Work values: Their emergence and their consequences for labour market behaviour

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Chapter 6

Conclusions and discussion
6.1 What has this study done?

The aim of this research was to investigate the influence of labour market characteristics on the work values of employees and to assess the effects of these work values on people’s labour market behaviour. The main research questions were: (1) How do work values come about and (2) What are the consequences of work values for labour market behaviour? In contemporary, highly volatile labour markets, where stable jobs sustained throughout the employees’ working lives are becoming increasingly rare, it is important to understand why people change or have to change jobs. Especially from the point of view of social stratification and social mobility research, it is relevant to examine the causes of labour market flexibility among workers. Understanding the importance of work values sheds some light on this issue. In combining insights from work value research and literature on voluntary and forced job endings this study has led to improved understanding of (a) the impact of labour market characteristics on employees’ preferred job aspects, (b) the varying impact of these characteristics for the preferences of workers with different educational attainment and income levels, (c) the influence of work values on voluntary and forced job endings, and (d) the possible conflict between individual work values and peers’ preferences for job mobility and its effect on the individual’s decision to end employment relationships voluntarily.

This study contributes to existing research in several respects. It fills a gap in existing work value research by focusing on whether work values – subjective individual characteristics – matter for individual labour market behaviour. Furthermore, it shows that subjective characteristics indeed matter for the decision of workers to end their employment relationships voluntarily and thus that (work) values should not be ignored in research on individual (labour market) behaviour. Another important contribution of this study is that it introduces advanced methodological techniques applied to longitudinal data in a field of research that is dominated by cross-sectional studies. By employing these techniques and data, we provide statistically and methodologically sound insights into the consequences of work values on individual work-related behaviour.
An overview of the research questions, data sets and statistical methods used in this study is presented in Table 6.1. We first assessed the impact of labour market characteristics on job preferences of workers (Chapter 2). In the following chapters, we considered the effects of individual work values on the voluntary and forced termination of employment relationships and the effects of social norms on individual job mobility. In these chapters, we therefore concentrated on answering the second research question. In the remainder of the current chapter, the findings of the study are summarized, the limitations of the study discussed and suggestions for future research provided.

**Individual characteristics matter most for employee work values**

What a person values in a job, is influenced by individual characteristics. Gender, age and educational level have proven to be of influence as origins of work values. In our study, we found that the workers’ educational level and occupational status especially matter for their work values. More highly-educated workers consider extrinsic job aspects less and intrinsic job aspects more important than workers with a lower educational level do. The higher the worker’s occupational status, the lower the importance the worker attaches to the extrinsic job aspects. For intrinsic work values it is the other way around: workers with higher occupational statuses consider intrinsic job aspects more important than workers with the lowest
occupational status. As workers grow older, the importance attached to both extrinsic and intrinsic job aspects diminishes.

Table 6.2: The effects of the individual characteristics on employees' extrinsic and intrinsic work values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual characteristics:</th>
<th>Extrinsic work values</th>
<th>Intrinsic work values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occupational status (ref. semi-skilled and unskilled manual worker):
- Employer/manager: – +
- Professional worker: – +
- Middle-level office worker: – +
- Junior-level office worker: – +
- Skilled manual worker: – +
- Farmer: 0 +
- Member of armed forces: 0 +

Household situation (ref: single, no children):
- Single with children: 0 0
- Couple, no children: 0 0
- Couple with children: 0 0

+ = positive effect  
– = negative effect  
0 = effect is not significant

The labour market is important for workers' preferred job aspects as well
By controlling for individual characteristics, we found that country-specific labour market characteristics are relevant for people's preferred job aspects. Generous unemployment benefits help workers to secure their basic needs in times of unemployment. Our analyses showed that these benefits reduce the importance attached to extrinsic job characteristics. An unequal distribution of incomes also affects the employees' extrinsic work values. The importance attached to the extrinsic job aspects is greater in countries where incomes are more unequally distributed. In countries with an equal distribution of incomes, more employees are in a labour situation that offers little safety or security than in countries with a more equal allocation of incomes. Workers in insecure labour situations consider extrinsic job aspects more important.
than intrinsic job characteristics. Finally, the scarcity of jobs makes workers more interested in the extrinsic aspects of a job.

