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How Globalization Has Impacted Labor: A Review Essay

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ABSTRACT

This essay outlines the features of globalization in the current era and indicates how conceptualizations of this process differ from the related formulations of the Annales School and of World Systems Analysis. The main theme of the paper is then developed, namely an assessment of the ways that globalization has impacted the organization of work and the structure of employment careers. This assessment is based on results from a variety of recent research studies, especially on findings from the Globalife project.

INTRODUCTION

Few terms have entered our lexicon with as profound an impact on policy discourse as the notion of globalization. For some, the globalization process carries the promise of unleashing productive forces that will reduce poverty and raise living standards throughout the world, in both industrialized and less developed countries. Others, however, see in this phenomenon a new strategy for the exploitation of politically weak and economically backward countries by the powerful nations of Europe and North America and by their artful agent, the multinational corporation.

As a generic term for heightened international commerce and multi-nation political organization globalization is not a new process, though what is unique in the present incarnation is its sustained impact on the lives of individuals in a great many countries and its unifying neo-liberal agenda. There have been kindred phenomena in earlier centuries--empires and colonial powers that had a global reach, at least within the then known world. However, those were extensions of powerful nation-states and had the character of political and economic arrangements consciously devised for the benefit of the home country, whether by creating captive markets or dominating sources of raw materials. Globalization in its modern expression is quite different; at least in principle the economic outcomes from the neo-liberal trade policies central to the formulation emerge from transactions that take place in a neutral marketplace.

Representative multinational political organizations, such as the League of Nations and the United Nations, have largely been at the sidelines in the formation and governance of the modern variant of globalization, which is characterized by a press to eliminate trade barriers and harmonize national economies to facilitate the flow of capital, commerce, and labor. Several agencies of the UN, such as the International Labor Organization and the World Health Organization, have had to contend in their own activities with the consequences of globalization, but the parent body has not been a central player in the governance of this process. The European Union is an exception to the relative absence of multinational political actors in the unfolding of globalization. Though formulated at the level of a continent, the European Union was an early adopter of many of the free market policies associated with globalization, especially a single market, central bank, and a common currency--the last perhaps the ultimate sign of market integration. Through its Commission for Competition and other agencies, the European Union has also moved further in regulating market liberalization than have countries outside this community.

Rather than reflecting the design decisions of a representative body of nations, the features of globalization, as we know it, are an outgrowth of recent technological developments and a succession of ad hoc trade agreements contracted, in the main, by the United States since the Reagan administration (e.g., the US-Chile Free Trade Agreement, US-Australia Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA [US-Canada-Mexico Free Trade Agreement]), with the goal of removing barriers to international commerce. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, all dominated by US interests, have also been major players in the globalization process, pressing less developed countries to lower trade barriers and reduce the involvement of their

governments in the domestic economy as a condition for receiving financial assistance (e.g., the Washington Consensus¹).

It is certainly the case that globalization has come upon us quickly; the first use of this term in its modern meaning dates to 1962 (Chanda 2003). Perhaps as a consequence of its origins, globalization is seen as postulating a dizzying set of relationships between free markets and social welfare, individual freedom, and democracy, as well as responsible for some perverse outcomes such as heightened inequality within countries, terrorism, the propagation of pathogens, climate change, and the like. With this complexity of potential effects, the unfolding of globalization has been the source of much anxiety, contention, and vilification, and has stimulated a rich body research that has sought to clarify its still emerging impacts. Against this background, the intent of the present essay is to clarify the dimensions of the globalization process and the way it differs from related formulations, and discuss the particular matter of how globalization has impacted the organization of work and the structure of employment careers, especially in western countries.

THE GLOBALIZATION PROCESS

What, in fact, is meant by this term? According to the International Monetary Fund (2002), globalization refers to the growing economic interdependence of countries as a result of heightened cross-national transactions of goods and services, the free flow of capital, cross-border migration, and the rapid diffusion of new technologies. Bhagwati (2004, p. 3) provides a similar definition though he speaks of economic globalization, while Reich (2007) uses the term "supercapitalism," though with much the same referent. While technological and economic developments may be the driving force behind globalization, other accounts are more expansive in their description of the process and encompass many of the effects of the new developments in the definition. Thus, the Global Policy Forum (2006) includes the impact on politics, culture, law, social movements, and the environment in its description of globalization. However, for the purposes of relating the root phenomenon to its consequences, the more restrictive definition is preferred.

The technological developments that underlie globalization derive from advances in the second half of the 20th century in communications, information processing, and transportation. The declining cost of computing and the growth of fiber networks and communication satellites permit the rapid transmission of vast amounts of information nearly instantly. These developments have given rise to new corporate arrangements and employment practices, based on teleprocessing, outsourcing, and "virtual enterprises"--organizations that come into being for the execution of a specific project and then dissolve.

