

Ethnicity, Ethnic Conflict and Work Values: the Case of Jews and Arabs in Israel

Moshe Sharabi*

Abstract

Work values of Arabs have not to date been studied in Israel and this paper investigates the work values of the Jews and Arabs in Israel. Between the two ethnic groups who have different cultures, there is alienation, mistrust and social tension that stems mainly from the escalating ethnic conflict (the regional Israeli- Arab/Palestinian conflict). The paper examines work values of 1201 Jews and 286 Arabs who are working in the Israeli labour market. The findings reveal significant differences in the importance of all life areas and in most of the preferred work goals. The findings can be explained by the high degree of segregation, by cultural differences, by the employment discrimination and primarily by the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict.

Keywords: Israel; Jews; Arabs; Ethnic Conflict; Work values.

Introduction

Several comparative studies have found significant differences of work values between societies (e.g. MOW - International research team, 1987; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Super, Svirko and Super, 1995), but none of them have compared the work values of different ethnicities in the same country. Hofstede (1980, 2001) as well, compared values between nations, not between ethnic groups in those nations.

There are hardly any studies on the values of ethnic groups that have been living together in the same country for more than several decades. Gaines et al. (1997) found in the USA almost no cultural-value differences between the Anglo-American and African-American men and women, whereas the differences between the Anglo-Americans and the Latin-American and Asian-American men and women (more recent ethnic immigrants) were wider. Another study comparing cultural values among ethnic groups is that of Rodrigue and Richardson's (2005) which compares work values of Chinese, Malays and Indians in Malaysia.

* Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Yezreel Valley College and The Center for the Study of Organizations and Human Resources, Graduate School of Business. University of Haifa, Israel.

The researchers found that there are few differences in cultural-values between the ethnic groups.

In these two cases, ethnic groups that have been living peacefully in the same country for a long time (Anglo-American and African-American in the USA and Chinese, Malays and Indians in Malaysia) share similar values although they are segregated and have socio-economic gaps between them. This strengthens the claim that the level of trust between groups in general, and ethnic groups specifically, can affect individuals' attachment to cultural values (Berry & Sam, 1997). In addition, 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's values (Hewstone, 2003). Higher levels of trust, can lead to higher levels of cultural similarity between societies and ethnic groups, whereas mistrust and conflict between societies and ethnic groups, may lead to rejection of the other's culture and values (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

The long escalating conflict between Israel and the Palestinians prevents the Israeli Arabs (who are Palestinians too), from identifying with the dominant Jewish culture and values. There is a high degree of residential and economic segregation as well as mistrust, alienation, social tension and conflicts between the two ethnic groups (Kraus and Yonay, 2000; Nabil, 2005; Yaish, 2001).

Work values and ethics at the level of groups within society, and in society at large, can affect the degree of a society's economic success (Child, 1981; Mannheim, Baruch and Tal, 1997; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Weber, 1958). This exploratory study attempts to reveal the intra-state work values of Jews and Arabs and the impact of the ethnic conflict on work values. There are few studies comparing work values between ethnic groups that have been living in the same country for several decades and apparently no studies on ethnic groups that share a long ethnic conflict. Understanding the similarities and differences of work values between Jews and Arabs in the Israeli context can shade a light on the perceptions of each ethnic group and their relations to the political, social and economic situation in Israel.

The study will present the cultural and economical gaps between Jews and Arabs and the historical conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians. Based on this background the research goals are to examine how this reality (ethnic conflict, cultural and economical gaps) affects the work values of Jews and Arabs and to interpret the meaning of the findings for the Israeli society and economy.

Values and culture

Schwartz (1999) claims that exploring the meaning of work within a cultural context is important, as the cultural context may shape and modify values. Therefore, in order to understand the meaning one attributes to work, the personal structure of values, the nature

of the job the individual is performing and the processes linking these various components, it is necessary to study the cultural and social context in which the individual lives and works (Brief and Nord, 1990). Although "culture" has been defined in many ways, we use Hofstede's (2001) famous definition stating that culture is the learned programming of the mind that differentiates one group from another group. In his research, Hofstede (1980, 2001) compared values, especially the individualism vs. collectivism dimension, between nations. Erez and Early (1993), who compared work values in different countries, came to the same conclusion as Hofstede. They found that the meaning of work is expressed differently in different societies because, in their view, culture shapes and directs the choices, commitments and standards of action which in turn influence a person's attitudes and values.