The labour market characteristics not only influence the preferences for the extrinsic job aspects but also affect the preferences of workers for the intrinsic characteristics of a job. Protection against (the consequences of) being fired enhances the importance employees attach to the intrinsic job aspects. Furthermore, when wage setting is coordinated, workers have a stronger preference for the intrinsic characteristics of a job. An overview of the effects of the labour market characteristics on employees’ extrinsic and intrinsic work values is reported in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: The effects of the labour market characteristics on employees’ extrinsic and intrinsic work values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour market characteristics:</th>
<th>Extrinsic work values</th>
<th>Intrinsic work values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replacement Rate</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Protection Legislation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage Setting Coordination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Inequality (Gini)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth of Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ = positive effect  
− = negative effect  
o = effect is not significant

To examine whether labour market characteristics affected the work values of employees in precarious employment relationships differently than the job preferences of workers in more favourable job positions, we used the workers’ attained educational level and income level as indicators for the precariousness of their employment relationships. We found that the influence of labour market characteristics on extrinsic work values does not differ between employees in precarious employment relationships and workers in more favourable job positions (see Table 6.4). Our results did show that labour market characteristics affect the intrinsic work values of employees in precarious employment relationships and the intrinsic work values of workers in more favourable job positions differently. Especially more highly-educated employees benefit from the protection against the financial consequences of unemployment. Generous replacement rates particularly enable the more highly-educated employees to have stronger
preferences for the intrinsic job aspects in comparison with the workers with a lower educational level. A more equal income distribution also has a positive effect on the intrinsic job preferences of the more highly-educated. Even a cut-back in available jobs has a positive effect on intrinsic work values among the more highly-educated employees. For the other indicator of the precariousness of employment relationships, we found that the labour market characteristics do not affect the intrinsic work values of employees with varying income levels differently.

Table 6.4: The effects of labour market characteristics on extrinsic and intrinsic work values of employees with varying educational and income levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour market characteristics:</th>
<th>Extrinsic work values</th>
<th>Intrinsic work values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replacement Rate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with education</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Protection Legislation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage Setting Coordination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Inequality (Gini)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with education</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth of Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with education</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interaction with income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ = positive effect  
– = negative effect  
0 = effect is not significant

*The cells are blank for the interactions with educational level, because there is no random variance in the slope for the educational level for the countries selected in the analyses.

To conclude, our results showed that labour market characteristics are effective in enhancing preferences of workers for the extrinsic job aspects. Both workers in precarious positions and workers in more favourable work positions benefit from the possibilities the labour market offers to guarantee their basic needs. With the reduced necessity to secure basic needs, workers are able to enhance their preferences for the intrinsic job aspects. However, only the workers who already have a stronger preference for
intrinsic job aspects (the more highly-educated workers), fully benefit from the opportunities the labour market characteristics pose. The more highly-educated employees appear to use labour market arrangements, among other things via their job preferences, to ‘capitalize’ their investment in human capital.

*Work values matter for workers quitting their job…*

Workers with strong preferences for specific job aspects are likely to be dissatisfied with their current job and therefore search for other jobs that meet their work values better. By controlling for the usual determinants of job mobility, we discovered that employees with strong preferences for specific job aspects change jobs more often. Table 6.5 provides an overview of our findings.

Workers who consider ‘having a good pay’ or ‘having an interesting job’ very important, more often end their current employment relationship voluntarily to start a new employment relationship. Workers with a preference for ‘having a secure job’ are less likely to quit their job. A preference for security implies a preference for stability. Workers who value ‘having a secure job’, prefer a stable relationship with their (current) employer. It is therefore not surprising that workers who consider ‘having a secure job’ important, less often change jobs voluntarily. Workers with strong preferences for ‘having a job that is useful for society’ are also less likely to quit their job. The positive effect on individual job mobility of the work value ‘having a good pay’ especially prevails among women. ‘Having a good pay’ is an important motivator for female workers to end their current employment relationship. Men’s decision to quit is also influenced by work values. ‘Having a secure job’ and ‘having a job that is useful for society’ reduces the likelihood among men to end their current employment relationship voluntarily.

