental resources affect the values of their children.

The second set of theories focuses on how experiences *within work contexts* during one's work career may change the importance people place on various job facets. Such theories highlight how job incumbency, other workplace events, and labor force experiences affect the aspects of jobs that workers come to see as more or less important. There are two different psychological mechanisms by which work experiences might shape work values: *reinforcement* (prompting people to value what they already have); and *problematic rewards* (emphasizing job rewards that people are less certain of obtaining, while taking what they have for granted).

[1]Of course, experiences outside and inside the work context can operate together to shape work values. Work values formed prior to labor force entry, for example, predispose people toward selecting jobs that have particular characteristics (Johnson, 2005).

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A reinforcement explanation posits that workers adapt to the realities of their jobs, by either bolstering the work values that initially led them to choose particular jobs (Gruenberg, 1980; Johnson, 2001), causing them to assign greater importance to things they have already achieved or believe to be achievable, and/or prompting them to devalue job attributes that they believe to be unattainable. Such an account is consistent with a Marxian approach asserting that alienated workers whose jobs lack challenge or intrinsic meaning may come to see work instrumentally, regarding it as a means to satisfy non-work needs, as in Goldthorpe et al.'s (1968) study of affluent workers.

An alternative psychological mechanism, "problematic rewards," posits that people may come to value job rewards that they feel least certain about obtaining at a given time. While all workers may have similar basic needs in principle, they are unequally successful in the labor market and vary in their circumstances and capacities to realize particular job rewards. Hence, people differ in what they deem important to obtain from work. This problematic rewards explanation is closely related to Maslow's (1954) notion of a "hierarchy of needs," which holds that some needs (e.g., for survival, security) are more basic than others and must be satisfied before workers become oriented toward "higher order" needs such as self-actualization. Satisfied needs, however, are not primary motivators of behavior. Applied to work values, this theory suggests that workers generally come to value meaningful, self-actualizing work only after more fundamental needs for income and security have been fulfilled.

These general explanations of temporal differences in work values underlie theories of each of the three components of temporal differences: cohort/generation, age/life course, and historical time period. We briefly discuss the rationale for anticipating differences in these three respects and provide an exemplary hypothesis about each.

Cohort/Generational Differences

Different generations may come to see work differently due to their collective socialization, such as changing ideologies about child rearing and the gender division of labor. Likewise, experiencing either scarcity (e.g. the Great Depression of the 1930s or the Great Recession of 2007–09) or abundance at a crucial juncture such as labor market entry may leave a lasting imprint on a cohort's values. Some have argued that the Millennial generation, for example, is self-absorbed and narcissistic, lazy and impatient (Twenge, 2006). Others view this cohort as less concerned with career advancement or meaningful work than with achieving greater work-life balance (Jenkins, 2006).

> H1. Millennials are more likely than members of other generations to value having flexible work schedules, given their emphasis on balancing work and family.

Aging/Life Course Differences

Aging or life course explanations maintain that the relative importance of particular job facets changes as people experience different life events such as marriage, childbirth and childrearing, mid-life crises, retirement, and so on. Values formed prior to entry into the labor force may subsequently be altered by the situational demands of different life-course stages, such as family responsibilities that pose greater or lesser needs to realize economic

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rewards from work. Johnson (2005), for example, showed how marriage and parenthood influence the importance husbands and wives place on aspects of jobs.

> H2. People in their prime working ages will place greatest importance on economic rewards, as this is when economic pressures to support a family are generally highest.

Historical Time Period Differences

Opportunities to obtain good, high-paying and secure jobs vary across economic cycles associated with different periods, highlighting the differential availability or achievability of job rewards and calling attention to those that are problematic. Similarly, sociocultural valuations placed on aspects of work (e.g., the "Greed is Good" mantra of the 1980s) vary over time in ways that may influence everyone, not just those in particular generations or age groups. The period since the mid-1970s in the United States has been called the "age of precarious work" during which the transformation of employment relations has produced greater insecurity and uncertainty for workers, and reduced opportunities for economic rewards and career advancement (Kalleberg, 2009).

> H3. Americans are more apt to value greater security, economic rewards and opportunities for advancement in recent years, as these have become increasingly problematic to attain given the rise of precarious work.

STRUCTURAL MECHANISMS

We also examine several specific structural explanations of differences in work values that are rooted in experiences both *outside* the labor market and *within* work contexts.

