

# **Ethno-Religious Groups and the Meaning of Work: The Case of Jews, Muslims and Christians in Israel**

**Moshe Sharabi**  
Yezreel Valley College

# Introduction

**Various studies compared work values between countries and societies (e.g. Hofstede, 1984, 2001; MOW - International research team, 1987; Inglehart, 1990, 1997; Super, Svirko and Super, 1995) but none of them have compared the work values of different ethno-religious groups in the same country.**

**Sharabi, M. (2009) Work Values, Employment and Ethnicity: Jewish and Moslem academic graduates in Israel, *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*. 16, 398-409.**

**Sharabi, M. (2010) The Meaning of Work among Jews and Arabs in Israel: the Influence of Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict and Socio-Economic Variables, *International Social Sciences Journal*. 61, 501-510.**

# Studies on religious groups

**Harpaz, I. (1998).** Cross-national comparison of religious conviction and the meaning of work. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 32(2), 143-170.

**Arslan, M. (2001).** *The work ethic values of protestant British, Catholic Irish and Muslim Turkish managers. Journal of Business Ethics*, 31(4), 321-339.

**Aygun, Z. K., Arslan, M., & Guney, S. (2008).** *Work values of Turkish and American university students. Journal of Business Ethics*, 80(2), 205-223.

**Parboteeah, p. K., Hoegl, M., & Cullen, J. (2009).** *Religious dimensions and work obligation: A country institutional profile model. Human Relations*, 62(1), 119-148.

**The research purpose is to examine the Meaning of Work (MOW) among Jews, Muslims and Christians in Israel and to explain the similarities and the differences by cultural, social, political and economic factors.**

# **Theoretical background**

## **MOW of 3 Ethno-Religious Groups**

- **Different religious work ethic/values**
- **Different socio-economic situation**
- **Different cultures**
- **Geopolitical situation**

# Christianity & work ethic

Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1958)

## *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Weber maintained that the Protestant Reformation created a new work ethic (e.g. thrift, individual diligence and responsibility) that led to the rise of capitalism and the success of individuals and societies that had internalized this ethic compared to Catholic societies as well as societies of other religions.

# Jewish work ethic

- ששת ימים תעבוד וביום השביעי תשבות
- כל שאינו מלמד את בנו אומנות, מלמדו ליסטות
- אם אין קמח אין תורה, אם אין תורה אין קמח
- כל תורה שאין עימה מלאכה – סופה בטלה וגוררת עוון.
- על שלושה דברים העולם עומד על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות החסדים
- לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיד והגית בו יומם ולילה למען תשמר לעשות ככל הכתוב בו כי אז תצליח את דרכך ואז תשכיל



# **Islamic work ethic (IWE)**

(Ali, 2005; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007)

**“No one eats better food than the one who eats out of his work”**

**“God loves a person who learns precisely how to perform his work and does it right”**

**The “Islamic work ethic” perceives laziness as a sin that causes failure in life, focusing on working as a way of worshipping God and fulfilling one's purpose on earth.**

**Iannaccone, L. R. (1998). Introduction to the Economics of Religion. *Journal of economic literature*, (36), 1465-1495.**

**Delacroix (1995) "Amsterdam's wealth was centered on Catholic families; the economically advanced German Rhineland is more Catholic than Protestant; all- Catholic Belgium was the second country to industrialize, ahead of a good half-dozen Protestant entities."**

**Economic successes of Methodists and Baptists in the US from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> to the mid18<sup>th</sup> century compared to other Protestant denominations**

**The higher wages and income of American Jews compared to non-Jews is attributed to their high levels of human capital, mainly education (Chiswick & Huang, 2008).**

**The underdevelopment of the economy in Islamic countries in the Middle East compared to Western Countries, is attributed mainly to Islamic laws, rules and tradition that prevent economic and institutional modernization (Kuran, 2004).**

# **Socio-economic environment**

(Inglehart, 1990 1997; Abramson and Inglehart, 1995)

## **Materialism / Post-materialism**

**‘Scarcity Theory’- individual preferences reflect one’s socio-economic surroundings, where the individual bestows a more subjective value upon those things that have relatively little to offer him/her and do not respond to personal needs.**

**High income and job security represent materialistic values, while interesting and meaningful work, and working with friendly people, represent post-materialistic values.**

