

Values and Work: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Perspective

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Cet article fait la revue de la littérature concernant les valeurs et le travail, en examinant les études sur (1) la structure des valeurs, (2) les profils et configurations de valeurs, et (3) le changement de valeurs. Des études sur la structure des valeurs ont essayé de trouver des “dimensions de base” relatives aux valeurs en analysant les relations empiriques existantes entre des mesures de valeurs dans différentes populations. Ainsi apparaissent des convergences limitées entre de telles dimensions de base. Par voie de conséquence la théorie des valeurs a peu à offrir si ce n’est qu’un bricolage de modèles structurels. D’autres études ont montré que les nations, les pays et d’autres catégories sociales, manifestent des profils et configurations de valeurs distincts. A cause d’un manque de recherche théorique les origines de ces différences sont encore mal comprises. Cela vaut aussi pour la recherche sur les changements de valeurs à travers le temps. La plupart des chercheurs sur les valeurs semblent avoir adopté un champ d’exploration étroit en se concentrant sur les valeurs *per se* plutôt que sur le rôle des valeurs au regard d’une théorie sociale ou comportementale. Tout ceci peut avoir restreint la pertinence de la recherche sur les valeurs en psychologie appliquée. Pour identifier les lacunes de notre connaissance actuelle, il est présenté un modèle intégrateur qui recouvre trois éléments (valeurs générales, valeurs de travail, et activités de travail) et trois niveaux (pays, groupes, et individus). Ce modèle peut aussi servir à cadrer la recherche sur les besoins en psychologie appliquée.

This article reviews the literature concerning values and work, examining studies on (1) the structure of values, (2) value profiles and patterns, and (3) value change. Studies on the structure of values have tried to find “basic value dimensions”, analysing empirical relationships between value measures in

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different populations. There appears to be limited convergence between such “basic dimensions”. As a result, value theory has little to offer but a *bricolage* of structural models. Other studies have shown nations, countries, and other social categories to display distinct value profiles or patterns. Due to a lack of theoretical research the origins of such differences are still poorly understood. The same is true for research on changes in values over time. Most value researchers seem to have adopted a narrow focus, concentrating on values *per se* rather than on the role of values in social or behavioural theory. This may have restricted the relevance of value research for applied psychology. To identify the gaps in our current knowledge an integrative model is presented which covers three elements (general values, work values, and work activities) and three levels (country, groups, and individuals). This model may also be useful in tuning research to the needs of applied psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years a great deal of research has been devoted to the study of values in relation to work. The fact that work has attracted relatively more research attention than other life domains, such as family, leisure, community, and religion, can be explained by the key role that work plays in social life, not only as the primary source of income, but also as a base for social participation, social status, consumption, health, family life, and so on. Since the early 1980s several large-scale comparative studies have been undertaken, which show the differences between citizens from various countries or nations with respect to the importance of work (Super, 1980; Super & Sverko, 1995), the meaning of work (MOW International Research Team, 1987), and a series of other work value dimensions (Elizur, Borg, Hunt, & Beck, 1991; Hofstede, 1984; Zanders, 1992). Most of these studies have treated work-related values as expressions of more general life values, and have made efforts to interpret the differences in terms of broader cultural patterns, reflecting the historical development of the particular countries or regions and the adaptation to their environments. Some studies, following Weber’s thesis on the Protestant Ethic, have looked at the link between work-related values and overall economic performance (see Furnham et al., 1993). In another vein, work values have been investigated at the level of occupational categories (e.g. Ball, Farnill, Beiers, & Lindorff, 1989; Zanders & Harding, 1995) and at the level of the individual (e.g. Allport & Vernon, 1931; Super, 1969). In the latter case, values have been related to interests and other motivational notions, and used to explain differences in people’s occupational behaviour, in particular vocational choice. A general assumption, underlying most of the research and theorising on values, has been that shared values as expressed at the collective level on the one side, and individual values as operating in daily occupational behaviour on the other side, are somehow interrelated, although its causality is still a debated issue.