One prominent theory (e.g., Kohn, 1969) stresses the impacts on work values of social origins and parental influences during early childhood socialization. It holds that middle-class parents tend to accentuate the importance of autonomy and self-direction, since they have found such capacities to be most useful and rewarding during their working lives. On the other hand, working class parents are more apt to encourage obedience and conformity, again reflecting the qualities that have proved valuable to them.

> H4. People from more advantaged social origins are more apt to value intrinsic rewards such as having interesting work, since they are more likely to take extrinsic rewards for granted. Economic rewards are valued more by people from less advantaged origins.

Within the labor market, people with more resources (such as human and social capital) are better able to obtain good paying, relatively secure jobs. The problematic rewards perspective anticipates that such workers will be less apt to stress extrinsic rewards and more likely to value intrinsic ones. By contrast, those who are unemployed or lack marketable skills are more likely to place higher value on jobs that pay adequately and are relatively secure (Martin and Tuch, 1993; Kalleberg and Marsden, 2013).

> H5. People who have more resources in the labor market (e.g., men, whites, the better educated) are more likely to value intrinsic rewards as opposed to extrinsic

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rewards such as security and advancement (which are apt to be valued more by women, blacks, and the less educated).

DATA, MEASURES AND METHODS

Our analyses draw on data assembled by the General Social Survey (GSS) project, a continuing survey of U.S. adults stressing over-time replication of social indicators. The GSS has been conducted every year or two since 1972. Each round draws a new sample representative of Americans aged 18 and above, and gathers information on numerous sociodemographic variables together with many behaviors and attitudes, including work values. The GSS also collects International Social Survey Program (ISSP) data for the U.S. By measuring the same indicators repeatedly over time, its design enables both the tracking of trends and the separation of age-related from cohort-related differences. We use the 1973–2016 GSSs, especially data from ISSP modules on Work Orientations collected in 1989, 1998, 2006 and 2016.[2]

Work Values Measures

We briefly describe the eight distinct indicators of work values in our analyses; Appendix A presents the specific wording for each of these. The first is about work as a "central life interest," asking whether someone would continue to work or stop working if they were to become sufficiently wealthy to have the option. In 2016, nearly three-quarters of those questioned (71.4%) stated that they would continue working.

For the other seven indicators, respondents rate different features of jobs, including both extrinsic aspects (security, high income, potential for advancement) and intrinsic ones (interesting work, opportunity to help others, opportunity to help society); we also study ratings of flexible hours, but do not classify it as either extrinsic or intrinsic.

Ratings range from "not at all important" to "very important." In 2016, most respondents assigned high importance to all seven features: more than half rated each as "very important" or "important." Security was most often rated as "very important" (by 73.6% of respondents), followed by interesting work (51.6%), advancement (49.6%), helping society (47.5%), helping others (42.1%), high income (29.0%), and flexible hours (16.7%). Ratings of extrinsic values are moderately correlated with one another, as are those of intrinsic ones; correlations between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are weaker. Our analyses focus on factors that distinguish people who rate a given facet as "very important" as opposed to those who rate it less highly.

Explanatory Variables

Our explanatory variables include indicators of temporal differences (age, period, and cohort), variations in social origins, and current respondent characteristics. We describe these briefly here; Appendix B provides summary statistics for them in 2016.

[2]See Marsden and Smith (2012) for an overview of the GSS's basic study design and content, and Smith, Davern, Freese and Hout (2017) or http://www.gss.norc.org/ for many more details. See http://www.issp.org for information about the ISSP; the 1998, 2006, and 2016 U.S. data about work orientations were collected one year later than those for most other ISSP member countries.

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Temporal variables.—The GSS measures date of birth (and hence birth cohort) directly and calculates age as the difference between the survey date and date of birth; the survey year defines period. Consistent with general practice, we construct 12 age groups spanning approximately 5-year intervals (from 18–25 to greater than 75). We also use 5-year groups to distinguish generations, ranging from those born before 1900 to those born after 1995. For work as a central life interest, we categorize periods into 5-year intervals (from 1972–75 through 2011–16); We have only one measure per decade for the seven ISSP ratings, however, so there the periods refer to years 1989, 1998, 2006, and 2016.

Social Origins.—We tap differences in the class-related socialization to which respondents are exposed via retrospective reports about the family of origin when a respondent was 16 years old. We rely primarily on reports about the years of education completed by the respondent's parents.[3] Parents' education is closely linked to all three types of resources that parents might convey to children: cultural; social; and economic/financial (see the other articles in this *Annals* issue).