# Individualist vs. Collectivist Culture

(Hofstede, 1980; 2001; Schwartz, 1994; Triandis, 1995; Inglehart, 1997)

Individualism	Collectivism
<p><b>Social pattern based on loosely connected individuals, who see themselves as being independent of the collective.</b></p> <p><b>Caring for the self and the nuclear family; valuing the right for a private life and opinions; independence, self-actualization and achievement; autonomy, variety; leisure; self-fulfillment, creativity, curiosity, materialism, financial security.</b></p> <p><b>individualism is characterized by a low power distance and a <u>need for friendship</u> (Hofstede ). Inglehart =&gt; post-materialism=&gt; need for <u>interpersonal relations</u> post-materialism/ economic development =&gt; <u>less importance it gives to work</u> (Davoine &amp; Méda, 2010)</b></p>	<p><b>Social pattern based on closely connected individuals, who see themselves as part of a specific collective (family, tribe, nation).</b></p> <p><b>Harmony in the internal group commitment, obligation, general security, tradition, conservatism, dependence, conformism, obedience to authority</b></p> <p><b>Preference for <u>attitudes of sociability</u>, internal dependence and unity. <u>Good personal &amp; social relations</u>,</b></p>

**There is hardly any research on the values of ethnic or ethno-religious groups that have been living together in the same country for more than several decades.**

**Rodrigue & Richardson's (2005)  
study on ethnic groups in Malaysia  
(Chinese, Malays and Indians),  
indicated that there were almost no  
cultural values differences between  
workers from different ethno-  
religious groups**

**Gaines et al., (1997) found almost no cultural values differences in the USA between the Anglo-American and African- American men and women.**

**There where wider differences between the Anglo-Americans and the Latin-American and Asian-American (who are more recent ethnic immigrants).**



# **The Israeli Context**

**The state of Israel was founded by Jews in 1948 and the dominant culture is Jewish and secular, with a western orientation.**

**The Arab citizens in Israel (or Israeli Palestinians) are 19% of the Israeli population. Of these, 82% are Muslims, 9% Christians and 9% Druze.**

**The Jewish Israeli society places great emphasis on individualism, instrumental achievements and materialism; cultivating personal independence and autonomy, while granting a high degree of social permissiveness (Harpaz, 1998; Sharabi & Harpaz, 2007).**

**Unlike the Jewish society, the Arab Christian and especially the Arab Muslim subcultures in Israel, are more conservative, traditional and collectivist.**

**The Arab society, especially the Arab Christians are undergoing a process of rapid modernization and internalization of western values (Kaufman et al. 2012; Khattab, 2005; Sharabi, 2011).**

**While Israeli Jewish society is closer to the individualistic pole of the spectrum, Israeli Muslim society is closer to the collectivistic pole with Israeli Christian society being in between.**



**There is a high degree of residential, educational, occupational and economic segregation between Jews and Arabs.**

**There is also occupational discrimination of Arabs (especially Muslims) in the labor market (Jerby & Levi, 2000; Khattab, 2005; Kraus and Yonay, 2000)**

# **Ethnicity and ethnic conflict in Israel**

**Since 1882, there is conflicts between the Jews that immigrated to Palestine to implement the Zionist movement's goal - establishing a homeland for the Jewish people and the native Palestinians (Muslims and Christians).**

**In 1948 the war between the Jews and the Palestinians with the support of the Arab countries, led to the establishment of the Israeli state and to masses of Palestinian refugees.**

**The tension between the Jews and the Arab Palestinians (in and out of Israel) rose after the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab countries when Israel occupied Gaza and the West Bank.**

**Since then there are Palestinian uprisings in the occupied territories and the conflict is escalating and involves the Palestinians in other Arab countries (mainly Lebanon).**

**This long and tough conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories, as well as with other Arab countries, has led to a high level of mistrust, social tension and a dual identity problem among the Israeli Arabs (or Arab-Palestinians) who are bisected between their loyalty to Israel and to the Palestinians kin (Kaufman et al. 2012; Dowty, 2004 ).**



# **MOW Conceptualization**

- 1) *Centrality of Work as a Life Role.***
- 2) *Valued Work Outcomes.***
- 3) *Importance of Work Goals.***
- 4) *Work Role Identification.***
- 5) *Societal Norms Regarding Work:***
  - a) obligation norms*
  - b) Entitlement norms*

