

# INTRODUCTION

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For decades, European labor markets have been praised for their social democracy and corporatism, and for what seems like greater security and equality. However, European labor markets have received equal amounts of criticism and concern for their purported rigidities and inefficiencies and for seeming to be unable to foster job growth and flexibility. The history of European workers has long been a source of theoretical inspiration as well (e.g., Sassoon, 1996). Studied for representing the roots of industrialization and democratization, European workers have been central to many great debates in the social sciences (e.g., Aminzade, 1993). In more recent years, the socioeconomic model organizing work in Europe has been scrutinized (e.g., Pontusson, 2005). Many have raised questions about whether European workers will face fundamental challenges and will be forced to adapt to new realities. Others point to work in Europe as an ideal or preferred path compared to neoliberal and American style capitalisms (e.g., Brady, 2009). All the while, Europe remains distinctive and unique while simultaneously undergoing often rapid and deep changes.

This volume and its companion places the jobs, labor, labor markets, workplaces, and workers of Europe in comparative perspective. Broadly, this volume integrates scholarship on the experiences and inequalities of work and workers in Europe. The companion volume focuses on policies and institutions regarding work and workers in Europe (Brady, 2011). Both volumes compare workers within Europe, between European countries, and between European and other countries. The national focus varies with one

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chapter on Turkey, some scrutinizing Eastern Europe, and several comparing Western Europe to other affluent democracies. Though principally quantitative, the methods are diverse. There are chapters featuring survey data, macro-level archival sources, and ethnographic fieldwork, and an exclusively theoretical chapter. Both volumes are interdisciplinary, including a relatively even balance of chapters by sociologists and political scientists.

Several themes emerge out of the volume. In particular, the authors show the great value of studying workers with a multilevel perspective that incorporates macro-level country characteristics. Many chapters offer both an in-depth concentration on the perspectives and realities of workers themselves while also stressing how macro-level conditions are shaping the micro-level experience of workers. In addition, several chapters challenge conventional wisdom and present evidence that defies the stereotypes about European work and workers. Many of the chapters demonstrate that Europe is experiencing growing inequality, and that this rise in inequality threatens even formerly very egalitarian countries. Conversely, the chapters also give us reason to be optimistic about the European model. Especially in the companion volume, several chapters convincingly show that social policy is effective and that generous social policies do not really have the counterproductive consequences that are often alleged.

In total, these two volumes compare the contemporary patterns and the recent history of European workers with other models of work worldwide. In this brief introduction, I describe the organization and content of the volume.

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The chapters in the volume are organized into two sections. The first three chapters examine the "Experience of Work" in European countries. The following four focus on various aspects of economic "Inequality" by drawing comparisons between and within Europe and other affluent democracies. In this section, I provide a brief preview of each chapter and identify a few of the unique contributions of each.

### *Experience of Work*

Fullerton and colleagues focus on what they call "perceived job security." They utilize Eurobarometer survey data from 2006 on 31 European countries. Their analysis builds from a survey question on the extent to which workers feel confident that they will be able to keep their job in the

coming months. Their analysis incorporates country-level measures of flexible employment, unemployment and unemployment benefits, unionization, and post-socialist legacy. They find that European workers feel most secure in the context of high unemployment, where welfare states are thin and labor unions are weak, and in post-socialist countries. Surprisingly, they find that flexible employment at the country-level is not associated with greater individual-level insecurity. Indeed, a low-level of flexible employment is associated with greater insecurity. Hence, they provide compelling evidence that flexible employment exhibits tremendous cross-national variation across different institutional contexts.

Wallace and Lowe utilize European Values Study data on 31 European countries in 1999. This chapter examines individual-level survey data on four work attitudes: work centrality, work commitment, job satisfaction, and autonomy. They link this survey data with 11 institutional processes at the country-level. Because they compare post-socialist societies with the traditional West European countries, they are able to provide general conclusions about the cross-national patterning of work attitudes. For instance, they show that traditionally capitalist countries score lower on work centrality and work commitment and higher on satisfaction and autonomy. They also exhaustively examine a wide variety of hypotheses for the individual and institutional variables. Altogether, Wallace and Lowe provide what might be the most comprehensive study of work attitudes in Europe to date.

Tugal examines how workers experience the recent market transformations at the edges of what has historically been defined as Europe. In his chapter, Tugal explores the role of religious politics in informal workers' pro-capitalist ideology. Based on an ethnography and intensive interviews in a squatter district in Istanbul, he finds that these marginalized informal workers' dispositions reflect the historical context and articulation of political and religious movements. Applying insights from Bourdieu, he shows that Islamism leads to the consent of these subproletarians. Somewhat unique to the volume, Tugal concentrates on the experiences of the more marginalized and contingent workers in a more peripheral European society. By doing so, he is able to gain unique leverage on the challenges faced by and politics of some of Europe's most vulnerable workers.