Respondent Characteristics.—To represent variations in ascribed characteristics, we use indicator variables identifying black and male respondents. Years of education and the socioeconomic index (SEI) score for a respondent's primary occupation[4] measure differences in achieved status. We also incorporate life-course variations by including an indicator variable for marital status and a measure of the number of children (age 17 or less) who live in the respondent's household.

Analytic Methods

We assess our hypotheses using hierarchical logistic regression analyses (Yang and Land, 2013, in which period and cohort differences are modeled using random effects.[5] Graphs portray age, time period and cohort differences. We describe the associations of other predictors with work values (see Table 1) by assessing predicted probabilities of holding particular work values at illustrative levels of each explanatory variable, while holding the others constant at average values.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows how overall commitment to work as a central life activity varies with age, period, and cohort. Solid lines represent trends by age, period and cohort in the estimated probability that one would continue to work in the event that s/he were to become wealthy.

[3]We use the average of separate reports about the mother and the father to represent educational origins if both are available, and otherwise a report about a single parent. Because the 2006 GSS did not ask the respondents who answered the ISSP work orientations questions to also answer questions about parental education, we are unable to simultaneously estimate differences by parental education and the effect of being observed in 2006. For all predictors other than parental education, findings presented below are based on analyses that include the cases from 2006. Findings for parental education are from identical analyses that omit the 2006 observations; in the latter, findings for predictors other than parental education are substantively similar to those displayed.

[4]See Hout, Smith and Marsden (2016) on the construction of these scores; higher scores indicate higher standing. For those who are currently unemployed or retired, the SEI measure refers to the respondent's most recent occupation.

[5]We use listwise deletion as a missing value treatment. We obtain similar findings using the intrinsic estimator described by Yang and Land (2013). Estimates were obtained via the xtmelogit routine implemented in Stata (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2012). Because estimating generalized linear mixed models with crossed random effects makes very intensive demands on computation time, we present estimates based on a Laplace approximation.

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Grey areas represent confidence bands around those trends, while the dotted line shows the estimated probability that an average person would continue to work.[6]

In the upper panel of Figure 1, we see that aging effects are dominant—after adjusting for period and cohort differences—in shaping whether people would to continue work if they were to become wealthy. At average values of other predictors, an estimated 80% of younger workers say that they would continue to work; the "continue" percentage declines monotonically (to about 55%) until age 65, after which it increases somewhat. The upswing in the latter age groups likely reflects selection into the labor force beyond the conventional age of retirement.[7]

The prominence of work as a central life interest also varies across periods (middle panel of Figure 1), though differences among periods are much smaller than those among age groups; holding other predictors constant at average values, period-specific proportions of people who would continue to work vary between about 0.67 and 0.72. Somewhat higher proportions of Americans regarded work as a central life interest between 1976 and 1990; this then dipped a bit in 1991–1995, before beginning to increase gently until 2011–2016.

Cohort effects on work as a central life interest are statistically detectable, but substantively minor, as shown by the small cohort variations seen in the lower panel of Figure 1. Aside from a slightly lower propensity to continue working among people born between 1955 and 1969, the estimated cohort differences display little pattern. Our results for the seven indicators of importance placed on specific work facets (see below) also reflect an absence of pronounced cohort differences. This relative lack of cohort effects casts doubt on speculations about the distinctiveness of work values held by the Millennial generation, or its predecessors.

Age, Generation and Time Period Differences in Types of Work Values

Turning to the valuation placed on specific aspects of work, the temporal differences that arise most consistently have to do changes over *time periods*. These are statistically significant and substantively meaningful for six of the seven ratings of the importance of specific aspects of work we examined (all except flexible hours), as shown in Figure 2.[8]

In general, people seem to demand more of their jobs in recent periods, assigning more importance to most work facets than previously. In particular, we find that in recent periods people assign greater priority to jobs that have security, high income and opportunities for advancement—especially after 2006 (for security) and 1998 (for income and promotion chances). These results are consistent with both H3 and a problematic rewards situational explanation asserting that workers tend to place greater emphasis on work values that they find most difficult to realize. Opportunities for advancement with one's employer and to obtain high incomes have generally declined in recent decades, leading Americans to see

[6]The temporal trends displayed in our figures are adjusted for other temporal components (e.g., cohort and period in the case of age) as well as the other explanatory variables listed in Table 1.