In view of all the studies conducted, one might now start to think of integrating the various findings in a more comprehensive theory on values and work, ranging from the cultural to the individual level. Few authors (e.g. Erez & Earley, 1993; Triandis, 1972) have had the courage to embark on this. The aim of this special issue is more modest, but the direction is the same.¹ It is to review the research on values and work, to show some typical findings from large-scale research projects, to identify some major theoretical issues, to discuss what is currently known about them, and to generate ideas about how the different approaches can be linked to one another. To this purpose a multilevel framework model will be presented.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

What are values? The literature gives an abundant number of *definitions of values*. Much cited is Rokeach (1973, p.5), who defines a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.” Super (1980, p.130) defines a value as “an objective, either a psychological state, a relationship, or material condition, that one seeks to attain.” Hofstede (1984, p.18) defines values as “a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others.” A more elaborate definition is given by Schwartz (1992, p.2), who defines values as “desirable states, objects, goals, or behaviours, transcending specific situations and applied as normative standards to judge and to choose among alternative modes of behavior.” An important merit of this latter definition is that it distinguishes values from attitudes by pointing at their generalised nature. *Attitudes* are people’s beliefs about specific objects or situations (Hollander, 1971). They can be considered as taking a lower place in the person’s hierarchy of beliefs (Rokeach, 1973). Another difference is that attitudes can be positive or negative, whereas values are always positive, i.e. in favour of something. Less specific than attitudes but more specific than values are “*interests*” (Dawis, 1991; Roe, 1981). This notion has mostly been used in the domain of work in connection with vocational choice, and refers to a person’s preference or liking for particular types of occupational activities. On the individual level the demarcation line between interests and values is not easy to draw, but unlike values, interests are typically not shared socially within larger communities.

All definitions treat values as latent constructs that refer to the way in which people evaluate activities or outcomes. Thus, generally speaking, the notion of value points at a relationship between an evaluating subject and an

¹ This special issue is based on a Symposium on Values and Work that was held at the Work & Organization Research Centre (WORC) of Tilburg University, Tilburg, the Netherlands, on 9–12 November, 1994.

evaluated object, whereby this relationship is supposed to be durable and to have implications for the subject's subsequent activity. Holders of values are not necessarily individuals but may also be collectivities, i.e. the people belonging to a certain occupational group, a firm, a subculture, a community, a national category, or a country. One might even speak of the values of people living in a certain geographical or geopolitical region. For the sake of convenience we propose to speak about *value holders* (or *value-holding entities*) at three levels, i.e. countries, groups, and individuals.²

There are some difficulties, however, in defining the values held by groups or countries. One of these difficulties is whether or not it should be assumed that values are indeed shared. Although the assumption is easily made (e.g. Hofstede, 1980, 1984; Inkeles & Smith, 1974; Schwartz, 1992), it is not at all easy to certify that values are actually shared. A certain level of homogeneity would seem to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for sharing. Moreover, assuming that values are shared seems to preclude the possibility of divergence or conflict of values within groups or countries. This difficulty may be partly resolved by assuming that the entities at the three levels are nested (individuals within groups, groups within countries) whereby the level of homogeneity increases the lower one gets. The assumption of shared values generates some other inconveniences. For instance, researchers who derive "cultural" values from individual values by mere aggregation, and postulate that individual values are influenced by cultural values, face the risk of causal inconsistency. This is particularly obvious when dealing with change. It is hard to assume that a change in cultural values causes a change in individual values if the change in cultural values is operationally defined as the sum of individual changes. One would have to define macro-level constructs differently in order to avoid such problems (Liska, 1990).

In the literature a distinction is made between *general values*, or general life values, and values concerning specific life domains. As work is considered to be such a domain, *work values* by implication have a more specific meaning than general values. The relationships between general values and work values are being conceived in different ways. One view is that values have a particular cognitive structure which produces a structural similarity between general values and work values. This view is represented and empirically corroborated by Elizur and Sagie (in this special issue). Another view is that general values produce work values; for example, that work values emerge from the projection of general values onto the domain

² One might also speak of societies, or alternatively nations. We prefer to speak of countries because of the more precise meaning of this term and because most research publications deal with countries as entities.

of work. Most researchers seem to assume that work values do somehow derive from general values, but they are not very explicit about the causal nature of this process. Many studies have found general values to correlate with work values of a similar content (e.g. Kinnane & Gaubinger, 1963; Schwartz, and Ros, Schwartz, and Surkiss in this special issue), which is in agreement with this assumption. Work values might, alternatively, be seen as a *source* from which general values develop. Work values seem to diffuse easily through such channels as management literature, consultancy, and training, by the way of international conventions and laws (e.g. labour codes), and through multinational corporate management. This especially holds in contemporary globalised business life. In this way modern work practices and standards may generate work-related values that generalise into the wider social life. There is as yet very little empirical evidence to support this position, but a study by Selmer and De Leon (1996) on organisational “acculturation” shows that multinational corporations can play a role in the transmission of values. It would be of theoretical interest for researchers to further examine this issue of interconnectedness and causality, and to contrast the two ways in which general and work values may influence each other.