### *Inequality*

Mahler begins the next section by examining how the relationship between education and earnings varies across countries and time. He uses data from

the Luxembourg Income Study on eight countries for various years since the 1980s. Mahler calculates the wage premium associated with less than secondary, tertiary or vocational educational attainment. He convincingly demonstrates that returns to education account for a substantial share of cross-country variation in wage inequality. In the process, Mahler shows scholars of inequality the importance of differences in education and in returns to education.

Leicht and my chapter tests David Gordon's (1996) well known but rarely studied "fat and mean" thesis. Gordon contended that as the managerial/administrative class grows in an economy, this boosts earnings inequality. Leicht and I examine three measures of earnings inequality for 17 affluent democracies since the 1970s. We construct an original measure of "managerial intensity," which we find is positively associated with all three measures of earnings inequality. Thus, this chapter provides one of the very few applications of Gordon's provocative argument. We show that one source of the rise of earnings inequality in European and other rich countries has been the growth of the managerial class.

Misra and colleagues investigate the influence of gender, parenthood, and partner's employment on one's employment and how these relationships vary across affluent democracies. Their analyses show the salience of countries' strategies to facilitate women's employment. Moreover, their study deeply interrogates the combining, offsetting, and interacting effects of parenthood and partnering. Their analyses model both selection into employment and full-time status among the employed. They find intriguing relationships between parenthood, partner's status, and women's employment. Even more interestingly, they show that there is tremendous cross-national variation in these relationships. This suggests a fruitful research agenda on women's employment that takes parenthood and partners more seriously.

It is an honor to feature one of the last chapters written with Michael Wallerstein. The chapter, lead authored by Miriam Golden, is based on a project started before the distinguished political scientist's passing. Like the previous chapters in this section, they devote attention to the rise in earnings inequality in affluent democracies in the last few decades of the 20th century. Their aim is to sort out the relative impacts of labor market institutions, international trade with less developed countries, and deindustrialization. They show that the predictors of earnings inequality were different in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1980s, growing wage inequality was mainly due to changes in labor market institutions. In the 1990s, increased pay inequality was driven by increasing trade with less developed countries and weakening

social insurance. This is one of the few chapters that has provided convincing evidence of a link between trade with developing countries and the rise in earnings inequality in affluent democracies.

## CONCLUSION

The final chapter of the second volume contains a reflective concluding essay by Daniel and colleagues. The authors reflect on the contributions of all of the chapters in this and the companion volume. Beyond the insightful chapter of Daniel and colleagues, this volume suggests some directions for future research on European workers. First, the chapters in this volume continue to show the tremendous value of cross-national comparison by routinely contrasting the European economies with other countries. Perhaps, one valuable direction would be to extend the comparisons beyond the standard set of affluent democracies. While there continues to be great value in showing European exceptionalism relative to North America, there are likely to be many valuable contributions in showing how Europe compares to developing countries like those in Latin America or East Asia (Huber, 2002). Second, the boundaries of Europe and the definition of European workers is stretching and expanding. As exemplified by Tugal's, Fullerton and colleagues, and Wallace and Lowe's chapters, Eastern Europe and Turkey are fascinating frontiers for the study of European workers. This is becoming even more true as immigration between Turkey and Eastern Europe and Western Europe continues to grow. Given the many and expanding links between "old" and "new" Europe, European workers are an increasingly heterogeneous and rapidly changing population. Third, even more research is needed on the subjective "on the ground" experiences of workers. In the final chapter of the second volume, Daniel and colleagues highlight areas of research that Fullerton and colleagues and Wallace and Lowe have initiated. While Daniel and colleagues encourage even greater depth on culture, meaning, and cognition, Fullerton and colleagues and Wallace and Lowe illustrate effective strategies for studying what workers think, feel, and judge to be important. Given the progress made in cross-national survey data, it will increasingly be feasible to investigate the micro-level aspects of work while also considering macro-level differences. At the same time, Tugal reminds us of the necessity for qualitative methods and deep case study for a more complete understanding of the subjective and micro-level experiences of workers.

Though European workers have long been studied, there is no shortage of exciting research questions. As this volume shows, the availability and accessibility of data on European workers has never been so strong. Even within the past 10 years, we have made tremendous advances in being able to study and compare European workers. Thus, despite the rich and distinguished history of the field, the possibilities have never been better. The companion volume addresses some of the key questions with regard to policies and institutions and complements the focus of this volume on experiences and inequalities.

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## SECTION I THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK