The Divergence Hypothesis in Modernization Theory Across Three European Countries: the UK, Sweden and Greece

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Abstract

Following a comparative approach it is argued that the modernizing trajectories of three European countries, i.e., the UK, Sweden and Greece were different, as the cultural heritages of the three countries under study, formed by specific historical, political and religious events have acted as a filter of their modernization processes and left an imprint on the prevailing values. England followed a type of modernization associated with "bourgeois revolutions", Sweden was highly influenced by the popular belief system of solidarity of the political culture of Scandinavian nations and Greece, although increasingly modern, can be associated with a more traditional, top to bottom, version of modernization, highly influenced by the Greek Orthodox Church. Secondary data and empirical research show that the different modernizing paths in the three countries have formed their main cultural characteristics; the UK is portrayed as an individualistic culture, Sweden as an amalgamation of both individualism and collectivism, and Greece as a traditional and more collectivist one. As culture, in the Parsonian approach, acts as the binder of the social world it has functioned as a mediating mechanism, shaping the personality traits and social relationships among British, Swedish and Greek citizens in the direction of an individualistic and/or a collectivist ethos. Whilst the thesis of the article does not support the bipolarity of the "divergence" and "convergence" hypotheses it provides some evidence to the former suggesting that modernization does not always take a simple linear path providing no room for variations.

Keywords: Modernization, divergence hypothesis, individualism, collectivism, Europe

1. Introduction

Greenfield (2000) argues that individualism and collectivism reflect the deep structure of cultural differences determining the fundamental relationship between the individual and the group. Hofstede (1980) rated national cultures in terms of individualistic and/or collectivist values on a scale from 1 to 100 (lower scores indicate collectivist and higher scores individualistic cultures). In Hofstede's analysis the UK has a score of 89 representing the most individualistic culture in Europe (and one of the most individualistic cultures in the world, i.e., the US has a score of 91, closely followed by Canada and Australia). In this scale Greece (score 35) has a greater collectivist orientation (which is one of the most collectivist cultures in Europe) than the UK and Sweden, which has a score (71) between these two countries. Hofstede (1980) apart from individualism, proposed three other factors to distinguish among cultures; power distance, avoiding uncertainty and masculinity/ femininity; all of them derived from a study of values associated with work among employees of IBM company with branches in more than 40 countries.

However, Hofstede's (1980) scale of individualistic values is the one that has been widely used to rate national cultures and explain cultural differences in social behaviors and personality traits (Triandis 1988, Vandello & Cohen 1999, Hofstede 2001, McCrae 2001, Schimmack et al. 2002). Whilst Hofstede's analysis took place almost 28 years ago, recent research findings suggest that it still constitutes a valid and important construct of cultural differences among nations for the study of social behaviors (Schimmack et al. 2005). In one of the most recent works of Hofstede and McCrae (2004: 65) they claim that "The IBM national dimension scores (or at least their relative positions) do seem to have remained as valid in the 1990s as they were around 1970".

The differences in the scores of individualistic and/or collectivist cultural values among the UK, Sweden and Greece give birth to questions such as: Why are values in different European cultures more individualistically oriented while in others they are more collectivistic? The aim of this article is to provide adequate answers to such queries by arguing that the modernizing path of each of these European countries had a decisive impact on the formation of their individualistic and/or collectivistic cultural characteristics.

2. Individualism and collectivism

The central idea of an individualistic cultural orientation is based on individuals' independence and self-determination, which are seen as legitimate goals of life (Hofstede 1980, Kagitcibasi 1994, 1990, Kim 1994). In contrast, the core element

of a collectivist one is the interdependence, which binds individuals through a set of mutual obligations (Schwartz 1990, Oyserman et al. 2002).

In their social relationships individualists invest primarily in their first-degree relatives and feel rather detached from other groups (Triandis 1989, 1995). They tend to acquire many relationships but these are loose in context, whereby group memberships are impermanent and non-intensive (Kim 1994). Moreover, individualists would abandon relationships or groups when the cost of participation exceeds the benefits redirecting their attention to new groups and relationships best promoting their personal goals (Oyserman 1993, Kagitcibasi 1997). This attribute is central to rational choice theory where action is based on the principle of rational calculation applying economic models of behavior (Becker 1968).

In collectivist cultures the central feature is the subordination of personal goals to those of the community (Markus & Kitayama 1991, Oyserman 1993). The self is conceived as an aspect of a collective, i.e., family, work-group, religious group, geographic district, or whatever is considered as an in-group by members of the culture (Triandis & Gelfand 1998). In collectivist societies individuals are mainly concerned with in-group's values and norms, including sharing resources with in-group members establishing in-group stability and long-term relationships. Collectivists may be emotionally attached only to a few groups but they are actively concerned with their preservation and promotion (Triandis 1989, 1995).

Triandis (1995) advocates that in loose cultures, which are usually affluent and complex societies, there is a wide terrain of choices so that people become more rationally oriented and more independent in making their own decisions adopting more individualistic behaviors. In contrast, in tight cultures homogeneity promotes strong social bonds and cohesive relationships. In Triandis' (1995: 57) words "…homogeneity predisposes a culture toward collectivism. The more homogeneous the culture, the more beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles and values are shared". Despite the differences observed between individualism and collectivism these cultural dimensions should not be treated as bipolar constructs as both cultural orientations may coexist (Triandis & Gelfald 1998).

3. Modernization Theory

The above discussion on individualistic and/or collectivist cultural orientations and attributes leads to additional questions: Why do individuals tend to be more autonomous and pursue self-maximisation in some cultures rather than in others? Ultimately, which are the social forces (historical, political or economic) that make some individuals to base their relationships on rationality instead of on emotions or traditions?

Some think that the answers to such questions are to be found in modernization theory (Arts & Holman 2004). The core idea is that traditional societies have been transformed into modern ones through sub-processes such as industrialization, urbanization, democratization, professionalization and bureaucratization, whereby rational decision-making and co-coordinating mechanisms such as markets and states now predominate. The crucial sub-process is industrialization. Due to industrialization, the division of labor has become more complex, increasing urbanization, professionalization and bureaucratization. As national and international markets have spread and commercialization of economic life has taken place, technical and economic forms of rationality have spilled out of the work sphere into all other spheres of social life, enforcing values, which are functionally consistent with rationality.

Modernization, as the outcome of economic and technological advancement, results in greater affluence, pluralism, heterogeneity, and more generally, in extensive individual freedoms (Hawdon 2005). Individual freedoms provide individuals with a variety of choices of associations. More choices of associations free individuals from group control (Simmel 1971). In modern societies personalities become more independent and autonomous as they are differentiated from their social and cultural context (Habermas 1984). The pursuit of personal interests becomes common replacing collective ones (Parsons 1951), and individuals gain freedom in their choices and behaviors but lose the stability and security of earlier times. Therefore, modernization promotes an increasing shift in the direction of an individualistic ethos, i.e., the ability to "be one's own person" emphasising self-actualisation and personal happiness rather than collective goals.

The theoretical proposition that the socio-economic, cultural and political development will be a unilinear process taking on almost identical forms in all societies with regard to various characteristics such as labor force structure, level of development, technology, state bureaucratization and value system came to be known as the "convergence hypothesis" of modernization theory (Inkeles & Rossi 1956, Lenski & Lenski 1987). Rostow (1960) is among the most well-known theorists of the so called "convergence hypothesis". Rostow advocates that social development follows five stages the last of which is the modern western society characterized by individualism, rationalism and formal democracy, as well as by mass production and consumerism.

However, other theorists have criticised this hypothesis arguing that societies rather than converging are diverging (what came to be known as the "divergence hypothesis") as their developmental paths are highly influenced by their unique cultural, political, or environmental characteristics (Odum 1971, Horowitz 1966). For instance, Moore (1966) claims that there have been three different types of modernization (i.e., "bourgeois revolution", "revolution from above", "peasant revolution") mainly associated with changes in the class structure, and with the

political costs and benefits accrued to different political players, which in some cases contributed to increased freedom and rationality, but not in others.

The portrayals of the UK, Sweden and Greece presented below suggest that the path of modernization in each of these European countries was different providing some support to the "divergence hypothesis". In order to conceptualize "country" the Parsonian approach of culture, as developed in the *Social System* (Parsons 1951), is applied. In Parsons' theory (1951), social action is the result of the interrelationships of three systems; the social world (or according to his definition the "social system"), the personality system of the individual actors and the cultural system. According to Parsons (1951), in order to understand social action one must analyze the interrelationships of all three systems. The interrelationship between the actors and the social system is attained by the processes of internalization and socialization of the norms and values of the system by its actors. An effective socialization process means a successful internalization of norms and values in a way that becomes part of the actors' consciences.

In Parson's theory culture constitutes one of the functional imperatives of all social systems as it binds the elements of the social world by mediating interaction among actors and by integrating the personality and the social system. Culture has the fundamental ability to be, at least in part, a component of all the other systems. As Parsons and Shils state:

> Culture has been distinguished from the other elements of action by the fact that it is intrinsically transmissible from one action system to another –from personality to personality by learning and from social system to social system by diffusion. (Parsons & Shils 1962: 159)

In the social system, culture is embodied in norms and values, which are internalized by the actor in the personality system. Therefore, the norms and values become the imperatives of the cultural system "which guide the choices made by actors and which limit the types of interaction which may occur between individuals" (Parsons & Shils 1962:55).

In this comparative approach on the different paths of modernization, Parson's concept of "culture" is applied to conceptualize the three European countries under study in cultural terms. It should be noted though that culture, as well as the rest of the action systems, does not exist in the real world but constitutes a tool for analyzing it (Parsons 1951). Hence, culture *per se* is a methodological device, an abstract concept (Griswold 2004) useful for studies associated with cultural analysis.

The empirical research and the secondary data presented below provide some evidence that the cultural heritages of the three countries under study, formed by specific historical, political and religious events have acted as a filter of their modernization processes and left an imprint on the prevailing values forming their main cultural individualistic and/or a collectivist attributes. As culture acts as the binder of the social world (Parsons 1951), it has functioned as a mediating

mechanism, shaping their personality traits and social relationships in the direction of an individualistic and/or collectivist orientation.

4. The UK

For Marx, Weber and many others, capitalism was born in Western Europe (Macfarlane 1987). This new social formation emerged in its purest and earliest form in England, which acted as the model country for the other continental ones (Marx 1973). As Brenner (1977: 75) claimed it was "classically in England" that "the rise of the three-tiered relation of landlord/capitalist tenant/free wage labour, around which Marx developed much of his theory of capitalist development", emerged. Weber (1961) considered England the "*home of capitalism*". In his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* argues that it was in England above all that the Puritan outlook "stood at the cradle of the modern economic man" (1992:174). Polanyi (1944) takes England's history as the fundamental example of the *Great Transformation* to modernization.

In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Smith states that the advancing industrial power of England in the latter half of the 18th century was accompanied by an economic liberalism, which came to govern the English thought. Smith argues that the wealth of the nations and consequently the individuals' wealth and welfare were increased by a capitalist system which promoted no or minimal state interference, i.e., what came to be called as "laissez faire". Therefore, the greatest benefit to the society could be brought about by individuals acting freely in a competitive marketplace in the pursuit of their own self-interest. Although the arguments were developed on economical grounds they reinforced social ideas on individuals' freedom and independence whereby state intervention was redundant. It is likely that in these important political, economical and social transformations we can find the roots of the individualistic values still prevailing in Britain.

According to Moore (1966) England followed the "bourgeois revolution" path to modernization, in which a violent revolution abolished the traditional domination of the landed elites and the absolute power of the Crown, bringing with it capitalism and democracy. The "bourgeois revolution" was followed by social transformations that prepared the ground for industrialization and the creation of a modern and market-based new type of economy. These transformations involved the destruction of the absolute power of the crown and of a portion of the traditional elites, and prevented the excessive exploitation of both the peasantry and the working class in the early stages of industrial development. Gelfand et al (1996) identify individualism as a product of the ideology of liberalism, which emerged in France and America, with the French and American Revolution, that according to Moore (1966) followed a similar modernizing path with England, emphasizing freedom and civic liberties. Moore argues

that by the seventeenth century, England already had a competitive, individualistic and commercialized value system, which is still clearly recognizable in modern liberal Britain.

Modern Britain is a highly complex and diverse society (Abercrombie & Warde 2001). It is a multicultural society that encompasses different ethnic groups, each with its own characteristics and customs. The ethnic minority population in Great Britain was 8 per cent in 2001 (National Statistics, Social Trends 2006). Heterogeneity though constitutes one of the pillars of individualistic cultures (Triandis 1995). The UK is less religiously homogeneous than both Sweden and Greece, probably due to its multicultural composition. Data shows that 71.6% of the British are Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, or Methodist), 87% of the Swedish are Lutheran whilst Greece is more religiously homogeneous than both Sweden and the UK as 98% are Greek Orthodox (The World Factbook 2007).