[7]Only labor force participants are asked the "central life interest" question. Hence those who have already stopped working (or looking for work) because they have sufficient wealth or other assured income sources are not among those questioned.

[8]Temporal variations in the rating of flexible hours are minor and unpatterned, so we do not display the corresponding graphs in Figures 2 and 3.

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their work increasingly in market-oriented, instrumental terms (see Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg and Marsden, 2013). It also seems eminently plausible that the large rise in the importance assigned to job security in 2016 (by which time the adjusted probability of a "very important" rating of security exceeded 0.7) reflects painful memories throughout the society of the Great Recession that began in December 2007, together with the heightened insecurity and increasingly precarious work characteristic of the U.S. and other rich democracies in this period (e.g., Kalleberg, 2018).

Other notable period-related differences include a general rise in the importance assigned to the three intrinsic work values (interesting jobs, and work that helps others and society). The ratings of these are notably higher in 2006 and 2016 by comparison with 1989 and 1998. The rise in the importance of having interesting work from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s may reflect the greater availability of such jobs (which would be consistent with a reinforcement explanation), as corporate restructuring led to reductions in middle management and gave workers in many organizations more opportunities to participate in decision-making, thereby increasing opportunities to obtain challenging work that utilized their skills (Kalleberg, 2009). The greater importance placed on helping others and society—additional sources of intrinsic meaning from work—also increased markedly until 2006, after which it levelled off or grew more slowly. The economic crisis of 2007–9 thus appears to have led people to place more priority on extrinsic aspects of work.

Age differences in work values are displayed in Figure 3. These are generally somewhat smaller than the period differences shown in Figure 2, though some notable variations across age groups are evident.

The importance people place on jobs offering high income is greatest between the ages of 26 and 45, in line with H2. Family responsibilities are most pressing at those ages. Valuation of opportunities for advancement declines more or less steadily with age until the midlife years, after which it levels off. Younger people (aged 18–25) place the most emphasis on interesting work, perhaps reflecting the idealism of those with less experience in the labor market, though age-related variations here are modest. Work that helps others or society is somewhat less valued by the oldest age groups.

By contrast, differences among cohorts or generations are very small, unpatterned and usually not statistically significant. For this reason, we do not display them in a separate figure. In particular, Millennials do not appear to differ from members of other generations in their work values, even the importance of flexible schedules. Thus, we find no support for H1.

Structural Mechanisms

People from more advantaged social origins (i.e., whose parents have more education) are more likely to assign high importance to interesting work and less apt to emphasize security, high income, good promotion opportunities, or jobs that help society and others, supporting H4 (see Table 1). A person whose parents have 8 years of education, and who is average on other predictors, has a predicted probability of 0.66 of rating security as "very important," for example; this falls to 0.58 for an otherwise-similar person with college-educated (16

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years) parents. Those with more highly educated parents are also less likely to regard contributing to society as a high priority; we speculate that those who experience disadvantaged conditions are more inclined to try to help others avoid them.

Those who have more resources in the labor market are more likely to value intrinsic rewards as opposed to extrinsic factors such as security and advancement (which are valued more by less advantaged members of the labor force)—providing a great deal of empirical support for H5 (see Table 1). Respondents with more education more often place high importance on interesting work and less on having secure, high paying jobs with greater promotion opportunities. More educated people are also more apt to say they would continue working if they were to become financially independent, perhaps reflecting a greater intrinsic appeal of their work activities or a greater opportunity cost of exiting the labor force. By and large, higher occupational status is associated with work values in the same way that higher education is, though those with higher SEI scores are no more likely than those with lower ones to regard work as a central life interest.

As well, black respondents are more likely than non-black ones to place greater importance on most of the specific values, including security, high income, advancement, helping both others and society, and flexible schedules, though not having interesting jobs. Blacks do not differ significantly from non-blacks in whether they would continue working if they no longer needed to earn an income, though.

Turning to gender differences, we find that men are more apt to see work as a central feature of their lives, but for the most part less likely to regard the seven specific facets of jobs as highly as women do. Women assign significantly greater importance than men to having secure jobs, jobs in which they can help both others and society, and flexible working hours.

Married people are significantly less apt than the unmarried to see work as a continuing life activity, and to regard security, high income, and interesting work as having high importance. We conjecture that having a spouse is an alternative source of fulfillment that the unmarried lack. We also found that having children at home raises the prospect that one regards working as a central life interest, while reducing emphasis on having interesting work.