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) comprise, to date, 19% of the Israeli population. Of these, 79% are Muslims, 11% Christians and 10% Druze. Since its establishment, the Israeli society has undergone significant economical, political and social changes, especially from more collectivist to more individualistic values. It would seem that a number of causes account for this transformation, just as in other countries in the past. A number of factors which Hofstede (1980) suggests as characterizing high individualism do, in fact, apply to Israeli society, including: rapid economic growth, a high degree of social mobility, strong development of a middle class, support of private enterprise, less traditional agriculture, modern industry, and progressive urbanization. Triandis (1995) claims that an important factor influencing the degree of individualism is the relative level of wealth in a given society and the Israeli society has indeed been enjoying a relatively high level of economic success in the last decades. Another factor that Triandis (1995) mentions, is the exposure to international communication networks and mass media, the influence of which is certainly felt in Israel. The Arabs in Israel, as an ethnic subculture, have also been affected by these economic, political and social changes, but their work values have not been yet studied in Israel.

Values, culture, and ethnicity in Israel

The Jewish society in Israel has undergone a gradual change in values, similar to that of the Western world, moving from a collectivist society in its early years to an individualist society. These global processes have left their mark on Israel and can be seen in the rapid change that has occurred since the late 1970s. Today, the Jewish society places great emphasis on the different dimensions of individualism, cultivating personal independence and autonomy, while granting a high degree of social permissiveness (Harpaz, 1999; Kenny-Paz, 1996; Schwartz, 1994; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007). As part of an Americanization process,

Jewish-Israeli culture has become more and more materialistic, emphasizing instrumental achievements (Harpaz, 1999; Kenny-Paz, 1996).

Unlike the Jewish society, the Arab society in Israel (as other Arabs subcultures elsewhere in the Western countries), is more conservative, emphasizing tradition, the welfare and safety of the group, rigid hierarchy and little autonomy - all fundamentally collectivist characteristics. Additionally, the Arab society is more homogenous than the Jewish society (Al-Haj, 1996; Nabil, 2005; Smooha, 1999). In the past, the Arab work force was mainly agricultural, but over time the number of farmers decreased, while the numbers of those employed as hired workers in the Israeli labour market increased (Al-Haj, Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1994; Nabil, 2005). The Arab society has been undergoing a process of rapid modernization and it, too, perceives work as a means of achieving higher income and improved physical conditions. Moreover, having an income enables a person to have a say in internal family affairs and decision making, as well as to achieve independence and to shape one's own destiny (El-Ghannam, 2002; Ganaim, 2001; Nabil, 2005).

Arabs in the Israeli labour market

The Israeli-Arab economic market is dependent on the Israeli-Jews economic market and the work options that it provides. This situation stems mainly from the fact that the modernization process in Israeli Arab society was not accompanied by an internal economic development of the Israeli Arab market, partially due to the lack of government investment and private funding (Al-Haj, 1996; Kraus & Yonay, 2000; Nabil, 2005). Most Israeli Arabs remain dependent upon the Israeli Jews economy to earn a living, and are concentrated in fields and professions that are characterized by tough competition and no collective wage agreements. Their integration into the Jewish-Israeli economy was limited from the beginning, enabling them mainly inferior occupations that only enhanced their dependency. For the sake of comparison, 1.5% of Arabs hold managerial positions, while 5.8% of Jews hold such positions (Jerby & Levi, 2000). In addition, some areas of employment, such as the military industry and other security related fields, are closed to Arabs as they usually do not have adequate security classification. At the same time, most of the industries in the Arab sector consist of physical labour and pay low wages (Jerby & Levi, 2000; Kraus & Yonay, 2000; Nabil, 2005).

Ethnicity and ethnic conflict in Israel

Since 1882, masses of Jews immigrated to Palestine as an implementation of the Zionist movement's goal, establishing a homeland for the Jewish people. This settling led to conflicts with the native Palestinians and in 1948 to a war between the Jews and the Palestinians with the support of the Arab countries, a war that led to the establishment of the Israeli state. During this war many Palestinians left or were transferred to the Arab countries

and became refugees while the Palestinians that remained in Israel in 1948 became Israeli citizens (Dowty, 2004). 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 (who are Palestinians, too) who are bisected between their loyalty to Israel and to the Palestinians kin (Al-Haj, 1996; Dowty, 2004). More and more Israeli Arabs are getting involved in anti Israeli demonstrations and even in terror actions. 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).