It is important to note that in modern societies work values are typically considered as salient, basic, and influential. This is clearly demonstrated by research on “work centrality” carried out in the context of the Meaning of Working project (England, 1991; MOW International Research Team, 1987), as well as the Work Importance Study (see Sverko, in this special issue). The importance of the work role in many cultures makes work values into core values that take a cardinal position in the overall pattern of values.

Finally, something should be said about values in relation to *work activity*. There is general agreement in the literature that values do not influence people’s activity directly, but rather indirectly, through attitudes and goals. Thus, values are seen as a source of motivation for individual action. With respect to the societal level, a similar indirect influence is assumed: values define norms and shared goals, which elicit and guide collective action. Although people’s activity in the work domain, such as looking for a job, taking part in training, performing organisational roles, dividing time between work and family, is likely to depend more on work values than on general values, the role of general values should not be overlooked. Religiosity, for instance, is likely to have an impact on how people deal with clients, how they behave vis-à-vis colleagues, or how they balance work, family, and leisure roles. A study by Sagie (1993) shows religiosity to be a factor that determines how young people perceive their work obligations. This issue will be taken up in the final section of this article.

STRUCTURE OF VALUES

Several authors have postulated dimensions exhibiting different value orientations that people in society can have. Parsons and Shils (1951) distinguish five polar dimensions on which people have to make a choice, i.e. affectivity vs. affective neutrality; self- vs. collectivity orientation; universalism vs. particularism; ascription vs. achievement; specificity vs. diffuseness. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) distinguish five (other) value orientations to differentiate between cultures, i.e. human nature (good-bad); human position towards nature (subjugation-mastery); time (past-future); activity (being-doing); relational (linearity-individualism). Some authors have proposed dimensions to differentiate values at the level of the individual and have used psychometric techniques to measure such values. Well known examples are the "Study of Values" of Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey (1960), which has scales for theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious values, and Super's "Work Values Inventory" (1969), which covers the values altruism, aesthetics, creativity, intellectual stimulation, independence, achievement, prestige, management, economic returns, security, surroundings, supervisory relations, associates, variety, and way of life. The "Rokeach Value Survey" (1973, 1979) covers instrumental values such as being broadminded, clean, forgiving, helpful, honest, responsible, and terminal values such as comfortable life, equality, freedom, salvation, true friendship, and wisdom. Its structure has recently been re-examined by Crosby, Bitner, and Gill (1990), and by Braithwaite and Law (1985).

Numerous other researchers have tried to empirically define basic dimensions of general values (e.g. Elizur, 1984; Elizur et al., 1991; Hofstede, 1980, 1984; Sagie & Elizur, 1996; Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990), as well as work values (Borg & Galinat, 1986; Ronen, 1985; Ronen, Kraut, Lingo, & Aranya, 1979; Sverko, 1995). We refrain from listing all the dimensions, making an exception for the much cited research by Hofstede (1980, 1990). He found the following four value dimensions—power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity-femininity—to differentiate within a very large sample of people employed by IBM in different countries.

Researchers have used mathematical techniques such as factor analysis and smallest space analysis to draw up a space in which both singular values, or value expressions, and value holders can be displayed. There is limited convergence between the results of these analyses, which is not surprising as the studies employ different value holders, different value attributes, and different measurement techniques. It is obvious that the analysis of mean scores on value scales of individuals in a sample involving several countries will not produce the same results as the analysis of similar individual data in

subsamples from separate countries (see the contributions by Schwartz and by Ros et al. in this special issue). Yet each type of study may give stable outcomes. As a consequence we find ourselves in the theoretically unsatisfactory situation of having a multitude of “basic dimensions” that are difficult to compare and to combine. This is true for general values as well as for work values. The relationships between the two kinds of dimensions are unclear as well. Thus, there is an apparent need to overcome this *bricolage* of basic value dimensions by systematic comparative research, and to further theorise on how different types of values interrelate.