CONCLUSIONS

We examined how three distinct processes—generational shifts, aging, and changes over time periods—result in temporal differences in work values in the United States. Our analyses of data from the GSS and the ISSP showed that the most widespread differences in work values have to do with variations in the *time periods* during which people live. In particular, in recent periods Americans tend to place greater importance on jobs that provide security, high income and greater opportunities for advancement; this is consistent with the view that these job rewards have become more difficult to attain in recent years and thus more problematic for workers.

We found significant overall age differences in the centrality of work within peoples' lives, a steady decline until the conventional age of retirement (65). Our results also indicate that

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people in their prime working ages place greater importance on income and security, while younger people are most apt to value interesting work.

On the other hand, we found few if any meaningful differences in work values among people in different cohorts or generations. This finding suggests that much speculation about the distinctiveness of values for particular generations lacks a strong empirical grounding, at least for the U.S. The work values of young people may well be different from those of older ones, but such age differences do not appear to be mainly attributable to either youth or cohort membership. To the extent that we are seeing "global generations" (Edmunds and Turner, 2005) that have similar patterns of work values (and other attitudes and ideologies) in different countries, then, these similarities are likely due more to parallel developments during those time periods (such as technological innovations that shape the structure of work in similar ways among countries, or that promote diffusion across countries) than to specific generational characteristics.

We also found evidence that those from more advantaged social origins and with more labor market resources were more apt to assign greater importance to interesting work and less to extrinsic rewards such as high income, security and opportunities for advancement. These findings too are consistent with a "problematic rewards" explanation.

The centrality of period differences in work values underscores the profound impacts of work structures and the availability of various types of job rewards—coupled with cultural narratives about the role of work within societies at particular times—on peoples' attitudes toward work. This highlights the importance of understanding differences in work values in terms of the larger environments in which people live. In turn, this points to the need to examine how work values vary across countries that have different labor market and social welfare protection institutions, economic conditions, and cultural values. The articles in this issue of the *Annals* illustrate some of these cross-country differences.

Appendix A.: Wording of GSS/ISSP questions on work values

The GSS question about "work as a central life interest" is:

> If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you would like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or would you stop working?

Response categories are "continue to work" and "stop working." The question is asked of all respondents in the labor force (i.e. working full- or part-time, or unemployed but seeking work).

The ISSP measures work values using a question battery; all respondents (employed or not) rate the importance of different facets of jobs. It begins with

> For each of the following, please tell me how important you personally think it is in a job.
>
> How important is …

These seven aspects of jobs are considered here:

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job security

high income

good opportunities for advancement

an interesting job

a job that allows someone to help other people

a job that is useful to society

a job that allows someone to decide their times or days of work

[in 2016]

Respondents rate each aspect as "*very important*," "*important*," "*neither important nor unimportant*," "*not important*" or "*not important at all*." The 1989, 1996, and 2006 ISSPs asked respondents to rate "*a job with flexible working hours*" rather than "*a job that allows someone to decide their times or days of work*"; we treat the two wordings as equivalent.

These seven questions are asked of all respondents. We found no notable differences in ratings between those in and outside of the labor force, and hence retain all respondents in our analyses in order to increase the precision of estimates.

Appendix B.: Indicators of Explanatory Variables

The illustrative descriptive statistics for the explanatory variables presented here are for the 1473 GSS respondents in 2016 who rated at least one of the seven job facets considered in our analyses.

Temporal variables

Year of birth: mean, 1967; standard deviation 17.28; interquartile range from 1954 to 1981.

Age: mean, 49.0; standard deviation 17.26; interquartile range from 35 to 62.

Social origins

Mean parental education: mean, 11.8 years; standard deviation, 3.7 years; interquartile range from 10.5 to 14 years.

Respondent characteristics

Education: mean, 13.8 years; standard deviation, 3.0 years; interquartile range from 12 to 16 years.

SEI of primary occupation: mean, 47.1 points; standard deviation, 22.5 points; interquartile range from 26.9 to 67.7 points.

Male: 47.8 percent.

Black: 17.7 percent.

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Marital status: 42.9 percent married.

Children 18 or under at home: top-coded at “6 or more” to limit skew. Mean, 0.48; standard deviation, 0.97; interquartile range from 0 to 1.