By better linking countries, these technological advances have made possible a heightened integration of national economies. As noted earlier, this integration is proceeding along the lines of the neo-liberal economic policies favored by developed countries, with the goal of reducing barriers to the flow of

¹An understanding among the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the US Treasury in the 1980s regarding the elements to be included in a standard aid and economic reform package (Stiglitz 2003, p. 16).

goods, capital, and labor. Underlying this agenda is the view that free markets promote efficiencies through competition and a division of labor, permitting states to specialize in what each can best do. Global commerce offers an opportunity to access diverse sources of capital and technology, and provides a large export market (International Monetary Fund 2002). These gains, however, are accompanied by deep risks from volatile capital movements, the loss of manufacturing jobs to other nations, greater within-country inequality, and the growing autonomy of multi-national corporations (Stiglitz 2006, chaps. 1-4). Added to this list is the rise of super-national regional entities like the European Union, that are absorbing some of the authority traditionally wielded by countries to control the flow of commerce across their borders. This development is reducing the relevance of the nation-state in the lives of its residents, opening the possibility of an erosion of loyalty, especially in multi-ethnic countries where this commitment is problematic (e.g., Belgium).

Related formulations of global change

There is a rich literature of comparative state studies that predates the emergence of the current phase of globalization. In recent decades comparative empirical research has been particularly informative about European countries, owing to generous support from the European Community for multi-state surveys and to the harmonizing of country-level data sets (e.g. the European Community Household Panel, Survey of Health, Aging, and Retirement in Europe, the Luxemburg Income Survey). Using materials of these sorts, Esping-Anderson and his followers have constructed influential typologies of social welfare regimes, reflecting the historical traditions and institutional arrangements in Europe and North America (e.g., Esping-Andersen 1990; 1996; Goodin, et. al 1999; Alcock and Craig 2001)). Bradshaw and Hatland (2006) and Kaufmann et. al. (2002), among others, have examined family policy and work arrangements; also comparative investigations of income inequality and economic well-being have been reported for the European countries by Pontusson (2005), Wolff (2004), and Atkinson (1995).

An essential difference between these studies and the current globalization literature stems from the presumption in the latter of an unrelenting, driving force that is responsible for the massive economic transformations brought to the world in recent decades. The comparative state literature, by contrast, largely entails static comparisons of policies and structures, and attributes country differences to the specifics of local history, tradition, and religion. With the exception of natural processes such as climate change, these studies do not posit the operation of powerful exogenous forces that are responsible for the global trends.

This is not to suggest that the social sciences lack for grand theories that embody a dynamic of change and that purport to explain societal development on a global level. Marxian theory, for one, views the long sweep of history in terms of a progression of institutional arrangements that are compatible with the productive order in an era--feudalism, capitalism, and socialism--with the struggle between classes in each production system generating the institutional change. Some neo-Marxians--e.g., Dobbs and Sweezey--have engaged in a debate over whether the driving force behind the transformation from feudalism to capitalism was endogenous to each country or driven by exogenous factors such as the growth in cross-nation trade (Sinha 2004, p. 3; Wallerstein 2004, p. 14); the latter position,

incidentally, with its stress on the role of the world market, anticipates the type of formulation used in the exegesis of globalization effects.

Braudel and his associates in the Annales school also adopted a global perspective in accounting for the succession of civilizations and viewed long stretches of human history in terms of cycles in climate, population, and food production, modulated by the “gentle rhythms” of social history--i.e., the growth and decline of economies, states, and societies (Braudel 1980, pp. 3-5). Analogously, World Systems Analysis, an outgrowth of the Annales school, takes the world as the unit of analysis and seeks to examine the overlapping networks of interaction and exchange by social and economic units that are at different conceptual levels--individuals, families, firms, states, transnational actors--with the goal of identifying the properties of the global system (Wallerstein 2004, pp. 16-22; Chase-Dunn and Grimes 1995, pp. 388-391).

Nonetheless, the formulations of the Annales school and of World Systems Analysis, while global in scope and dynamic in their focus on change processes, differ from the specifications used in globalization studies in several respects. Unlike the literature on globalization, they do not presume the operation of a single, or a narrow set of driving forces that underlie the change. Wallerstein (2004, p. 21) is emphatic on this point: “[W]orld-systems analysis lacks a central actor in its recounting of history. ... [The various actors in other theoretical systems are seen here as] part of a systemic mix out of which they emerged and upon which they act.” The earlier formulations also depart from the globalization literature in that the primal drive, whether conceived as a systemic mix of factors or more narrowly, as in the case of Marxian historiography, tends to be conceptualized as an inexorable force of nature that is beyond the control of the impacted nations. In studies of globalization, by contrast, the engine of development and change is an outcome of intention and design, the result of negotiated agreements among nation-states to advance a neo-liberal agenda.

Another difference from the earlier formulations relates to the treatment of time. The prior depictions of world transformations measured time in centuries and millennia, with neither the rate of change nor the forces underlying the transformations visible to the inhabitants of a country. Wars, plagues, and famines may have been witnessed, but without a sense of an unfolding trajectory of development. In contrast, what is unique in the current era is the compression of time, with the emergence of global effects comparable in magnitude to those of the earlier transformations but in a temporal frame that is measured in decades, not centuries.

GLOBALIZATION EFFECTS ON STRATIFICATION

One indicator of the rapid emergence of globalization as a factor in people’s lives is provided by the growth of the literature on this topic. According to Guillen (2001, p. 239), in 1980 there were 89 entries in Sociological Abstracts with the words “global” or “globalization” in the title, subject heading, or abstract. By 1990 the number had grown to 301 and in 1998 it reached 1009. A similar count from books in print shows an increase from 48 to 589 in the same period. Along with the growth in number of publications, there has been an expansion in the diversity of issues subsumed

under this theme. These now include assessments of the impact of globalization on a variety of economic and political institutions as well as on cultural mores, some several steps removed from the technological and market changes that are at the core of this phenomenon.