Cultural complexity and affluence provide a wide terrain of choices leading to more individualistic behaviors (Triandis 1995). Data on affluence from the World Bank (World Development Indicators 2005) show that the UK has the highest (26,134) GDP per capita (in US $) of the three countries here considered, closely followed by Sweden (26,019). Greece has the lowest GDP per capita (18,767).

Indicators of social capital show that this affluence is accompanied by a decline in social bonds in the country. Among the indicators that conceptualize social capital, in terms of strength of community spirit and strong social ties, are individuals' perceptions of their neighbourhood's bonds of help and trust. Data from the British Crime Survey (1996 as cited in National Statistics, 2003) show that in 1996 the proportion of British (England and Wales only) who perceived that people in their neighbourhood "help each other" was only 36 per cent. While those who perceived that people "mostly go their own way" was almost half of the population (49 per cent).

In 1984 both indicators were roughly 40 per cent each, indicating a decline in social cohesion over a decade. Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey (2000 as cited in National Statistics, 2003) on "social trust" show that in 2000, less than half of the adult British population (45 per cent) agreed that "most people can be trusted". The indicator of "social trust" has been declining from the late 1950s to the early 1980s and then stabilised around 45 per cent. These changes are in the direction of a shift to more individualistic values indicating that social cohesion and trust are eliminating in the UK. Other indicators appear to support this diagnosis. For example, in the British welfare state, social security is regarded as being a matter of individual responsibility; therefore it promotes a "limited" collective responsibility (Aspalter 2001). In Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology of welfare capitalism, the UK approximates the liberal welfare regime sharing similar characteristics with other Anglo-Saxon countries like the United States, Can-

ada and Australia. Not surprisingly, these countries are the most individualistic around the world (Hofstede 1980).

Whilst the network of associations of the British is influenced by class, gender and ethnicity, it is generally permeated by self-interest (Abercrombie & Warde 2001). Although family and friends act as sources of support at difficult times they are often used instrumentally to further individuals' careers. This instrumentality is compatible with the main attributes of individualism and rationality as developed earlier in this article. Abercrombie and Warde (2001) support that the web of associations in Britain compared to 1940 is in decline. The British are spending less time with their extended family and friends and participate less in voluntary associations compared to 1940. Instead the modern British are occupied more with their nuclear family, i.e., children and partners, and spend more time at home. These characteristics appear to support previous arguments that individualists invest primarily in their first-degree relatives and feel rather detached from other in-groups.

The non-intact family model, either in terms of family disruption or single parenting, is associated with individualists' preferences for freedom, independence and autonomy (Storry & Childs 2002, Dion & Dion 1988). Kuijsten (1996) suggests that large proportions of single households are associated with high levels of individualism, independence and freedom in more individualistic cultures, where long term commitments such as marriage are avoided as they are seen as obstacles for individuals' self-maximization. The decline of family as measured by higher numbers of non-intact families is exemplified in Becker's (1991) "economic theory of marriage". Becker explains divorce rates as the consequence of rational calculation, much in the same way that economic behavior is explained in economic markets. In his theory, the household constitutes an economic unit from which both parties (i.e. the husband and the wife) make gains through specialization and the division of labor. The husband brings an income to the household, which is run by the wife. Becker argues that marital breakdown is more likely to occur when the benefits from this trade-off decrease, i.e., when the wife joins the labor force.

Secondary data (Eurostat) shows that in 2005 more divorces (per 1000 inhabitants) took place in the UK (2.6) and Sweden (2.2) and fewer in Greece (1.2). In the same year, more live births outside marriage took place in the UK (42.94) and Sweden (55.45), whilst the indicator is much lower for Greece, i.e., 5.10. Storry and Childs (2002) advocate that the excessive individualism and consumerism, which took place in 1980s economic boom in the UK has lessened the moral values related to family life. Similarly, Barry (1988) argues that the decline of family moral values in the UK is associated with the rational choice calculus embodied in British relationships, in line with Becker's (1991) "economic theory of marriage".