VALUE PROFILES AND PATTERNS

Once a space for depicting values has been defined, singular social entities (countries, groups, individuals) may be located in it and differences may be investigated. Many studies have done so. The typical approach is to produce *profiles* of coordinates, showing the (mean) scores of various entities on a number of value dimensions. A theoretical assumption sometimes made is that a particular relationship exists between the different elements of the profile, making it into a value *pattern* (also referred to as “value system”). Parsons and Shils (1951), for example, speak of a value pattern that reflects the specific way in which a society adapts itself to its environment. Rokeach (1973, p.5) refers in a similar way to value systems at the individual level: “A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance.”

If the number of dimensions is not too high, the location of the entities in the value space can be depicted graphically. With orthogonal factor analysis two or three dimensions are the maximum. With correlated factors the result of a second-order analysis can be shown. The case of smallest space analysis is similar.

The literature is replete with studies showing value profiles and patterns. Cross-national and national country profiles of general values have, for example, been published by Inglehart (1990), Basanez, Inglehart, and Moreno (1996), Triandis (1990, 1995), Ester, Halman, and De Moor (1993), and De Moor (1995), and similar studies of work values by Zanders (1992), the MOW International Research Team (1987), Ronen (1994), Super and Sverko (1995), and Bae and Chung (1997). Analogously, there are many studies depicting the value profiles of particular occupational groups (e.g. Harpaz, 1985; Shapira & Griffith, 1990; Zanders & Harding, 1995), as well as age and gender groups (e.g. Cherrington, Conde, & England, 1979; De Vaus & McAllister, 1991; Mannheim, 1993; Rowe & Snizek, 1995).

In this special issue one also finds some profiling studies. Schwartz presents data on the value profiles of *nations* and their position in a general value space, claimed to be encompassing and universal. He demonstrates how 49 nations can be located in a space defined by smallest space analysis using aggregate scores on scales for general values, taken as measures of values at the cultural level. Schwartz analyses two specific samples, teachers and students, but argues that both groups can be viewed as indicative for the nation as a whole. Ros et al. use a comparable methodology, but their focus is on the particular position of two *occupational groups*, i.e. teachers and students in Spain, and the differences between them. They use non-aggregated scores, which are seen as indicators of individual values.

Descriptive studies revealing and comparing the profiles of particular nations or groups, are of interest in themselves. But once differences are found one should explain where these differences come from and which consequences they have for social and individual life. Unfortunately, this kind of explanatory research on values is still rather scarce. Research studies with a sociological origin typically look for differences in the natural environment, economic circumstances, and religion as explaining factors (e.g. Parsons & Shils, 1951). More recent research has put more emphasis on economic development and the process of modernisation resulting from it (e.g. Ester et al., 1993). We will come back to modernisation later, when discussing changes in values. Studies of individual values consider such societal factors as "distal" and look for more proximal factors, such as the person's occupation, family situation, and demographic characteristics (Triandis, 1972; Zanders, 1993).

As for consequences, there has been research showing differences in values between countries to be related to social norms and policies (e.g. Heaven, 1990; Van Deth & Scarborough, 1995; Wilhelmsson, 1993), as well as to economic activity (Yankelovits et al., 1985). Work values have been linked with a variety of individual behaviours, including labour market participation (Feather, 1990; Lobodzinska, 1996), career choice (Kalleberg & Stark, 1993; Young, 1984; Zytowski, 1994) and work performance (Swenson & Herche, 1994; Vora, 1993).

The lack of theorising on values has been critically addressed by Hechter (1993). In his view no compelling substantive theories of values have emerged. He lists (pp.3–10) four major impediments to the study of values: (1) "Values can take many forms, but all of these are unobservable"; (2) "Existing theoretical traditions provide little guidance for understanding how values shape behavior"; (3) "Postulating values in behavioral explanations is unconvincing when the processes that generate them are unknown"; (4) "Measurement problems abound". He convincingly calls for an effort to build an integrated, interdisciplinary theory based on novel measurement approaches.