Much of this literature has been summarized in several comprehensive review papers; see, for example, Gunter and van der Hoeven (2004) regarding globalization effects on migration, education, and training; Fischer (2003) on fiscal and investment impacts; Brady et. al. (2007) and O’Riain (2000) on consequences for political organization and democracy; Yenyurt (2003) on multinational corporations in the age of globalization; Thorin (2003) on gender effects; Halliday and Osinsky (2006) on legal developments; and Guillen (2001) on controversies about the consequences of globalization, such as whether or not it is leading to convergences of institutional arrangements in different countries. Also, a full issue of Contemporary Sociology (1996) was devoted to a literature review of globalization effects.

In this essay I restrict attention to recent studies of the way that the global trends have influenced aspects of stratification systems. In particular, I examine how various categories of workers have fared under the neo-liberal trade policies, and how the institutional arrangements of different countries have succeeded in filtering or mitigating the disruptive effects from this unfolding process.

The fate of labor under globalization

The move to a global economy has had a profound impact on employment opportunities and on the features of work careers. These effects have not been uniform across occupational groups, and the consequences for labor market processes have been quite different in the capitalist countries of Europe and North America than in less developed states that have recently joined the global economy.

The entrance of large population states--China, India, Indonesia--into the world economy has doubled the size of the global workforce engaged in non-agricultural activity. This has had the effect of lowering the global capital/labor ratio, shifting the balance of power in market relations towards capital and away from labor (Freeman 2005). Countries must now compete vigorously with one-another for capital, as this is a major determinant of labor productivity and, correspondingly, of wages and living standards.

The western industrialized countries face a problem of retaining capital-intensive, high value-added jobs in their ambience. Many less developed nations have been rapidly raising the education level of their workforce--China, for one, already graduates more engineers and scientists each year than the United States (Freeman 2005). Since capital is mobile, multi-national corporations are able to offshore research and development as well as routine production activities, taking advantage of the lower wage rates for technical workers in emerging economies. This has put great pressure on wages in the industrialized countries. Labor unions have little recourse but to mitigate their contracts demands in

order to keep manufacturing facilities from departing to locales in the developing world (World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization 2004, p. 77).

The rationale used to justify a commitment to globalization is that world production would be maximized and all nations benefit if each were to specialize in what it does best. In the industrialized nations, with their large pools of educated, skilled workers, there has been an expectation that while low-skill jobs might migrate abroad, they would continue to dominate in research and development of high value-added goods. Correspondingly, the less developed countries would presumably specialize in labor intensive manufacturing, which would provide pools of much needed jobs for their unskilled populations.

As envisioned by industrialized countries, the globalization of markets would permit them to grow the proportion of their labor force engaged in capital-intensive work, thereby supporting a high wage economy and enhanced living standards. Indeed, it is such a vision that underlies the intense interest by recent US administrations in raising educational attainment and explains their recent insistence on school accountability. The intent is to prepare the labor force for the impending buildup in demand for highly skilled labor--a recognition that a very different economy is in the process of unfolding. Evidence of the potency of this transition can be found in the increasing income returns to college graduates during the past 20 years relative to high school completion; the unmistakable conclusion is that the demand for less educated workers in western countries has been declining (Mishel 2005. et. al. pp. 151-156).

Yet, this assessment of the impact of globalization appears to be only partially correct. There has, indeed, been a migration of labor intensive manufacturing to less developed regions with low wage rates. However, at the same time, the large population countries of the developing world, especially India and China, have sizeable pools of educated workers even though the percentage of college graduates in those countries is small. These pools of skilled workers have proven to be an irresistible attraction to multi-national corporations seeking to reduce their wage costs for technically trained workers.

This points to a second consequence of globalization for labor market opportunity in the developed world. Digitalization of paperwork and the teleprocessing of computer files permit many technologically advanced tasks to be carried out in distant locales, far from the end-use consumer. Computer programming, technical support services, radiological analysis, accounting functions, and other back office operations are now routinely performed in low wage countries, with the effect that demand for these professional specialties is lessened in the US and Europe (Sachs 1996). This threat to western dominance of high value added jobs was not foreseen at the beginnings of globalization, but it is a predictable outcome of investments by less developed countries in the education of their workforce, in combination with the easy movement of capital in an integrated world economy.

Thus, in the developed world, the relative positions of capital and labor have shifted, with capital the clear winner. With the reduction of import tariffs and the removal of hindrances to capital flows, there is little need for corporations to locate production in the countries in which their goods will be consumed (Andersen 2006). Globalization has eroded the barrier rents previously imposed by national boundaries, permitting corporations to uproot their plants on short notice and relocate production to another region when this bolsters profit. Facilitating such moves is the growing preference by corporations for spot contracts with local firms that undertake much of the manufacturing and assembly of commodities for households in the West. This arrangement lessens "sunk costs" by a contracting company and increases its flexibility to transfer production to another country, or to threaten to do so in order to secure concessions from unions or governments (International Labor Organization 2000).