5. Sweden

Sweden appears to approximate the type of a social democratic welfare state emphasizing collective responsibility and simultaneously promoting independence (Esping-Andersen 1990). The country has instituted a social security system with high levels of income maintenance, equal access to benefits and services, overall guaranteeing very high levels of equality. The Swedish welfare state is based on the principle that the welfare of the individual is the responsibility of the social collective (Esping-Andersen & Korpi 1987). This regime type addresses both the market and the family and is characterised by social transfers to children, elderly and generally to all dependents. It ”constructs an essentially universal solidarity in favour of the welfare state. All benefit; all are dependent; and all will presumably feel obliged to pay” (Esping-Andersen 1990:28). Esping-Andersen (1990) argues that behind the socialization of the costs of familyhood is the promotion of individual independence composing a combination of both socialism and liberalism. Boekhout van Solinge (1997) advocates that the Swedish welfare system has offered the Swedes a high degree of ”*security*”, best described in Swedish as ”*trygghet*”. ”*Trygghet*” promotes a high degree of confidence in the society or the “system” and solidarity.

An important factor in the formation of the welfare state in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries is that the peasantry, constituting a consolidating class of small and middle sized family farmers, fought side by side with the working class in a “red-green” coalition in the struggle for political emancipation (Esping-Andersen 1984). Einhorn and Logue (1989) argue that the rise of the universalistic type welfare systems in Scandinavian countries was not due to their higher economic development but to their popular belief system of solidarity and social cohesion, which was imbedded in the political culture of Scandinavian nations. The Scandinavian political culture of social solidarity has formed a cultural heritage that has left an imprint on the prevailing values that endure despite modernization and are still recognizable in the social relationships and personality traits in modern Sweden.

Previous research characterizes Sweden as an amalgam of both collectivism and individualism (Daun, 1991,1992, Triandis 1995). On the one hand, the Swedish culture shares characteristics of sameness and conformity, i.e., collectivist attributes but on the other, it stresses independence and self-sufficiency, i.e., individualist attributes (Triandis & Gerfald 1998). Daun (1996) provides a range of examples of Swedes’ tendency to stress similarities and sameness, including the large proportion of the population involved in voluntary associations and clubs, and their tendency to establish friendliness and mutual understanding by discussing similar topics and experiences. In Daun’s (1996:105) words ”they each wan” to play the same melody ”with the same rhythm and in the same key”. Daun (1996) exemplifies his arguments on Swedish independence by the high

proportion of Swedish single-person households. According to the author, young people find accommodation in their twenties and old ones decide to stay alone as they do not want to be a burden to their children. Similarly, Popenoe argues (1985) that behind Swedes' tendency of "living alone" a need for independence and autonomy is hidden.

Popenoe (1987) based on empirical data supports that the Swedish family model has moved farther from the nuclear family than in any other industrial country. According to the author, Swedish familism is based on five main factors: low marriage rate, high cohabitation rate, high rate of family dissolution, small household size and the extensive move of mothers into the labor force. The high cohabitation rate in Sweden is also associated with the individualistic attribute of independence. As Daun (1996:104) puts it: "Another expression of independence among Swedes is the practice - very widespread by international standards - of cohabiting without being married". Secondary data (OECD 2007) shows that during 2002, 19.8% of the Swedes were cohabiting (as share of those being married, cohabiting or single) compared to 8.6% of the British and only 1.2% of the Greek inhabitants. Non-marital cohabitation in Sweden is legally and culturally accepted, as since 1987 the law placed cohabitation on an equal footing to marriage (Popenoe 1987). In terms of associations, Daun (1996) claims that private relationships in Sweden are restricted to family, whereby attachment to first-degree relatives and detachment from other in-groups is promoted, i.e., a similar pattern of associations to the British citizens.

Popenoe (1985: 99) advocates that "in no other Western society have government planners been granted the amount of authority they have in Sweden". This "*philosophy of planning*" is interpreted by Daun (1996: 137) as a "way of arranging social conditions for the best of citizens by means of rational thinking". To remind the reader, rationalism is strongly associated with individualism. It seems that "*for the best of citizens*" the Swedish bureaucratic state intervenes in every aspect of political, economic, and social life. Hence, Swedish citizens have become dependent upon impersonal services and bureaucratic experts, which function as the state's formal control apparatuses (Gould 1994). As Gould argues, Sweden

> is a highly disciplined society in which the mass of the population has internalized the need for a strong state and the bureaucratic regulation of everyday life. (Gould 1994: 91)

Similarly, Ronnby (1985) criticizes the Swedish bureaucratic state by arguing that the extended welfare policies in the country have created a state apparatus where social controls are intensive, intervening in every aspect of people's lives. Ronnby claims that in Sweden, welfare policies related to employment, health care, housing, education and social work institutions have taken away people's ability to care about themselves and the others.