Work values also influence the kind of job change employees make. Workers who emphasize the importance of the extrinsic job aspects, in particular ‘having a good pay’, more often quit their job to take up a new job that meets their extrinsic work values better. Preferences for intrinsic job aspects influence the extrinsically motivated voluntary job mobility of workers negatively. Workers who highly value ‘being an expert in one’s work field’ or ‘having a job that is useful for society’, less often make an extrinsically motivated job change. The analyses for the relationship between work values and intrinsically motivated voluntary job mobility showed that workers with strong preferences for ‘having an interesting job’ more often change jobs for
intrinsic reasons voluntarily. Workers who emphasize the importance of the extrinsic work value 'having a secure job', less often quit their current job to start a new employment relationship that meets their intrinsic job wishes better.

On the basis of our findings we conclude that work values are important for voluntary job mobility and that work values also influence the type of job change workers make. Our results thus provide evidence that work values influence labour market behaviour and should therefore not be ignored in analyses explaining individual (labour market) behaviour.

Table 6.5: The relationship between voluntary job endings and (1) 'individual' work values and (2) social norms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All a</th>
<th>Extrinsically motivated</th>
<th>Intrinsically motivated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total b</td>
<td>Men b</td>
<td>Women b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extrinsic Work Values:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good pay</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic Work Values:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Having an interesting job'</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Being an expert in one's work field'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Having a job that is useful for society'</td>
<td>- c</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social norms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represented in job mobility of peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative 'deviance' of peers' mobility</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive 'deviance' of peers' mobility</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ = positive effect
- = negative effect
0 = effect is not significant

a: 'All' means that the job endings included are voluntarily terminated for either extrinsic reasons or intrinsic reasons. Job endings for which the reason of termination was not reported, have been excluded.
b: The control variables in the model that include both men and women slightly differ from the control variables included in the models for men and women separately. Besides controlling for (gender,) age, educational level and occupational status, we also control for household composition in the latter models.
c: In the model that examines the influence of peers on individual voluntary job mobility, the work value 'having a job that is useful for society' has no significant effect on the voluntary job mobility of workers who make fewer job changes than their peers (negative deviance of peers' mobility).

…but work values do not affect forced job endings

Since workers with strong preferences for specific job aspects have moved voluntarily, it is likely that workers who highly value specific work values, are not at risk of experiencing a forced ending of their employment relationship.
We demonstrated that work values indeed have hardly any effect on forced job endings among men and women. None of the work values affect the likelihood that the men who are forced to end their current employment contract become unemployed. Finding a new job immediately after a forced job ending is harder for men who value ‘having a job that is useful for society’. Workers with preferences for this job aspect are likely to have a job in the public sector (Dur and Zoutenbier 2011; Lewis and Frank 2002). The attractiveness of jobs in the public sector is in the ability to help others and so in their contribution to society. Public-sector jobs are also appealing because of their conceived job security. ‘Firms’ in the public sector downsize less frequently than businesses in the private sector (Lewis and Frank 2002). In case government agencies have to downsize, they most likely fire the public-sector workers with high levels of public sector experience (the costly employees). A possible explanation for the negative finding of ‘having a job that is useful for society’ on forced job mobility could be that once public-sector workers know that they are going to lose their jobs, they realize that with their specific level of experience fewer job opportunities are available to them. Workers who want the preference of ‘having a job that is useful for society’ to be met, therefore probably have to search for a job longer than their notification period. If this explanation is correct, however, the work value ‘having a job that is useful for society’ should have a positive effect instead of the currently insignificant effect on forced job mobility. Perhaps the public-sector workers with high levels of experience who are fired, are older workers. In the Netherlands, these older workers had the opportunity to leave the labour market until the mid 2000s through early-retirement schemes. The chances of the older workers to find a new job after being fired are minimal (Putman, Stavenuiter and Smollenaars 1999). For female employees work values have no influence on their probability to find another job immediately after they lose their current job. Women, though, who value ‘having a secure job’, are less likely to be unemployed when they are forced out of their job. Our research findings, summarized in Table 6.6, confirm our general idea that work values especially affect the decision of workers to change jobs voluntarily. Workers with strong preferences take the initiative to end their current employment relationship themselves and do not ‘wait’ for their employer to end it.
Peers’ job mobility affects workers’ individual job changes…