Globalization poses two additional threats to the developed world. First, it is responsible for an immense growth in the power of large corporations to the detriment of national governments, to the point that Marc Blondel, Secretary General of the French Confederation of Labor described public authorities as, at best, subcontractors of the process--"the market governs, the government manages" (quoted in Sachs 1996). Second there is a concern that "sovereign funds"--the huge financial pools controlled by national governments--may be used to influence the policies of nation-states through strategic investments. These funds largely derive from the upsurge in demand for raw materials, stimulated by the emergence of new and powerful economies on the global scene. In the short run, the revenue from sales of the raw materials is too large to be efficiently absorbed by the producing countries, giving rise to these large monetary pools that are currently valued at some three trillion dollars (Davis 2008, p. A9; Murray 2008, p. A2).

The impact of globalization on developing countries has been less studied, though it is equally profound. Among these states comparative advantage is provided by education, but also by the presence of a large pool of English language speakers. Similar to our comments on educational attainment, the percentage of English speakers in a country is less relevant than the numerical size of the group. In India, for example, where much technical work is performed for western countries, only four percent of the population is proficient in English; this amounts, however, to some 40 million English speakers (Crystal 1995). A lack of familiarity with spoken English and, to a lesser extent, with other western languages, is one reason for the much smaller presence of China, Taiwan, and Korea as providers of technical support services to western countries.

Losers among the less developed countries include ones that were early entrants into the global economy and now have a work force that commands moderate wage rates. Mexico and Colombia, for example, have been shedding production jobs to the countries of South East Asia, which have even lower labor costs (Freeman 2005). Also, farmers in less developed states have been hurt by imports of foodstuffs, often surplus production from western countries that is provided free or at low cost as part of an assistance program. At the same time, to protect their own farmers, the western countries impose stiff import tariffs on agricultural products. Because less developed countries tend to have large agricultural sectors, some analysts have suggested that the West should reformulate its policies, to

either eliminate tariffs on agricultural imports from the world's poorest regions or provide cash assistance rather than surplus food shipments (e.g., Birdsall 1999).

The less developed countries have also been buffeted by the externalities from globalization--the internal migration of rural workers to cities with inadequate housing and sanitation, the rapid building of factories with poor pollution controls, the weak labor unions and consequent inadequate job protections. With this said, the multinational corporations that have expanded into developing countries often pay higher salaries and provide better working conditions than local firms serving the domestic economy (International Labor Organization 2000).

Taking a long view, it may well be the case that what we are witnessing are the fits and starts of less developed countries as they attempt to move to a more or less equal footing in the global economy. Each state begins from a particular skill base, cultural tradition, institutional arrangements, and a set of attractions to multinational corporations. Drawing from the experiences of India and China, it appears that, initially, the labor force of a developing country is used by multinationals to provide them with standardized products. But skill transfers are inevitable, if only to make the local firms more efficient in the service of their masters. The trajectories of India and China suggest that, with the build-up of a local skill base, native entrepreneurs can expand their firms, moving from suppliers to multinationals to developers of their own products. India and China now have corporations that emulate the western multinationals, developing their own technologies and contracting for production with firms in other developing countries. Indeed, Infosys, Wipro, and Lenovo are emerging powerhouses that compete with the established multinationals of western states (Giridharadas 2007, p. A1). Which countries will succeed in moving through these stages, and which will stagnate, is an open question and requires a nuanced grasp of the structural and cultural factors that make for rapid economic progress while maintaining the fabric of social stability. At a theoretical level this question relates to whether globalization fosters niche development or a uniform trajectory of progression.

GLOBALIZATION AND LABOR MARKET PROCESSES IN EUROPE

A matter of some interest concerns the way globalization has affected the structure of work careers and the lives of workers, along with the related issue of the policies adopted by countries to mitigate insecurity and workforce dislocations. There is a consensus that competitiveness in the global economy requires flexible labor arrangements--limitations to protections from dismissal, the ability of firms to replace long duration employees with fixed term and part time workers, and a move from national and industry level union bargaining to company level negotiations (Sachs 1996; International Labor Organization 2000; Uchitelle 2007). The intent of these adjustments is to give employers the flexibility to expand and reduce their work forces in accordance with product demand, without having to add full time employees who have protections from layoff.

The European countries provide a particularly interesting site for examining the various approaches that have been implemented for enhancing labor market flexibility while affording some protection to household income. While the European Union has sought to harmonize the economic and social

policies of its members, the individual countries differ in historical tradition, culture, and material and human resources, which, collectively, have given rise to disparate adaptations to the dislocations brought by globalization. An essential aspect of the country strategies concerns the extent to which active labor market policies are pursued (retraining programs, public employment services, targeting of problematic populations such as school dropouts) versus more passive social programs (employment protections, generous unemployment compensation, retirement policies) [Pontusson 2005, chap. 6]. The former permits a country to maintain a high level of employment together with flexible labor arrangements but addresses household income indirectly, while the latter targets household income and seeks to manage excesses in labor supply through static mechanisms such as by legislating an early retirement age with full pension benefits.

France, Germany, and Italy are generally noted as having the most rigid and protective employment policies; the Anglo-Saxon countries as having the weakest safeguards for workers. Recent OECD data, cited in Pontusson (2005, p. 120), support this assessment, whether using an index of employment protection or a measure of employment tenure. In terms of the latter, the averages are 11.2, 10.3, and 12.1 years for the first set of countries, but 8.3 and 6.7 for the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively. In regard to expenditures on active labor market programs, Denmark and Sweden are at the top, whereas the United States and the United Kingdom show the smallest percentages of GDP allotted for this purpose (Pontusson 2005, p. 126), with the central European countries largely in the middle. Yet, these two programmatic strategies--active and passive policies--do not necessarily represent alternatives: France and Germany have high values on both and the correlation across countries in government spending on the two types of programs is positive (Pontusson 2005, Table 6.3).