## **Data Collection**

- **The Meaning-of-Working (MOW, 1987) questionnaire was conducted on a representative sample of the Israeli labor force consisting of 1,220 respondents.**
- **898 were Jews, 219 were Muslims and 103 were Christians**

# Demographic distribution

	Jews	Muslims	Christians
<i>Gender</i>			
Men	50.9	55.3	51.5
Women	49.1	44.7	48.5
<i>Religiosity degree</i>			
Secular	63.6	24.7	60.2
Traditionalist	28.3	60.0	31.1
Religious	8.1	15.3	8.7
<i>Residence area</i>			
Rural area (< 2,000)	27.3	57.0	30.1
Town (2,000-20,000)	7.6	10.3	14.6
City (> 20,000)	65.1	32.7	55.3

	<b>Jews</b>	<b>Muslims</b>	<b>Christians</b>
<b><i>Occupational status</i></b>			
Low status	<b>21.2</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>24.3</b>
Middle status	<b>47.4</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>49.5</b>
High status	<b>31.3</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>26.2</b>
<b><i>Net income</i></b>			
<3000	<b>11.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>12.3</b>
3001-4000	<b>13.5</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>17.8</b>
4001-5000	<b>17.8</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>14.3</b>
5001-6000	<b>19.8</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>20.5</b>
>6000	<b>37.8</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>33.6</b>
<b><i>Educational level</i></b>			
Elementary school	<b>5.3</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Secondary school	<b>30.8</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>29.1</b>
Additional education	<b>33.7</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>33.0</b>
Academic degree	<b>30.1</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>33.0</b>

# Measurements of MOW

- 1) *Work centrality* - 2 items
- 2) *Economic orientation* - 3 items
- 3) *Interpersonal contacts* - 3 items
- 4) *Intrinsic orientation* - 4 items
- 5) *Obligation norms* - 3 item
- 6) *Entitlement norm* - 4 items

# Major Findings

	Jews		Muslims		Christians		<i>F</i>
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Economic orientation	3.91	1.08	3.60	1.11	3.62	1.07	8.76***
Intrinsic orientation	3.18	.65	3.09	.58	3.24	.66	3.38*
Interpersonal relations	2.92	.82	2.74	.79	3.12	.81	5.65**
Obligation norms	3.09	.50	3.05	.46	3.06	.62	.60
Entitlement norms	3.21	.45	3.18	.42	3.17	.49	.39
Work centrality	4.02	.83	4.44	.86	4.25	.89	23.31***

**\*=p<.05   \*\*=p<.01   \*\*\*=p<.001**

# Regression Analysis

Demographic	EO	IO	IR	ON	EN	WC
Variables	Jews					
Gender (men=0)	-.08*	.04	.05	-.12***	.17***	.03
Age	-.10**	.08*	-.00	.11**	.04	.01
Religiosity (non relig. =0)	-.11**	-.9**	.08*	.12***	.11**	-.13***
Residence (non city=0)	.11***	-.14***	.00	.06	-.01	.01
Educational level	-.17***	.11**	.02	-.06	.00	-.10**
Occupational status	-.11**	.15***	-.03	.01	-.04	.11**
Income	.09*	.08*	-.12**	.03	.01	.13***
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.11	.15	.04	.08	.06	.09
F	10.80***	14.77***	4.06***	8.33***	5.32***	7.03***

EO= Economic orientation; IO= Intrinsic orientation; IR= Interpersonal relations orientation; ON= Obligation norms; EN= Entitlement norms; WC= Work centrality.

\*=p<.05 \*\*=p<.01 \*\*\*=p<.001

# Regression Analysis

Demographic	EO	IO	IR	ON	EN	WC
Variables	Muslims					
Gender (men=0)	-.15*	-.05	.09	-.05	-.07	.03
Age	.07	-.11	.01	.14	.15*	.02
Religiosity	.23***	.10	-.12	-.03	-.01	.01
Residence	-.04	.15*	-.10	-.09	-.05	.16*
Educational level	-.08	.05	-.06	.02	.21*	.04
Occupational status	-.01	.11	-.10	-.01	-.05	-.18**
Income	-.05	.18*	.04	.01	-.05	.11
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.13	.08	.04	.05	.06	.09
F	3.77**	2.30*	.92	.83	1.23	2.05*

EO= Economic orientation; IO= Intrinsic orientation; IR= Interpersonal relations orientation; ON= Obligation norms; EN= Entitlement norms; WC= Work centrality.