VALUE CHANGE

Another major research issue is the change of values. Value change can be understood in different ways. First of all as *change within the value profile* of a country, group, or individual. Many types of profile change are conceivable. For example, certain values within a profile may get a higher or lower *mean* score. But a general rise or decline of the profile is also possible. Inglehart (1990) has demonstrated an overall shift in values among successive generations in Western countries, which he has labelled as a transition from materialist to post-materialist values. Similar research on general value changes in various countries in Europe and North America have been reported by Ester et al. (1993). Research by Zanders (1992, 1993), based on the same data set but focusing on work values, has demonstrated partial changes, such as an increase in the value of personal development in certain countries (e.g. Sweden and the Netherlands). Values related to comfort and material conditions failed to show significant change. Changes in the meaning of work have been reported by Ruiz Quintanilla and Wilpert (1991). They found a decrease of work centrality in German samples over a six-year period. While the value of the work role decreased, the value of leisure increased. Also the expressive side of work was valued higher and the obligation side lower. The magnitude of these changes was small, however. A similar American study by England (1991) showed a different type of change: work centrality also decreased, but economic work goals rather than expressive work goals were valued higher. Topalova (1994) compared Bulgarian samples from 1977, 1984, and 1990. She found that work centrality did not change, but the importance attributed to various work facets did. A growing weight was assigned to the instrumental facet of work, especially to job security. Rappensberger and Maier (1995) address changes in the work values of a particular occupational group, i.e. candidates for managerial positions, during social transformation. In this special issue one finds evidence of an overall change in work values in Sverko's study on war-time Croatia.

Second, there may be changes in the *variance* of value scores within the sample investigated. Such changes do not show up in the profile of the entity as such, but they do appear if it is broken down into smaller entities, i.e. groups and/or individuals. Here, the modernisation thesis comes in, as it claims that modernisation brings about a process of individualisation which leads to a fragmentation of values, reducing the overall homogeneity in society (Ester et al., 1993; Halman & Petterson, 1995; Inglehart, 1977). Values are supposed to be increasingly based on individual choice and preference rather than by the traditional institutions, such as the church.

In the third place there may be changes in the positions of particular values (or value expressions) within the value space. Specific values may lose

importance compared to other values, while others gain. Their variances may also change. This type of *structural* change is also addressed by the modernisation thesis. The assumption is that several values that used to be interrelated in the past, as they derived from an institutionally enforced value system, have lost their connections and are nowadays considered as separate entities. Empirical evidence on this hypothesis has been presented by Inglehart (1977, 1990) and Ester et al. (1993).

In studying change it is important to know the direction of change. Some studies have therefore addressed the increasing *similarity* or dissimilarity of profiles over time. Examples of studies addressing this facet of change are Zanders (1992) and Rappensberger and Maier (1995).

As was the case with the structure of values, there is a clear need for theory and explanatory research, revealing the determinants of change as well as their social and individual consequences. The modernisation thesis (Ester et al., 1993) is an example of explanatory theory that addresses the antecedents of value change at the societal level. Nevitte and Inglehart (1995) discuss a theoretical model that addresses the consequences of a particular type of value change, i.e. growing convergence of main values, for economic cooperation and social integration (Deutsch, 1952, 1968). Yet theory-driven research is scarce, especially as regards work values. Several authors have given post-hoc explanations of observed value differences in terms of age (life-cycle) and cohort (generation) (e.g. England, 1991; Ruiz-Quintanilla & Wilpert, 1991) or in terms of the economic development or labour market situation (e.g. Topalova, 1994). Theories that spell out where value differences come from and how they change over time are still to be developed, however. This is certainly true for value change at the level of groups and individuals (Pinder, Stackman, & Connor, 1997).

A MODEL OF VALUES

Most interesting, of course, is the question of whether and how the results of the various studies on values and work can be linked to one another and put into perspective. In view of the differences between the various studies, it is clear that an immediate integration of concepts and findings is not achievable. What seems possible, however, is to design a framework model that enables one to group and connect the conceptual models of the diverse research projects. In such an encompassing model both general and work values would have to find a place. Moreover, the three levels of social entities—the country level, the group level, and the individual level—would have to be incorporated. Designing a structural model that just shows the interrelationships between general and work values at the three levels would only be a first step. However, one would also have to include the determinants of values and the changes therein, as well as the effects of

values on the activities of social and individual actors. It would be particularly valuable to incorporate occupational activity and to show how it depends on values.