The European countries have been categorized by several researchers in terms of features of their political economies. Such classifications provide a useful entry for assessing the relation between a country's institutional arrangements and its approach to the challenges of globalization. Esping-Andersen (1990), for one, distinguishes between "liberal," "social democratic," and "conservative" capitalist systems, with the categories reflecting the way that the provision of social welfare relates to a country's market economy; variants of his formulation have been offered by Goodin, et. al. (1999) and by Hall and Soskice (2001). Building on these specifications, Pontusson (2005, p. 17) distinguishes between "liberal market economies (LMEs)" and two types of "social market economies (SMEs)"--Nordic and continental versions. Briefly, SMEs differ from LMEs in having strong unions, institutionalized collective bargaining, extensive public welfare and employment protections. The Nordic countries stand out in having higher union density and a greater reliance on the public provision of social services. Thus, collective bargaining coverage in year 2000 was 83% for the Nordic SMEs, 75% for the continental countries, and 36% for the liberal market economies (Pontusson 2005, table 2.2).

From an examination of the OECD countries, Pontusson (2005, p. 94) concludes that the LMEs appear to have done better in regard to labor market performance--they have higher rates of job creation and shorter durations of unemployment. Also, despite arguments to the contrary (e.g., Sachs

1996), the pattern of national and industry-wide union negotiations in the Nordic SMEs appears to be responsible for a tradition of wage restraint in labor bargaining, a critical factor in the lesser inequality in northern Europe than elsewhere on the continent. Thus, 90-10 wage ratios for the Nordic SMEs, continental SMEs and the LMEs are, respectively, 2.23, 2.64, and 3.77 (Pontusson 2005, Table 3.4).

Pontusson reports considerable material about the institutional arrangements and economic performance of individual European states, especially ones that are outliers in his classification of the capitalist economies. However, the most comprehensive assessment of labor market adjustments by the countries of Europe in response to the dislocations from globalization comes to us from the Globalife project

The impact of globalization on career features

Blossfeld and his associates have recently published four lengthy volumes of country studies from this project that assess the impact of globalization on labor market processes. Two are organized around the issues of labor force entry and the transition into retirement (Blossfeld et. al. 2005; 2006a), the others examine mid-career concerns in the lives of men and women (Blossfeld et. al. 2006b; 2006c). Because these volumes provide a wealth of material on recent developments in employment opportunity and job mobility, and because they are likely to influence our appraisal of the different national approaches to offsetting the dislocations brought about by globalization, we examine these studies in some detail.

Following the work of Blau and Duncan (1967), Jencks et. al. (1972), Sorensen (1983), and Spilerman (1977), the Globalife project, directed by Hans-Peter Blossfeld, has framed its investigation in the vernacular of a life course perspective, but with particular stress on the institutional structures that frame the gross features of work careers. In emphasizing institutional arrangements they draw from Esping-Andersen's (1990) categorization of welfare states but broaden and deepen the specifics of the institutional formulation in applying it to work careers.

The approach of the Globalife project is to view work careers as involving a number of critical transitions which can have long term consequences for employment security and income: the move from schooling to first job, changes of job and employer, shifts between employment and unemployment, and the eventual departure into retirement. Each of these transitions is patterned by individual characteristics such as educational attainment and acquired skills, but also influenced in massive ways by the organization of the economy--e.g., the prevalence of internal labor market structures, the extent of employment protections written into law, possibilities for retraining and occupational change in mid-career, and the generosity of income supports for the unemployed and retired. The authors of the several country chapters proceed to assess how the impact of globalization on career development has been mediated by the institutional arrangements particular to each nation-state.

Though the focus is on labor market processes, the Globalife project adopted a wider institutional perspective, treating career dynamics as embedded in a multi-institution life course framework. Thus, attention is given to the organization of schooling in a country (e.g., ability tracking, occupational licensing, linkages with employers)--a consideration that precedes labor force entry--and to how the success of young persons in effecting the transition into the labor market impacts family decisions such as departure from the parental home, marriage formation, and the timing of first childbirth. The perspective in the study is to see these various events, though inhabiting different institutional spheres, as intimately related and requiring concomitant consideration.

A word about the organization of the four volumes. In preparing a set of integrated tomes the editors had to make a number of decisions. The first concerns the underlying conceptual formulation; as noted, the project focuses on critical career decisions with an emphasis on how they are molded by institutional arrangements. A second decision involves methodology; in the main event history procedures are used. A third concerns the format of the volumes. In this case, each begins with a theoretical chapter that outlines the main issues faced by workers at a particular career stage, then addresses the system shocks generated by globalization and discusses the institutional structures that might offset the full effects of the disruptions. A second chapter in each volume utilizes a data set with coverage of multiple European countries, such as the European Community Household Panel, to compare trends in key variables, with most of the data presented at the level of five welfare state categories. This material is followed by 12-15 country chapters that delve into the particularities of the individual states. Finally, each volume has a concluding chapter that collates the country findings and attempts to generalize them, with the intent of assessing the success of the different types of institutions in moderating the effects of globalization.