The above arguments provide some evidence that Sweden constitutes a cultural amalgamation of both individualistic and collectivist attributes. On the one hand, the Swedish bureaucratic state intervenes in individuals' lives with rational means and on the other, the Swedish welfare system, based on a high tax rate provides support to the less-privileged residents and emphasizes the strong commitment to communal obligations.

6. Greece

Historically Greece turned into a stable democracy only in the 1970s, when the authoritarian cliques that had intermittently ruled over the country were definitively forced out of office. This was the crucial step for the onset of an institutional modernization of the country. Although the transition to, and consolidation of democracy in Greece saw the culmination of a long process of political and socio-economic modernization (Malefakis 1995), in the sector of state bureaucracy the change was rather slow (Sotiropoulos 2004). Despite the Greek incorporation into the E.U, some argue that its bureaucratic structure has not yet converged with the Western European one. Greek bureaucracy does not easily match Weber's ideal type, or any paradigmatic route to modernization (Sotiropoulos 2004). The reason is that in the 19th and 20th centuries, Greece was still struggling with authoritarianism and clientism (Sotiropoulos 2004). Sotiropoulos' (2004) arguments provide some indirect evidence on the validity of the "divergence hypothesis", i.e., the existence of different historical trajectories to modernization.

Prokou (2003) argues that the reasons behind the peculiarity of the Greek process of modernization are to be found in the unsuccessful development of agriculture. Greece failed to create an industrial sector well articulated with the other parts of the country's economy, i.e., efficient linkages between primary and secondary sectors. Others claim that the main reason is to be found in the country's strong religious roots (Fokas 2000). Greek Orthodoxy and the Church are identified with authoritarianism and reactionary nationalism, which are incompatible with modern Western, pluralist democracy (Prodromou 1996). The importance of the separation between State and Church, as an impulse to modernization, is found in Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) theory about religious cleavages. The State-Church cleavage emerged as the modern state rose as a sovereign political entity against the authority over the church. In some cases this conflict was resolved; permitting polities to enter into modernity but in some others the conflict remained, constituting a barrier to modernity.

Whilst the conflict between Church and State has been long solved, religion still plays a fundamental role in modern Greece, in its national identity and culture (Pollis 1992, Georgiadou 1995). *The European Values Study* (Halman 2001) shows that 48.7% of Greeks consider religion as very important in their lives,

compared to 12.6% in UK and 10.7% in Sweden. Moreover 54.6% of the Greek consider it especially important to encourage their children to have a religious faith compared to only 18.1% of the British and 4.8% of the Swedish. According to Alivazatos (1999: 33) the Greek Orthodox religion and the Greek language have together formed "the fundamental pillars of its modern identity". Religion and culture are deeply intertwined, and Orthodoxy is widely seen as a preserver and expression of Greek national cultural identity (Georgiadou 1995). Similarly, Pollis (1992:171) states that Greekness "is understood as an organic whole in which Greek Orthodoxy, the ethnos, and the state are a unity".

The strong ties of the national Greek identity and Greek Orthodoxy, which have formed the "Helleno-Christian civilization" (Stavrou 1995:39) have shaped a cultural heritage that, despite the economic development, preserves collectivist values associated with strong traditionalism. Inglehart and Baker (2000) argue that although economic development brings important cultural changes, societies which have been historically dominated by traditional religious values associated with Protestantism, Confucianism, Islam or Orthodoxy are likely to preserve their traditional value system despite modernization.

The great influence of Orthodox Church in the Greek culture is evident in the importance of preserving traditional family models (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991). Greek traditionalism based on strong family ties and subordination of self-interest to the in-group's make divorce and single parenting less common. As shown earlier Greece has the lowest divorce rate, and the lowest rate of births outside marriage of the three countries here compared. The results from *The European Values Study* (Halman 2001) show that 96.8% of the Greeks tend to agree that a child does need a home with both a father and a mother in order to grow up happily compared to 66.8% of the British and 60.1% of the Swedish. In addition, 56.3% of the Greeks tend to disagree with the idea that women may want to have a child as a single parent without a stable relationship, compared to 38.3% of the British and 39.8% of the Swedish (Halman 2001).