Interactions with peers are important for an individual’s decisions. Our analyses demonstrated that employees who are less job-mobile than their peers, are more likely to make a future job change than workers who hold a comparable number of voluntary job changes as their social group (see first column in Table 6.5). Workers, however, who make more voluntary job changes than their peers, do not conform their behaviour to that of their peers. The peers who change jobs less frequently, therefore do not withhold the more job-mobile workers from making job changes. Apparently, the individual positive effects of job mobility prevail over the negative effects of deviating from one’s social group. The workers who are more inclined to change jobs, seem to be pioneers.

…but peers’ job mobility does not rule out the influence of individual work values

Some authors suggest that the effect of values is incorporated in social norms (Fishbein 1967; Jaccard and Davidson 1975; Pomazel and Jaccard 1976; Schwartz and Tessler 1972; Wiener 1982). Following these authors’ line of thought, the effects of work values on individual job changing behaviour would disappear once the behaviour of peers is controlled for; the effect of work values would run through the job changing behaviour of peers (cf. Bardi and Schwartz 2003). While controlling for peers’ job changing behaviour, however, we found that work values are not incorporated in the social norm on job mobility. The work values ‘having a good pay’ and ‘having an interesting job’ still affect the voluntary job changes among employees.
positively. Furthermore, workers with a preference for ‘having a secure job’ persist in refraining from changing jobs. ‘Having a good pay’ and ‘having an interesting job’ thus continue to be important motivators to change jobs voluntarily, especially for workers who change jobs frequently (or more frequently than their peers).

6.2 What have we learned?

The research reported in this thesis contributes to previous research in several ways. Its first contribution is in filling a gap in work value research and job mobility inquiries. What people value in their job, is a research subject of growing interest. However, studies on the influence of work values on work-related behaviour received limited attention (Elizur 1996; England and Lee 1974; Frieze et al. 2006; Putti, Aryee and Liang 1989; Swenson and Herche 1994). Research on labour market behaviour hardly focused on the impact of subjective individual characteristics on individual actions. Studies on job mobility mainly incorporated individual characteristics and labour market characteristics as determinants for job changes among workers. A notable exception to these sets of determinants commonly included is the long proven effect of the subjective individual characteristic job satisfaction. Studies on the effect of another subjective individual characteristic – work values – for job mobility are practically non-existent. As far as we know, only Kanchier and Unruh (1989) examined the effects of job aspects workers prefer with respect to voluntary job mobility.

A second contribution of this study to the field of research on work values and labour market behaviour is vested in the research technique and data design. Existing empirical studies mainly use cross-sectional data to assess the influence of work values on labour market behaviour (Elizur 1996; England and Lee 1974; Frieze et al. 2006; Kanchier and Unruh 1989; Putti, Aryee and Liang 1989; Swenson and Herche 1994). Researchers using this kind of data have to rely on the assumption that work values indeed affect labour market behaviour later on. To avoid work values being affected by factual circumstances, the assessment of the relationship between work values and work-related actions requires data with a longitudinal design. In this study, we used such data. To make optimum use of the longitudinal character of our data, we employed event history analysis. In employing advanced methodological
techniques and longitudinal data, we contribute to existing research because we are able to report statistically and methodologically sound insights into the consequences of work values on individual work-related behaviour.