Careers, then, are seen as evolving within a setting of institutional structures. In the Globalife formulation there are several broad configurations of institutional structures, variants of the welfare regime types proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990) and Pontusson (2005), among others. Blossfeld and his associates use the following nation-state categories: social-democratic (active labor market policies with a goal of full employment, gender equality, and income protection--e.g., Denmark, Sweden), corporatist (strong family policies, traditional gender division of labor, income protection--Germany), familistic (similar to corporatist, emphasizes the role of kin and family in ensuring against social risks--e.g. Italy, Spain), liberal (passive labor market policies, modest public sector employment--e.g., U.S., Great Britain), and post-socialist (emerging welfare regimes--e.g., Hungary, Czech Republic).

Globalization has internationalized markets and intensified competition, compelling employers to increase efficiency and enhance their suppleness in responding to shifts in product demand. With respect to their work force, employers have sought flexibility to layoff employees with outmoded skills, replace high wage and older workers with younger ones, and, in general, expand and contract a firm's workforce in response to variations in product demand. However, capitalist welfare regimes differ in the way this sort of flexibility is build into the labor market. Paramount in the Globalife framework is the notion of open and closed employment systems, with the latter characterized by a large proportion

of the labor force in protected employment, sheltered by mechanisms such as internal labor markets which provide high levels of job security (Mills, et. al. 2006, pp. 19-24).

From this formulation Blossfeld and his colleagues postulate that in countries with closed employment systems the flexibility would be obtained at the price of heightened insecurity for young workers who have not yet acquired job protections, for women who would be forced more into fragmented work careers, and for older workers who would be pressured to move into retirement. These groups would serve as a supplemental labor force, hired when necessary on short term contracts with few job benefits. For young workers this could mean long periods in the unprotected sector, a particularly deleterious experience given that marriage and the start of a family are often contemplated at this very point in the life course .

The notion of open and closed employment systems interacts with welfare regime types in the following way. The liberal and post-socialist countries tend to have low levels of collective bargaining coverage and weak employment protection legislation. Thus, they are relatively “open,” with only a small proportion of employees having the safeguards provided by an internal labor market. The social democratic countries are also characterized by open employment systems that permit employers much flexibility, but there is greater consensus in these countries about maintaining a high rate of employment, and this is implemented via retraining programs to facilitate mid-career job changes and by a large government sector that absorbs shortfalls in worker demand in private industry. In contrast, conservative and familistic welfare regimes tend to have systems of closed employment that accentuate the insider/outsider distinction. Insiders, commonly, are male workers, who are relatively shielded from the uncertainties associated with flexible employment (Mills, et. al. 2006, pp. 15-27).

Against this setting, the exogenous shocks of globalization have diverse impacts on the work force of countries that follow different welfare regime models. While all nation-states may need to adapt to the imperatives of a world economy, the required flexibility can be effected in various ways, and these “solutions” tend to be consistent with the logic and coherence of a particular regime type. Given this institutional apparatus, what, then, are the principal findings from the Globalife study? These can be most cogently summarized in accordance with the structure of the four project volumes.

In their analysis of early career stages, Blossfeld, et. al. (2005) find, consistent with expectation, that while youth in all countries are exposed to greater uncertainty with the unfolding of globalization, the need for employment flexibility impacts their career prospects more severely in some employment regimes. In closed systems, where there is a large category of protected workers, the press for flexibility is absorbed by labor market outsiders--women and especially youth; they tend to be ‘losers’ in the globalization era. And because of the more limited opportunities for young workers in closed employment systems, the role of individual human capital has become critical for securing entry into protected career lines; this is especially the case in Italy and Spain (Mills, et. al. 2005, p. 423-29). In open employment systems, by contrast, the shielding of workers is less prevalent, with the career risk spread over a wide base rather than centered on young workers.

Moreover, in the conservative and familistic welfare regimes there are clear gender differences among youth in their response to reduced labor market opportunity. In these male breadwinner societies uncertainty in the employment sphere appears to impede partnering and parenthood by young men. At the same time, depressed labor market conditions encourages many young women to opt for motherhood as a way to reduce insecurity and give meaning to their lives (Mills, et. al. 2005, pp. 429-32). However, in the liberal and social-democratic states, which follow a dual earner model, employment uncertainty affects young men and women in more or less similar ways, delaying their entrance into adulthood as indexed by age of partnering and first childbirth.

The central question addressed by Blossfeld and his associates in their study of the mid-career stages of men (Blossfeld, et. al. 2006b) concerns whether globalization has led to an erosion of men's standard employment contract. This might arise from the press by employers for greater flexibility and result in an increase of unstable and fragmented "patchwork careers." A related issue concerns the extent to which the different welfare regimes and domestic institutions in a country have buffered the impact of the disruptions wrought by globalization. One broad finding is that mid-career males are fairly well sheltered from these instabilities, especially in closed employment systems where patchwork careers appear to be targeted on special groups such as youth and women (Mills and Blossfeld (2006, pp. 465-79). The results for the liberal welfare regimes are more difficult to succinctly summarize: mid-career males exhibit both more upward and downward mobility than in other regime types, more transitions from flexible into permanent jobs, and fewer transitions into unemployment. Further, liberal regimes are "equally capable as corporatist regimes ... of maintaining high levels of employment security;" all this in the chapter by Muffels and Luijkx (2006; pp. 66-67). Nonetheless, in their summary chapter Mills and Blossfeld (2006, pp. 468, 479) stress the negative impact of liberal regimes, concluding that mid-career males, especially in the U.S., are increasingly vulnerable to uncertainty and dislocations.