Smith (2006) defines ethnicity as “named and self defined human population sharing myth of common ancestry, history, historical memories elements of culture (often linked with territory) and measure of solidarity” (p. 172). Judaism is a religion, but the Jews according to this definition are also an ethnic group and although among the Arabs there are people from several religions (mainly Muslims, Christians and Druze), their main identity is Arab (Arian et al., 2008; Dowty, 2004; Soen, 2008). According to a recent survey carried out among Israeli Arabs, 45% consider themselves as Arabs, 24% as Palestinians, 19% according to their religion (Muslims, Christians, Druze, etc.) and only 12% as Israelis (Arian et al., 2008). Since the main characteristics of the Jews and Arabs in Israel are ethnic, this conflict can be described as an ethnic conflict.

Investigating the work values of two ethnic groups living in the same country, having different cultural values and sharing a long and intense conflict, can shade light on how this reality creates differences and similarities of work values. As noted earlier, there is no research which examines the effect of this ethnic tension on work values differences in Israel.

Method

Data Collection

Data for the present study were collected via the Meaning-of-Working (MOW) questionnaire, developed by the Meaning of Working - International research team (1987). The research was an organized sample conducted on 1487 working respondents representing the Israeli labour force. 1201 were Jews and 286 were Arabs (88.8% vs. 19.2%, similar to the ratio among the Israeli population). The demographic distribution is presented in Table 1.

The interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes by trained interviewers and the average interview lasted 25 minutes.

Table 1 Demographic distribution of Jews and Arabs in Israel

	Jews		Arabs	
	n	%	n	%
<i>All</i>	1201	80.8	286	19.2
Gender				
Men	612	51.0	157	54.9
Women	589	49.0	129	45.1
Education				
Primary school	64	5.3	25	8.6
Secondary school	370	30.8	86	29.8
Additional education (non academic)	405	33.7	89	30.8
Academic degree	362	30.1	86	29.8
Religiousness degree				
Secular	791	65.9	95	33.2
Traditionalist	334	27.8	155	54.2
Religious	76	6.3	36	12.6
Residence area				
City	757	63.1	104	36.4
Little town	101	8.4	29	10.1
Rural areas	339	28.3	150	52.5

Measures

The measurement of work values utilized in the present study was based on the Meaning-of-Work questionnaire (MOW, 1987) translated into Hebrew by the 'translation/back-translation' method.

The importance of work centrality and other areas of life were measured by the item: "Distribute a total of 100 points to signify the relative importance of the following areas in your life: leisure time, community, work, religion, and family." The more points awarded to a certain area, the greater its centrality compared to other areas of life.

The importance of work goals was measured by the question: "Regarding the nature of your work life, how important is it to you that your work life contains the following?:"

1. A lot of opportunities to *learn* new things
2. Good *interpersonal relations* (supervisors, co-workers)
3. A good opportunity for upgrading or *promotion*
4. *Convenient* work hours
5. A lot of *variety*
6. *Interesting* work (work that you really like)
7. Good *job security*
8. A good *match* between your job requirements and your abilities and experience
9. Good *pay*
10. Good physical working *conditions* (such as light, temperature, cleanliness, noise level)
11. A lot of *autonomy* (you decide how to do your work)

Respondents were requested to rank-order all eleven items from the most important to the least important.

Results

The findings in table 2 reveals that among Jews, the importance of family and leisure is significantly higher than among Arabs while among Arabs work centrality, as well as the importance of religion and community is significantly higher than among Jews. A significant multivariate difference was found for the centrality of areas of life ($F_{(4,1461)} = 42.33, p < .001$).

Table 2 The importance of different life areas among Jews and Arabs.

Life areas	Jews		Arabs		t test
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Leisure	19.20	13.33	15.24	12.30	-4.59***
Community	5.22	8.01	8.76	11.09	6.18***
Work (centrality)	28.29	16.50	34.42	17.35	5.59***
Religion	4.16	8.20	9.26	10.33	8.94***
Family	43.10	17.86	32.81	16.44	-8.89***

** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Jews ranked family first, followed by work and leisure; whereas among Arabs, work was ranked first, followed by family and leisure. Among Jews, community and religion were ranked fourth and fifth while among the Arabs the ranking was inverse.