A sketch of such a generic model, showing only the main constitutive elements and their interconnections, is presented here. There are three levels, corresponding respectively to the country (society or other larger social entity), the group (e.g. occupational, demographic category, or organisation), and the individual. At each level there are assumed links between *general values*, related to life goals or activity domains, *work values*, pertaining to work activities and work outcomes, and *work activities* or occupational activities, such as career orientation, occupational choice, job application, role acceptance, task performance. Work activity should be understood in a broad sense, i.e. as an activity of people, employed or unemployed, that in any way pertains to work. Furthermore, the model posits links between the corresponding elements at the three levels, i.e. general values, work values, and work activities of the country, the group, and the individual. We have left out attitudes, norms, and goals, as well as other variables mentioned earlier, which may mediate the influence of values on activities, in order not to make the model too complex and non-transparent. Yet it should be recognised that such factors are likely to play a role and therefore should be taken into consideration in empirical studies.

As regards the *horizontal links* in the model, we have already mentioned the common conception that work activities are to some degree determined by work values, while work values derive from general values. However, as has already been stated, general values can also be seen as more direct determinants of behaviour, i.e. as guidelines that help people to choose goals and take decisions about ways to realise them (Rokeach, 1973). The causal links may also be reversed; that is, one may hypothesise that work activities have an influence on work values, that work values have an impact on general values, and perhaps that work activities have an impact on general values as well. Theories of socialisation (see Fisher, 1986; Wanous, 1992) and sense-making (e.g. Weick, 1995) would argue in favour of such reversed links.

The *vertical links* between the three levels are commonly seen as hierarchical, i.e. individuals are supposed to be nested in groups, and groups in society. The links in the model may also be understood in this way, i.e. as showing hierarchical subordination. But they may also be given a causal interpretation by hypothesising that higher-level values and activities influence lower-level values and activities. Several theorists implicitly assume such causal influences to exist. However, the causal order may be reversed, once again. It is not at all unreasonable to assume that individual values affect social values and individual activities affect collective activities.

Postulating such a double causality would be in line with social theories that try to account for the fact that social structure affects people's actions, while actions affect (i.e. change, create) social structure, such as the theory of structuration by Giddens (1984) and the theory of practice by Bourdieu (1990). Addressing this highly crucial issue of causality between and within these three levels of abstraction should in our view be a prime subject on the research agenda of work psychologists and sociologists.

Our framework model is by no means exhaustive. If one would wish to use it for explaining and predicting work activities and subsequent performance variables, it would be necessary to include other determining variables as well. At this point it is important to note that according to empirical research values make only a small contribution to the prediction of individual performance (e.g. Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Khaleque, 1992). There are dozens of other situational and personal variables that play a more significant role (Roe, 1996a). Moreover, values can play a moderating role, influencing the effect that other factors have on behaviour determinants. Erez and Earley (1993) point out that values, like other cultural characteristics, determine the effect of managerial interventions, such as participation in goal-setting, job enrichment, and individual incentive systems, on people's subsequent activity and performance. The moderating effect of values is also demonstrated in a study on training by Earley (1994).

Of course, one may shift the focus from individual work activities to individual work values or general values, or alternatively to variables at the group or country level, and consider these as dependent variables. In each case additional determining variables (e.g. contextual variables relating to demography, economy, and technology) would have to be included. An implication of the model for cross-national research is that there is no need to restrict comparisons to the highest level, i.e. that of the country. Cross-national comparisons may well be extended to the group level and the individual level. Thus, the model can be seen as a flexible and versatile tool that helps in structuring, interpreting, and evaluating research on values and work. The model also helps to clarify the role of cross-national research on values (see Fig. 1).

Looking at the links in the model in Fig. 1 it becomes clear that the vast literature on values and work provides only scanty information on most of these links. Much of the research, it must be acknowledged, is just declarative. It posits value attributes (scales or dimensions) and gives the positions of certain value-holding entities, i.e. particular countries or groups. But the causal links with behaviour are at best only poorly researched. For instance, we know little about the influence of values on behaviour at the country or the group level, or about the influence of cultural values (i.e. general values at the country level) on individual values. Thus, the model