Appendix Table 1

Differences in Work Values: Logistic Regression Coefficients[a]

	“Very Important” Rating of …							
	Continue Working	**Secure Job**	**High Income**	**Advancement**	**Interesting Job**	**Help Others**	**Help Society**	**Flexible Hours**
Age[b]	#		#	#			#	#
18–25	0.49*	−0.12	−0.11	0.32*	0.20*	−0.02	0.16	−0.01
26–30	0.30*	−0.06	0.20	0.28*	0.05	0.01	−0.08	0.12
31–35	−0.19*	0.12	0.28*	0.26*	−0.13	0.12	0.12	0.34*
36–40	0.05	0.13	0.26*	0.23*	−0.04	0.05	−0.06	0.03
41–45	−0.01	0.07	0.27*	0.02	0.04	0.29*	0.22*	0.34*
46–50	−0.17*	0.10	0.01	−0.11	−0.10	0.02	−0.00	−0.04
51–55	−0.32*	0.01	0.04	−0.27*	−0.01	0.07	0.09	0.06
56–60	−0.55*	−0.05	−0.05	−0.27*	−0.01	0.03	0.10	0.03
61–65	−0.65*	−0.00	−0.16	−0.09	0.07	−0.02	0.07	0.19
66–70	−0.03	−0.01	−0.10	−0.21	0.03	−0.10	−0.07	−0.26
71–75	−0.01	−0.05	−0.28	−0.05	−0.03	−0.12	−0.19	−0.34
Over 75	−0.25	−0.15	−0.36*	−0.37	−0.08	−0.32*	−0.36*	−0.45*
Male	0.23*	−0.23*	0.06	−0.01	−0.08	−0.32*	−0.14*	−0.23*
Black	−0.06	0.35*	0.86*	0.65*	−0.00	0.36*	0.34*	0.45*
Parental Education[c]	0.00	−0.04*	−0.06*	−0.03*	0.02*	−0.02	−0.03*	−0.02
Education	0.05*	−0.10*	−0.11*	−0.04*	0.04*	0.01	0.02	−0.06*
SEI of occupation	0.00	−0.00*	−0.01*	−0.00*	0.01*	0.00	0.00	0.00
# Children at home	0.05*	−0.04	0.01	−0.06	−0.09*	−0.05	−0.03	−0.04
Married	−0.15*	−0.15*	−0.27*	−0.06	−0.18*	−0.06	−0.03	−0.12
Constant	0.87*	0.54*	−1.15*	−0.35*	0.04	−0.66*	−0.51*	−1.73*
Standard deviation of random effects								
Period	0.10*	0.37*	0.16*	0.20*	0.17*	0.35*	0.35*	0
Cohort	0.06*	0	0	0.04	0.03	0	0	0.12
(N)[d]	(21,950)	(5,219)	(5,193)	(5,198)	(5,205)	(5,199)	(5,198)	(5,177)

[a] estimates from hierarchical age-period cohort models with random effects for period and cohort groups.

[b] effect-coded contrasts; coefficients sum to zero across the 12 age groups.

[c] estimates for parental education are from a separate model that excludes the year 2006 observations; other coefficients are substantively similar.

[d] For parental education, N is roughly 1500 smaller.

* denotes p<0.05 for individual regression coefficients.

differences among the 12 age groups statistically significant at <0.05.

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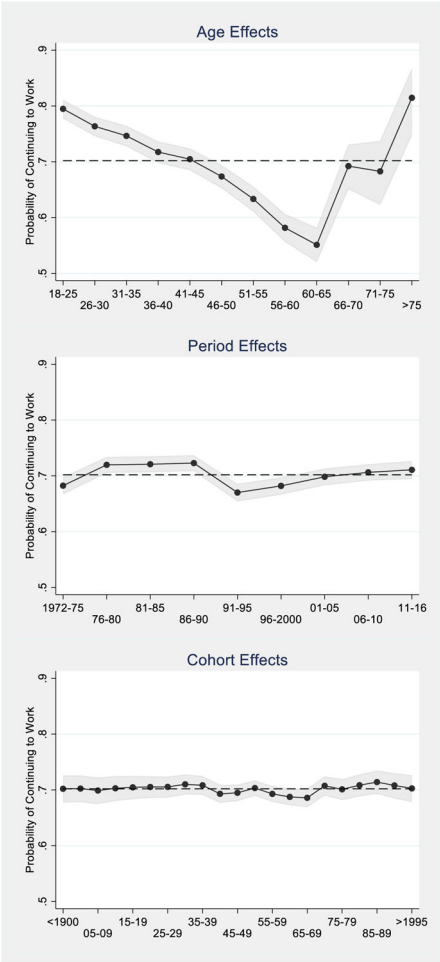