In regard to mid-career women (Blossfeld, et. al. 2006c), there is evidence of increased labor force attachment in recent years, though the trend has not been uniform. In countries in which women have traditionally had a weak link to the labor force their attachment has grown, while in countries where women have historically had a deep involvement there has been some tendency for the attachment to weaken (Hofmeister and Blossfeld 2006 pp. 434-36). However, there are notable exceptions. Sweden, in particular, with an historically high level of women's integration into the labor force, has succeeded in protecting this attachment by expanding its public sector and emphasizing parental leave and daycare programs (Korpi and Stern 2006, p. 138). For European countries that have a tradition of low or moderate inclusion of women the story has been one of rising labor force attachment, reflecting the growing opportunity for part-time work and the rising insecurity of men's employment and consequent need for wives to bolster family income.

If, in the main, globalization has contributed to a higher rate of labor force attachment by women, its impact of the quality of their jobs has been negative. The expansion of flexible employment has meant easier access by women to the labor force, but also a smaller share of secure jobs with attractive benefits. Again, it is countries with large public sectors (e.g., Sweden, Denmark) that have been most

successful in shielding women from the instabilities generated by globalization. Women with high education, especially ones with technical skills, and younger women appear to be the best positioned to secure stable employment in the new global era (Hofmeister and Blossfeld 2006, p. 442).

The culmination of work careers is examined in the last volume of the project (Blossfeld, et. al. 2006a). Older worker are a particular concern for work firms in that they enjoy high wages but tend to have obsolescent skills and less education than young workers. Nor surprisingly, companies may view their elderly employees as a high cost item, to be reduced where possible. Potential options for a firm are to push late career workers into retirement, reduce their wages, or lay them off. In general, it appears that the solution adopted by firms in a particular country tends to reflect its welfare regime category.

Thus, in the final chapter of the volume, Hofacker, et. al. (2006) conclude that in liberal welfare regimes, the combination of flexible markets, which permit job changes in late career, with only moderately compensating public pension systems have served to maintain older workers in the labor force. The social-democratic countries have also succeeded in keeping late career workers in the labor force, but by the use of quite different policies. In particular, they tend to combine continuous education and retraining with the sheltering role of large scale public employment (Hofacker, et. al. 2006, p. 359). In contrast, in both conservative and familistic countries, the decline in the employment rate of older workers has been pronounced. This is not surprising since these countries have large sectors of protected employment for prime age males; it is the elderly and youth who then bear the burden of providing employment flexibility.

Some final words about this massive project. Blossfeld and his colleagues have provided us with a definitive assessment of the effects of globalization on the work lives of residents of developed countries. In discussing the four volumes I have given attention mainly to the overview and synthesizing chapters of each, and even here I have provided little more than a sample of their intricately woven assessments. The individual country chapters are all careful studies, some more detailed than others owing to the availability, or lack thereof, of comprehensive country-level data. Almost all the chapters follow a common prescription in methodology and in the formulation of the problem to be addressed, an obvious requirement for producing comparable findings in a cross-national study. However, except for the overview and concluding chapters, the product from following a common recipe has the flavor of a set of reference volumes rather than an undertaking in which each chapter carries the potential of a new and revealing conceptualization, a different way of looking at these complex issues. In going through the volumes, the image in my mind often was one of tillers in the vineyard, each responsible for his furrow. The wine, however, is delicious, and students of globalization and work careers have been well served by this undertaking and in having these volumes available.

EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON WORK VALUES

One exception to the regimented structure of the county chapters is the inclusion of a paper on values and attitudes in the volume on women's careers (Luck 2006). This is the sole chapter in the four volume Globalife study that does not conform with the programmatic nature of the report, in that it neither examines employment transitions in a particular country nor overviews career outcomes across the European states. Instead it addresses the impact of culture and religious belief systems on gender roles. More precisely, the intent of the chapter is to assess the differential roles played by culture and welfare regime institutions in the choices couples make about wife's employment and the division of household labor.

Luck (2006 p. 416) argues that the cultural background of societies has shaped their institutional arrangements, but that cultural mores and religious belief systems continue to assert a direct effect on women's values. He also claims that compared with cultural background the impact of welfare regime effects is modest (Luck 2006, p. 419). I have issues with the adequacy of Luck's empirical analysis. These concern both his method of testing the relative effects of culture and structure, and the thinness of the empirical formulation for carrying the weight of rather strong claims. In my view, the contribution of Luck's chapter is not in his empirical findings but in raising an issue that deserves some thought; namely, the extent to which values are molded by institutional arrangements and the rate at which different sorts of values respond and adjust to changes in structural organization.