In terms of social relationships, research suggests that Greeks consider the values of the in-group, i.e., family, friends, work-group, religious group to be central (Dragonas 1983, Doumanis 1983, Katakis 1984) preserving strong communal relationships. Greeks are mainly occupied with activities associated with their in-groups, they are generally strongly attached to their family, which is the core of the in-group, and quite often they choose to stay close to their families even after they become independent (Georgas et al. 1997). Georgas argues (1989,1991) that the family system in Greece is the most vital source of both emotional and financial support as its function is not limited to socialization processes but also embraces the care of elderly members and the financial support of the newly married couples.

According to several scholars, Greece belongs to a distinct "family" or "world" of welfare capitalism, the Southern model (Leibfried 1993, Rhodes 1996, Ferrera 1996, Bonoli 1997). The Southern welfare model shares similar characteristics with Esping-Andersen's (1990) "conservative-corporatist" welfare state. According to Esping-Andersen (1990), this model is characterized by a strong commitment to preserve traditional family hood, by providing benefits that encourage motherhood and maximize dependence on the family. Contrary to the social democratic welfare model, the conservative-corporatist one is based on the principle that the state will intervene only when the family's ability to service its members has entirely weakened. Flaquer (2000) argues that the vital difference between the Southern welfare and the conservative-corporatist one is the extent to which they use family policies. In Southern Europe households are responsible for providing the necessary welfare to their members, and that this responsibility is taken for granted, i.e., does not depend on any family policy and provisions. The same author claims that as the burden of the welfare responsibility is placed on the household, it creates ties of mutual dependency between its members. The man becomes the breadwinner and the woman is occupied with the care of the household. In this symbiotic relationship we can find the origins of the strong family ties in Southern European countries like Greece.

Although Greece has been described in previous research as a collectivist culture (Polemi-Todoulou 1981, Dragonas 1983) some researchers (Georgas 1989, 1991, Triandis et al. 1986) advocate that social and economic changes have affected its collectivist and traditional orientation. As in other countries, these changes took place due to processes such as urbanization and industrialization but also due to the global exposure to mass media, to tourism, and widespread travel. Some claim that the country is undergoing a transitional stage from collectivism to individualism (Triandis et al. 1986, Georgas et al. 1997).

Even though Greek society's character has substantially changed Greeks still view concepts like "freedom" or "progress" as collective ideas and not as individual constructs. The results from *The European Values Study* (Halman 2001) show that 52.1% of the Greeks compared to 31.8% of the British and 34.7% of the Swedish believe that if they had to choose between "freedom", "equality" or "neither", they would choose equality. These features are compatible with previous arguments that modernization in Greece has been shaped by conservative roots stressing traditional, and collectivist values forming a cultural heritage that is still recognizable in modern Greece.

7. Conclusion

Whilst Marx (1973) envisioned a linear modernizing path where all societies would become structurally and culturally similar (what came to be known as the

"convergence hypothesis" of modernization theory) other theorists (Horowitz 1966, Moore 1966) advocate that there is room for variations (the so-called "divergence hypothesis" of modernization theory). The article provides some support to the latter by arguing that the modernizing trajectories of the UK, Sweden and Greece were different; England followed the first type of Moore's modernization ("bourgeois revolutions"), Sweden was highly influenced by the popular belief system of solidarity and social cohesion characteristic of the political culture of Scandinavian nations and Greece, although increasingly modern, can be associated with a more traditional, top to bottom, version of modernization, highly influenced by the Greek Orthodox Church.

It should be noted that whilst the evidence provides some support for the "divergence" hypothesis, it would be over simplistic to treat "divergence" and "convergence" hypotheses as two bipolar constructs. Obviously, these three European societies have all experienced the shift from traditional to modern ones, including, in different extent, processes such as industrialization, urbanization, democratization, professionalization, bureaucratization and subsequently an economic development which tends to bring pervasive cultural changes and push societies in a common direction providing some support to the "converging" path. However, these fundamental cultural changes have been path depended mainly from historical events, political and religious traditions that have formed a cultural heritage that has endured the influence of the economic development. Therefore, although the UK, Sweden and Greece have all faced, economic development in different extent, the cultural heritages of the liberal UK, the solidarity of Sweden and the strong Orthodoxism of Greece have acted as a filter of their modernization processes and left their imprints on the prevailing values, forming accordingly their main cultural attributes, personality traits and social relationships in the direction of an individualistic and/or collectivist ethos.

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