Figure 1.
Work as a Central Life Interest: Age, Period and Cohort Differences

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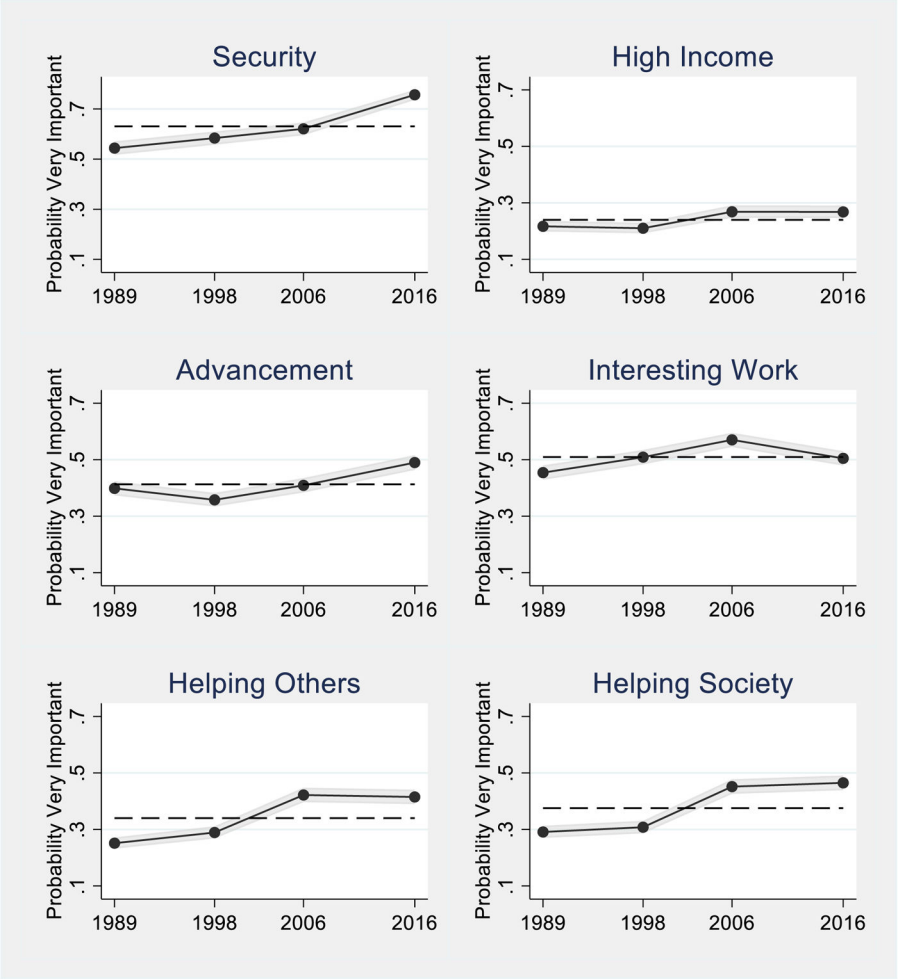