The third contribution of this study is represented in its findings. With its statistically and methodologically sound analyses the study provides evidence that work values have consequences for the voluntary decision of workers to change jobs. An important conclusion we can draw on the basis of this finding is that in research in the field of labour market careers we should not ignore the subjective individual characteristics when examining individual labour market behaviour. The mechanism underlying the relationship between work values and individual voluntary job mobility is the workers' dissatisfaction with their current job. Highly valuing a specific job aspect results in dissatisfaction with one's current job and puts workers at risk of making a voluntary job change. Another conclusion is therefore that work values function as motivators to act. This is why work values have no effect on forced job endings among employees, as our results have demonstrated. Individual work values are group-level phenomena; they imply a shared agreement that the preferred job aspects are important (enough) to be satisfied. Therefore, the job changing behaviour of the individual's peers could have a similar effect on individual job mobility as 'individual' work values. The actions of peers could even take over the effect of work values on individual job mobility (cf. Bardi and Schwartz 2003). Peer behaviour functions as a social norm, a behavioural rule to which the individual has to comply. On the basis of our findings we conclude that the effects of the social group's job changing behaviour are not so strong that they rule out the effects of the individual work values. Peer behaviour matters, but individual work values remain an important motivator for the decision of workers to change jobs. In this way, we provide evidence that when examining labour market careers researchers not only need to take subjective individual characteristics into account, but they also have to consider the impact of the actions of the individual's social group. Furthermore, we found that work values are not a given; they are formed. Individual characteristics are very important in shaping what employees value in a job. The educational level of workers and their occupational status and age especially affect their preferred job aspects. The labour market also influences what workers consider important aspects in their job. The effect of the labour market runs, of course, through the occupational status of workers, but specific labour market characteristics also
affect employee work values. Our findings lead us to the conclusion that with its characteristics the labour market helps workers to secure the extrinsic aspects of a job and to improve the intrinsic aspects of a job. However, mainly more highly-educated workers benefit from the opportunity the labour market characteristics offers them to attach importance to the intrinsic job aspects.

Finally, this study informs ongoing social stratification and social mobility research by showing that a significant share of the job mobility observed is individually motivated. Higher volatility of employment careers is therefore not only a result of increasingly flexible labour markets and more labour market uncertainty, but it is also structured by what workers consider important in a job. Our findings therefore help to nuance the on-going scholarly discussion about employment uncertainty and individualization (Blossfeld, Mills and Bernardi 2006).

6.3 What is still to be learned?

In this study, we assessed the relationship between individual work values and the labour market through the latter’s characteristics on the national level. Our results showed that the influence of the labour market ran through its characteristics on the national level. Our findings also demonstrated that the ‘labour market’ affects the individual work values of employees through the occupational status of workers. Where employees work and what kind of job they practise thus matters for their preferred job aspects. Besides country-level variables, meso level variables, such as branches of industry, are likely to determine the work values of employees as well. The different sectors as well as the different segments that make up the labour market (Doering and Piore 1971; Leontaridi 1998), have their own characteristics. In our study, we had to treat labour markets as single entities due to data limitations, and we were unable to differentiate between sectors and labour market segments. Firm size would have been a good indicator to test for labour market segmentation, but the EVS data on firm size had too many missing values for some countries to warrant any meaningful claims. Data on the growth in the number of unemployed individuals per sector would have provided valuable information on the characteristics of different labour market sectors as well. To give a more detailed picture of the effects of labour market characteristics on the
job preferences of employees, future research could focus on the effects of the characteristics of labour market segments and sectors.