Table 3 presents significant differences in seven of the eleven work goals. A multivariate significant difference was found for preferred work goals ($F_{(10,1456)} = 12.17, p < .001$). The goals of interpersonal relations, interesting work, variety and good pay are significantly higher among Jews than among Arabs whereas the goals of opportunity for promotion, match between job requirements and abilities/experience and working conditions are significantly higher among Arabs than among Jews.

The most important work goal among Jews and Arabs is good pay. While the Jews ranked interesting work second and interpersonal relations third, the Arabs ranked job security second and interesting work third.

Table 3 Means and rankings differences of work goals among Jews and Arabs.

Work goals	Jews		Arabs		t test
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Opportunity to learn new things	(7) 5.71	3.17	(6) 5.77	3.13	.37
Interpersonal relations	(3) 6.48	2.82	(10) 5.78	3.02	-3.71***
Opportunity for promotion	(10) 4.89	2.96	(8) 5.48	3.12	2.99**
Convenient work hours	(6) 5.75	3.17	(7) 5.65	3.09	-.48
Variety	(9) 5.14	2.68	(11) 4.42	2.95	-4.03***
Interesting work	(2) 7.36	2.92	(3) 6.70	3.00	-3.43***
Job security	(4) 6.33	3.04	(2) 6.63	2.98	1.49
Job - abilities match	(8) 5.31	2.88	(4) 6.22	2.84	4.81***
Good pay	(1) 8.09	2.90	(1) 7.70	3.07	-2.00*
Working conditions	(11) 4.73	3.15	(9) 5.45	3.35	3.48***
Autonomy	(5) 6.25	3.31	(5) 6.33	3.25	.39

a. Rankings are in parenthesis

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Discussion

The work values comparison between Jews and Arabs, two ethnic cultures sharing the same country and a long extensive ethnic conflict, can illuminate the effect of conflict (among other factors) on values diffusion between the ethnic groups, as this research does. This is a unique study since there are very few studies on cultural values and no studies on work values, which compare between different ethnic groups who have been living in the same country for more than several decades.

The findings revealed meaningful and extensive differences between the two different ethnic groups in Israel. There are significant differences between Jews and Arabs concerning to the importance of all life areas. Also the rankings, demonstrate that there is a different perception of life spheres between Jews and Arabs. Jews rank family first, followed by work and leisure, similar to the ranking in Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Britain, Yugoslavia and the USA (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Westwood and Lok, 2003), whereas Arabs rank work first,

followed by family and leisure. This ranking of work before family is unique since it's similar to that observed in Japan in the early 1980's (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007), in China at the end of 2000 (Westwood and Lok, 2003) and among high-tech workers in Israel (Harpaz and Ben Baruch, 2004).

The high work centrality among Arabs stems presumably from the perception that work is a main mean of social mobility and a mean for fulfilment 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 (Al-Haj, 1996; Ganaim, 2001; El-Ghannam, 2002). Al-Haj (1996) notes, that among Arab-Israelis, education and occupation had taken the place of land as a source of pride and a reliable way to earn a living and guarantee socio-economic mobility. Moreover, among minorities there is tendency to view work (and education) as a means for prestige and social mobility (Haveman and Smeeding, 2006; Jerby and Levi, 2000). It seems that the Israeli Arabs as an ethnic minority, value work much more than the Israeli Jews due to all the reasons that were mentioned above.

It should be noted that all previous studies examining the importance of family among Jews in Israel, found that it is higher than the importance of family among other societies, such as the U.S., Germany, Holland, Belgium, the U.K. and others (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007); so that one could expect to reach a similar finding when comparing family importance to the Arab society in Israel. The great importance of community and religion among Israeli Arab, and the low importance attributed to leisure, may reflect the solidarity and traditional aspects that are more characteristic of an Arab society than a Jewish society (Al-Haj, 1996; Smooha, 1999).