Figure 2.
Period Differences in Work Values

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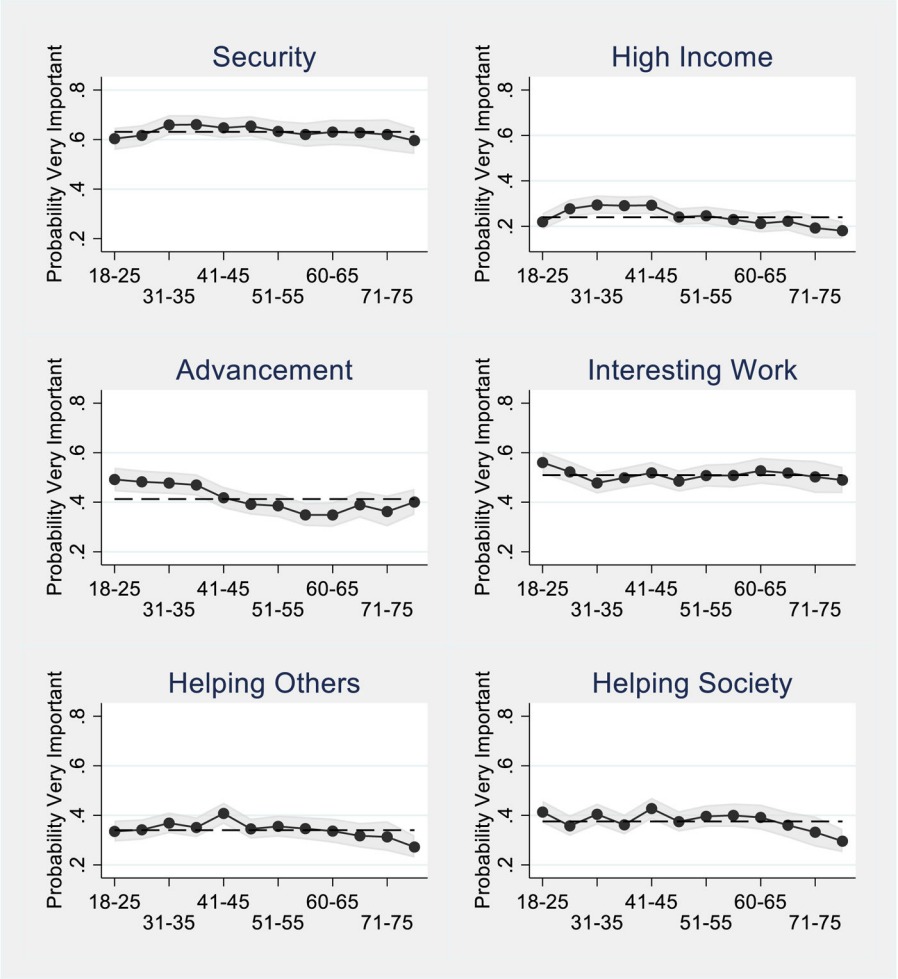

Figure 3.
Age Differences in Work Values

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Table 1

Adjusted Predicted Probabilities of Holding Work Values, at Selected Illustrative Values of Respondent Characteristics

	"Very Important" Rating of …							
Explanatory Variable	**Continue Working**	**Secure Job**	**High Income**	**Advancement**	**Interesting Job**	**Help Others**	**Help Society**	**Flexible Hours**
Sex								
Male	**0.72**	**0.60**	0.25	0.41	0.50	**0.30**	**0.35**	**0.14**
Female	**0.68**	**0.65**	0.24	0.41	0.52	**0.37**	**0.39**	**0.16**
Race								
Black	0.69	**0.70**	**0.40**	**0.55**	0.51	**0.41**	**0.44**	**0.20**
Nonblack	0.70	**0.62**	**0.22**	**0.39**	0.51	**0.33**	**0.36**	**0.14**
Education								
8 years	**0.65**	**0.74**	**0.36**	**0.47**	**0.46**	0.36	0.36	**0.20**
12 years	**0.69**	**0.66**	**0.27**	**0.43**	**0.50**	0.34	0.37	**0.16**
16 years	**0.73**	**0.57**	**0.19**	**0.38**	**0.54**	0.33	0.38	**0.13**
Marital Status								
Married	**0.69**	**0.61**	**0.21**	0.40	**0.48**	0.33	0.37	0.16
Unmarried	**0.72**	**0.65**	**0.26**	0.42	**0.53**	0.35	0.38	0.14
# Children at home								
0	**0.69**	0.64	0.24	0.42	**0.52**	0.35	0.38	0.15
2	**0.72**	0.62	0.24	0.39	**0.48**	0.32	0.37	0.15
SEI of occupation								
20	0.70	**0.66**	**0.28**	**0.44**	**0.47**	0.33	0.37	0.14
45	0.70	**0.63**	**0.24**	**0.41**	**0.51**	0.34	0.37	0.15
70	0.71	**0.60**	**0.21**	**0.38**	**0.55**	0.35	0.38	0.16
Parental Education[a]								
8 years	0.70	**0.66**	**0.26**	**0.45**	**0.47**	0.32	**0.37**	0.15
12 years	0.70	**0.62**	**0.21**	**0.42**	**0.49**	0.30	**0.34**	0.15
16 years	0.71	**0.58**	**0.17**	**0.38**	**0.51**	0.28	**0.31**	0.14
(N)[b]	(21,950)	(5,219)	(5,193)	(5,198)	(5,205)	(5,199)	(5,198)	(5,177)

Note: Entries give the predicted probability of holding a work value among people in the indicated group, holding all other predictors (including age, period and cohort) constant at average values. **Bold** entries correspond to statistically significant ($p<0.05$) differences.

[a] Estimates for parental education are based on a separate model that excludes observations made in 2006.

[b] For parental education, N is smaller by roughly 1500.