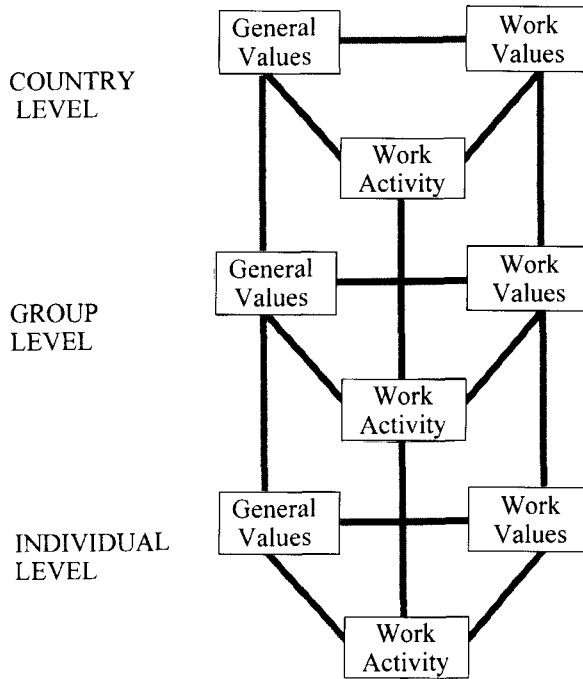


FIG. 1. Generic model of general values and work.

helps to identify “missing” causal links that deserve researchers’ attention in the future.

VALUES AND WORK IN PRACTICE

The inclusion of work activity in our framework model helps to identify what research on values has contributed to practice. After all, it is the link between the cultural or personal values and work activity that makes the subject of values interesting in the context of applied psychology. If one wishes to know how values would enhance or restrain occupational activities, directly or indirectly, one could profit from that knowledge in the optimisation of work activity and its outcomes. Generally speaking, there are two main approaches to the optimisation of work activity and outcomes. One is based on selection and allocation. Examples are: finding people with the appropriate values to do a certain job, choosing the proper job for people with given values, and bringing together people with similar values. The other approach is to modify the values by means of educational or propagandistic interventions. Such modification can aim at the promotion of a particular profile of values or at greater homogeneity between people in a

group. Both approaches are based on the general assumption that values, in particular work values, have an effect on people's behaviour at work. Values are considered to be motivating and thus to contribute to positive work outcomes. Value congruence is supposed to reduce conflict and improve cooperation.

Taking a look at the literature with reference to our framework model we must conclude that value researchers have devoted little attention to the *prediction* of work activity as such. Value research tends to have a narrow focus; that is, the factors explaining value structures and those following from them have been much less studied than the structures themselves. The most conspicuous exception at the individual level is research on vocational choice. As a consequence of this line of theorising, young people's values have been recognised to be important factors in choosing the right occupation or education, and instruments such as the Work Values Inventory (Super, 1969) have been utilised in practical settings on a substantial scale, especially in the United States. Yet our knowledge of the relative role of values compared to other variables such as interests, abilities, and educational qualifications, and the contribution of value-based choice, is far from complete and calls for further research. In addition, there is some knowledge about values in the context of personnel selection, but it is clear that in this domain values, like interests, have little power in predicting job success (Hunter & Hunter, 1984). Congruence between employee values and firm values may, however, lead to greater satisfaction (Meglino, Ravlin, & Atkins, 1989) and less turnover (Sheridan, 1992).

There is as yet little research evidence on the successful *modification of values*. Values are thought to be relatively stable, and less malleable than attitudes. This probably explains why many interventions aim at changing attitudes rather than values. Nevertheless there are two domains in which policy-makers and change-agents have tried to bring about value change. One is the domain of family and work, where the focus has been on a more fair division of work and household roles between men and women. The other is the domain of so-called "culture change" programmes in organisations. Although values have not been focal in most studies on family and work, they have somehow been addressed under the assumption that they can indeed be changed. There is little evidence to support this position (Roe, 1996b; Van den Akker, Van der Avort, & Van den Elzen, 1994). Also, educational measures seem to have had little effect. A study among Dutch students in secondary education (De Zwart et al., 1993) showed boys and girls to have traditional ideas about the paid and household work of themselves and their future spouses. The findings are more in line with the thesis that values, once established during socialisation, are relatively enduring over the individual lifecourse, and that what appears to be change in values is in part a reflection of value differences between successive

generations exposed to different events and living conditions (Jepsen, 1984; Krau, 1989; Wijting, Arnold, & Conrad, 1978). However, there is a distinct lack of clarity concerning the way in which people learn and the role played by generational differences (Becker, 1995). Culture has been defined in terms of values (Meglino et al., 1989). Projects aiming at culture change have often assumed that value change would occur, but have yielded very little evidence to support this assumption (cf. Fitzgerald, 1988). Again, values might be relatively durable and reinforced by daily practices and peer influence, rather than changed by outside interventions of limited scope and duration.