In this study, we proposed that in affecting labour market behaviour work values are stable throughout employees’ careers. There is, however, debate on the stability of (work) values over the individual’s life course. Some researchers point out that work values change during an individual’s life course due to experiences on the job. In her study on young people’s work values, Johnson (2002) found that what young people initially value in a job, changes across the young adult years. With age and experience on the job, their job preferences become more realistic. In their research on men’s and women’s work values, Tolbert and Moen (1998) also found that experiences on the job affected the job preferences of workers. Due to data limitations (the OSA data set contains information on people’s job preferences at one given point in time), we had to assume that work values are stable over the life course. It is not unusual to assume stability of work values. According to Rokeach’s (1973) much cited definition, values are *enduring* beliefs about a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence. The effects we found in our study for the ‘earlier’ work values on later mobility, showed that work values matter, even for subsequent changes. To examine the influence of work values on voluntary job mobility more thoroughly, it would, however, be relevant to assess the relationship between work values and individual job changing behaviour by using data on individual work values at several points in time during the individual’s life course.

When assessing the effect of the social group on individual job mobility, we assumed that the ‘others’ with whom individuals compare themselves, are those workers who have similar characteristics as the individuals (their peers). These peers, however, are a very specific group of ‘others’ with whom individuals compare themselves. Individuals also engage in interactions with other groups of ‘others’ that could possibly affect individual voluntary job mobility: The ‘others’ that might be important for the decision of workers to change jobs voluntarily, are the workers individuals would *like* to compare themselves with (cf. Merton 1968). To assess the relationship between the workers’ social group and their decision to change jobs voluntarily, we created a social group based on the employees’ individual characteristics (gender, age and educational level) and gave a first insight into the effects of the social group on individual labour market behaviour. Possibly, there are more individual characteristics that are relevant to create the social group,
like household situation or the industry in which the worker operates. In our study, we limited the social group to the aforementioned characteristics, because we lack data on the industry in which the employees work and because including the household situation led to too many ‘empty’ social groups. To examine the effect of the social group on voluntary job mobility in more detail, it would even be better to ask respondents who they consider their peers and with whom they would like to compare themselves. Given the relevance of the social group for individual labour market behaviour, surveys interested in explaining individual labour market behaviour should have questions on the individual’s reference groups in their questionnaire.

The answers to our research questions yielded some interesting issues that were outside the focus of our study but which make interesting subjects for future research. A first relevant topic for future research deals with whether work values differ for workers of varying ages. Research on voluntary job mobility shows that young workers change jobs more often than older employees do (see for instance Topel and Ward, 1992; Groot and Verberne, 1997) and that young workers differ from older workers in the kinds of job changes they make (Neal 1999). Given the strong effect of age on voluntary job mobility, it is relevant to examine whether the impact of work values on the decision to change jobs works out differently for young employees than for older workers. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine whether the importance attached to the different work values varies for employees born in different time periods, whether different work values affect the labour market behaviour of the various cohorts and whether the impact of work values on individual labour market behaviour changed over the various cohorts.

A second suggestion for future research is to widen the scope of the impact of work values on labour market behaviour from a national to an international perspective. Contemporary labour markets are characterized by higher volatility. However, it is unlikely that countries are closely comparable in their volatility. The Dutch context differs from other European and non-European contexts with respect to labour market policies and thus with respect to labour market characteristics. Our research showed that work values are formed by specific labour market arrangements. Given the differences in labour market characteristics, countries also differ in the importance their workers attach to specific job aspects. Further research is necessary to reveal how the contextual differences determine the extent to which work values affect the voluntary decision of employees to change jobs.
It is likely that the national institutions play a role in the decision of workers to change jobs voluntarily. The ease with which workers will make the decision to change jobs, differs from country to country. In turn, the labour market characteristics on the national level are likely to have an effect on the relationship between work values and employees’ job changing behaviour. In countries where workers can change jobs easily without having to face any major (financial) consequences, work values are likely to have a stronger impact on individual decision-making. In our study, it becomes apparent that in countries with well-developed labour market arrangements (more highly-educated) workers attach more importance to the intrinsic aspects of a job. A possible effect of the institutional context is that in countries with ‘good’ labour market characteristics the decision of workers to change jobs are encouraged more often by enhancing the intrinsic job aspects.

References