\*=p<.05    \*\*=p<.01    \*\*\*=p<.001



Demographic	EO	IO	IR	ON	EN	WC
Variables	Christians					
Gender (men=0)	.16	.02	-.01	-.30**	-.09	-.01
Age	-.10	.05	.07	.04	.07	.03
Religiosity	-.26*	-.05	-.02	.06	-.16	-.07
Residence	.02	-.03	.07	-.16	-.03	.26**
Educational level	-.17	.12	.22*	.00	.12	-.07
Occupational status	-.20*	.17	-.09	-.02	-.24*	.13
Income	.19*	.30*	-.22*	-.09	-.12	.09
R <sup>2</sup>	.14	.18	.05	.08	.06	.10
F	2.58*	3.34**	1.49	1.72	1.29	1.88

**EO= Economic orientation; IO= Intrinsic orientation; IR= Interpersonal relations orientation; ON= Obligation norms; EN= Entitlement norms; WC= Work centrality.**

**\*=p<.05   \*\*=p<.01   \*\*\*=p<.001**

# Discussion

**The differences in the MOW dimensions can be explain mainly by the cultural differences.**

**Individualism**

**Jewish society**

**Christian society**

**Collectivism**

**Muslim society**

**Beyond the cultural differences, the high work centrality among Christian and especially Muslim Arabs presumably stems from several sources: Working in the labor market (instead of working in wider family affairs), the status and the income related to it, are also a means of fulfillment of other needs (such as influencing family decisions, working outside of the community, achieving independence and shaping one's own destiny) in a collectivist, traditional and patriarchal society (El-Ghannam, 2002 ; Sharabi, 2010)**

# **Diversity Management**

**Aside from the diversity in Jewish, Christian and Muslim holidays, preferred food, prayer ceremonies, clothing preferences etc. (especially among religious people), there are differences in their work values and work ethic.**

**For example, economic orientation is highest among Israeli Jews with religious Jews having lower economic orientation than non-religious ones (similar to the religiosity effect among Christians), while religious Muslims have a higher economic orientation than non-religious ones.**

**This knowledge can help in the planning of material and non-material reward systems and methods, suitable to the different ethnic groups.**

**In a wider perspective, we can see that the more individualistic the culture or sub-culture that employees come from, the higher their need for intrinsic and extrinsic work outcomes.**

**Although there was economical and occupational discrimination of the Chinese against the other ethnic groups in Malaysia (Malays and Indians) and segregation between the ethno-religious groups, there were few differences in cultural-values between them (Rodrigue & Richardson, 2005)**

**There is also values similarity between Anglo-American and African-Americans in the USA, who also have residential and educational segregation and occupational discrimination against the African-Americans (Gaines et al., 1997).**

**In these two cases, the ethnic groups have been living relatively peacefully in the same country for a long time (Anglo-American and African-American in the USA, and Chinese, Malays and Indians in Malaysia)**



**The level of friendship, trust, and collaboration between individuals of different ethnic groups can affect the understanding between ethnic groups, and their willingness to except each other values (Berry & Sam, 1997; Hewstone, 2003).**

**Higher levels of trust, can lead to higher levels of cultural similarity between societies and ethnic groups, whereas mistrust and conflict, may lead to rejection of the other's culture and values (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).**

- **The Jewish-Arab conflict exists for more than a hundred years and is escalating over the years, especially with the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The Israeli Arabs who are Palestinians too, are experiencing a strengthened dual identity problem and are perceived by many Jews as the "fifth column" (Arian et al., 2008).**

- **According to Arian et al. (2008), 87% of the Israeli survey claims that the relationships between the Jews and Arabs in Israel are the main problem facing the Israeli society (next was the relationship between rich and poor people and in the third place the relationship between seculars and religious).**

- **In Israel less and less Arabs describe themselves as Israelis (12%) and more and more as Palestinians (24%) and Arabs (45%) (Arian et al., 2008).**

*köszönöm !תודה dĕkuji*

*mahalo* 고맙습니다

*thank you*

*merci 谢谢 danke*

*Ευχαριστώ شکرا*

*どうもありがとう gracias*