Luck developed his thesis in reference to the writings of several social psychologists, especially Ronald Inglehart (1990; 1997). A recent edited volume (Ester, et. al. 2006a) delves into this body of research, with specific regard to the effects of globalization on value patterns in the European countries. This publication has two distinct sections. The first examines trends in various value domains; the second involves a comparison of the value systems developed by three prominent researchers--Ronald Inglehart, Shalom Schwartz, and Geert Hofstede. Only the first section is relevant to this essay and I further restrict attention to the chapters that discuss work values.

The new work arrangements prompted by globalization have generated opportunities for career advancement as well as having been a cause of insecurity and anxiety. As made clear in the Globalife report, the press of globalization has led to the individualization of employment, fostering greater returns to education and eroding the potency of collectivist solutions to the provision of job security. In this context, national differences in work values might well differentiate among countries in terms of labor force adaptability and the capability of a citizenry to exploit the new economic possibilities.

What, then, has been the course of value change in the European states? Ester, et. al. (2006b) examine work values in 12 European countries using three waves of the European Values Study (1981, 1990, 1999/2000). One question they address concerns whether globalization has been eroding country differences, leading to value convergence. A second issue relates to the mechanics of value change, which they formulate in terms of whether there is evidence for differential socialization and generational replacement as the responsible process.

To pursue these matters Ester and his associates construct indices of extrinsic and intrinsic work values, a pair of categories that has a long tradition in social science research (e.g., Lenski 1963; Mortimer and Lorence 1979). In the present context, the motivation for this distinction derives from the view of Inglehart (1997) that value priorities in western countries have been shifting from materialist to post-materialist concerns; i.e., from a focus on survival needs to ones of individual freedom, personal growth, and aesthetic enhancement. Ester, et. al. (2006b, pp. 89-94) add the contention that a workforce that supports intrinsic values meshes well with the needs of employers in a global economy, where personal development, lifelong learning, and flexibility are esteemed.

The main findings from their analysis suggest that there has been an increase in the salience of both intrinsic and extrinsic values in most European states, and there is evidence that much of the change derives from a process of generational replacement. Not surprisingly, the youngest cohort expresses most of the change in values; they, of course, are deeply vulnerable to the dislocations brought about by globalization. Further, in reviewing the change patterns in the various European countries, the authors find little support for a thesis of value convergence, as is suggested in some formulations of modernization theory (Ester, et. al. 2006c).

However, inferring reasons for the value change from the reported analysis is rather difficult. For one matter, intrinsic work values are associated with educational attainment, and the shift toward a greater appreciation of intrinsic rewards may reflect little more than a continuation of the long term trend in schooling. One might claim that increased schooling is itself a response to globalization, but the rise in children's educational attainment has been taking place for more than a century and reflects the decline in family size, growth of urbanization, and the emergence of skilled industrial occupations, all of which have largely predated the onset of globalization as a conscious concern. I would be interested in how intrinsic work values have changed net of trends in educational attainment, but it is not possible to assess this effect since the reported analysis does not include a control for education (Ester, et. al. 2006b, table 4.6).

A more serious problem with the study is the failure to include institutional variables of the sort examined in the Globalife project. As a result, the authors have no theory of country differences in work values, aside from some consideration religion effects. Yet, an examination of country differences, as reported in the chapter, is suggestive of a patterning by welfare regime type. For example, focusing on the youngest generation in the 1999 wave--the group likely to be most affected by globalization--it is the case that they report a high emphasis on extrinsic values (a concern with earnings and job security) in Spain, Italy, and the US , but give them a lower rating in Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands (Ester, et. al. 2006b, table 4.4). This fits well with assessments of the career insecurities of youth, as discussed in Mills, et. al. (2005, pp. 423-29). In the case of Italy and Spain, the employment opportunities of young workers are limited because of the extensive shielding of the careers of established workers. In the northern European countries, young workers also take more time to secure standard employment contracts, but the availability of generous social benefits appears to cushion their economic uncertainty.

If this study of work values is oblivious to the literature on institutional effects, it is also the case that the Globalife volumes devote scant attention to work values. In short, the two literatures have proceeded like passing ships on a dark night. This neglect of the other has consequences for our comprehension of changes in work values, but also for developments in regard to work careers. With respect to work values, omission of a consideration of employment systems and welfare regimes detracts from an understanding of the mechanics by which the insecurities and anxieties generated by globalization are transformed into a stress upon certain values. Globalization, after all, is hardly a palpable phenomenon; rather, workers perceive its impact only after it is filtered by particular institutional arrangements, which can exacerbate or diminish their career and employment prospects. While feelings of insecurity and anxiety are not values, these dispositions impinge upon the salience of a construct such as extrinsic work values, which taps concerns about career and income.

The relevance of values to an assessment of globalization's effects on career features is more subtle. One can surmise, as Luck (2006, p. 416) does, that the cultural background of a society preceded and has shaped its institutional features, but this is an origin story and does not mean that country differences in work values continue to influence career outcomes once current work arrangements are taken into account. But country differences in value preferences surely affect the course of institutional adaptations to the unfolding of globalization, in both rate and in the form that the adjustments will take. Thus, while the imperatives of remaining competitive in a global economy may require frequent adaptations to new developments, it is value structures, especially in regard to work arrangements, that will constrain and mold the institutional change.

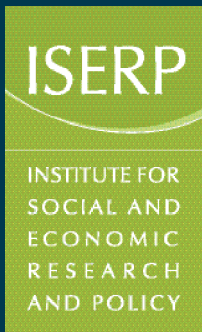
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