Another issue is that of the *natural change* of values under particular social conditions, such as the decline of “work ethos” among certain groups of people. There is some evidence that the difficulties young people in Western societies meet in their early work career, including the experience of unemployment, may affect their work values (Feather, 1990; Isralovitz & Singer, 1986; Judge & Bretz, 1992; O’Brien & Feather, 1990). In fact, people may re-evaluate the importance of work, which facilitates the adaptation to their personal situation, but at the same time impedes their (re)entry into employment. In such cases one might think of preventive interventions aiming at the creation of conditions that avoid such value change.

Perhaps the most exciting theoretical development in the field of values and work, with great potential implications for practice, is the recent work by Erez and Earley (1993). Their “cultural self-presentation theory” deals with the question of how cultural factors, including values, can account for the fact that managerial interventions such as, for example, goal-setting, job enrichment, quality-circles, performance-based pay, have differed so greatly in effectiveness between countries. The theory points at the moderator effect of values. It postulates that workers’ responses to such interventions depend on the effects they expect these interventions to have on the different facets of their “selves”, where the relevant facets are culturally defined. For example, in a society characterised by collectivism the “collective self” is more salient than the “individual self”, and interventions such as differential rewards are likely to be unproductive, as they aim at enhancing the individual self but not the collective self. The theory is rather sophisticated and seems able to account for differential effectiveness of a great number of well known interventions. Although more research is needed, the empirical evidence presented suggests that the theory is of definite practical value, especially in the growing number of cases where people work in a culturally heterogeneous environment.

Inspired by Kurt Lewin’s statement that nothing is as practical as a good theory, we would be inclined to conclude by saying that future value research might be of considerable impact in applied settings, especially if some of the “missing links” in our model were to be properly investigated.

ABOUT THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue contains four contributions. Schwartz focuses on cultural values and their significance for a variety of work related behaviours. He presents the results of a multidimensional scaling analysis of aggregated data on general values from 49 countries, which confirm his theory of values. This is in essence a structural theory, postulating seven basic dimensions and their interrelationships. Next, he suggests a number of implications of cultural values for differences between nations with regard to work centrality, societal norms about work, and work goals. These suggestions provide a fruitful agenda for future research on general values and work values. Testing these suggestions with a broader variety of occupations from different countries may also throw some light on Schwartz's own theory, which has been developed on the basis of teacher and student samples.

Ros, Schwartz, and Surkiss concentrate on the relationship between individual values and work values. First, they present a typology of general values and a classification of work values, and generate a hypothesis about the relationships between the two. Data from a sample of the Jewish population in Israel provide evidence about the validity of the classifications as well as their interrelationships. In a second study, they analyse the meaning of work in terms of the dimensions of their general value types for two Spanish samples: teachers and students. In this way, the usefulness of a broader perspective on values for the study of work roles is demonstrated.

The article by Elizur and Sagie deals with the relationship between general values and work values in another way. They depart from a definition of values that distinguishes multiple facets, and investigate how the structure obtained for life values compares to that of work values. The facets distinguished are: value modality, focus, and life area. Multidimensional scaling of data from a sample of Israeli managers and workers reveals a structural similarity between life and work values. The relative importance of life and work values shows some discrepancies, pointing at the influence of context on personal values. This topic is discussed with reference to the spillover vs compensation hypothesis and the need for more research is emphasised.

Sverko focuses on the issue of stability and change in work values. Using data collected in the framework of the Work Importance Study he analyses the work values of Croatian students as assessed in 1983 and 1993/94. When comparing the profiles of the 19 work values, grouped into five categories, he notes some differences that seem to reflect changes. It is argued that these changes can be attributed to the socio-economic developments that have occurred in Croatia during this period. Sverko also points out that the stability in work values, in particular during periods of great social change, should not be overlooked.

Of course, one cannot expect the articles collected in this special issue to solve all the issues of definition and explanation outlined here. But they represent a significant step forward in clarifying the structure of values and in exploring the links between general values and work values, as well as in specifying a number of issues in need of further study. We hope that our general framework model will also be of use in this respect. We feel that the time has come to reduce the effort spent on typological and descriptive research, to focus more on explanatory studies and to concentrate on some of the missing links in our model. There is definitely a need to bridge the gap between sociological and psychological research, the more as both have addressed cultural and individual values, as well as general and work values. The relationship between people's general values, work values, and work activity also needs more attention. Research on this topic, which belongs to the traditional domains of applied psychology, is of great theoretical interest and may have considerable practical utility.

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