There were also significant differences between Jews and Arabs concerning to seven of the eleven preferred work goals. The work goals differences can be explained by the "scarcity hypothesis" which assumes that individual preferences reflect the socio-economic surroundings, where individuals bestow a more subjective value on the issues that have relatively little to offer them and do not answer their needs (Inglehart, 1990; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2002). The "scarcity hypothesis" may explain the greater importance Arabs attribute to the compatibility of job requirements and personal skills, and to promotion opportunities and illustrates the dissatisfaction many Israeli Arabs experience as a result of working in positions unsuited to their education and expertise (Al-Haj, 1996). They may also reflect the difficulties this population has due to employment discrimination, as well as their difficulty in climbing the hierarchy ladder in private and public Israeli organizations (Al-Haj, 1996; Gera and Cohen, 2001; Jerby and Levi, 2000; Weinblatt, 1998; Yaish, 2001).

The "scarcity hypothesis" may explain also the greater importance Jews attribute to interpersonal relations since the Jewish society is more individualistic and experiences more social alienation and lack of close human relationships than Arabs. The solidarity, close interpersonal contacts and traditional aspects are more characteristic of the Arab society than a Jewish society (Al-Haj, 1996; Smooha, 1999). Table 1 demonstrates those aspects; a

higher percentage of Arabs than Jews live in rural areas (52.5 % vs. 28.3% respectively) and they are less secular (33.2% vs. 65.9% respectively).

In addition to the cultural differences, other sources for the wide value differences are the high degree of residential, educational, occupational and economic segregation between the two groups and the discrimination the Arabs experience in the labour market that leads to alienation towards the Jewish society (Kraus & Yonay, 2000; Nabil, 2005; Yaish, 2001). Rodrigue & Richardson (2005) found that although there was economical and occupational discrimination of the Chinese against the other ethnic groups in Malaysia (Malays and Indians) and segregation between the ethnic groups, there were few differences in cultural-values between the groups. They explain the values similarity by the good relationships between the ethnic groups in Malaysia. The effect of good relationships can also explain the values similarity between Anglo-American and African-Americans in the USA (Gaines et al., 1997), who also have residential and educational segregation and economical and occupational discrimination against the African-Americans; hence it seems that the profound differences of work values between Arabs and Jews in Israel primarily stem from the ethnic conflict. It is demonstrated by a survey which finds that the Israelis view the relationship between Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs as the widest cleft and the main source for tension among the Israeli society (Arian et al., 2008).

The Jewish-Arab conflict has existed for more than a hundred years (before the establishment of the Israeli state) and has escalated 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). Gaines et al. (1997) found in their research that individuals' racial/ethnic identity mediated the impact of race/ethnicity on all cultural value orientations. In Israel less and less Arabs describe themselves as Israelis (12% in 2008) and more and more as Arabs and Palestinians (43% in 2008) (Arian et al., 2008). The alienation, the mistrust and the social tension between the two ethnic groups seems to be the main cause that prevents Israeli Arabs from identifying with the Jewish culture, values and norms. This will probably hold true as long as the Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflict is on-going and escalating. The findings strengthen the assumption that mistrust and conflict between ethnic groups lead to individuals' alienation towards the opponent group and to the rejection of their culture and values (Hewstone, 2003; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

Various findings show that people, who have higher work centrality, have higher level of performance, job involvement and commitment to the organization and work longer hours (Mannheim et al., 1997; MOW, 1987; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Snir and Harpaz, 2002). The occupational discrimination and the extra-high work centrality of Arabs reflect high non-actualized potential of economic success for the Israeli society {e.g. the high work centrality and the economic success in Japan in the early 1980's and in China at the end of 2000 (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Westwood and Lok, 2003)}. Although the Israeli government has

recently decided to implement occupational affirmative action for Arabs, it seems that it will take time until the changes are reflected in the labour market.

The limitations of this study are related to the measures. The preferred work goals measure is based on the rankings of eleven one-item goals and the measure of the importance of life areas (including work centrality) was based on responses to one question. Using a single-item measures and ranking measures may not be the optimal. Those measures were built and used by the MOW research team in eight countries (MOW, 1987). Later they were used in different studies conducted in the USA, Germany, Japan (see Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007), China (Westwood and Lok, 2003) and several other countries. The findings over time show that these measurements can reflect the importance of work values in different societies.

Future researches can investigate to what extent each of the factors (ethnic conflict, cultural and socio-economic differences, segregation and employment discrimination) explain the differences in work values between the two ethnic groups. Also they can explore the effect of demographic variables (gender, age, education, religion, religiousness, etc.) on work values among Jews and Arabs. Since there are some religious groups among the Israeli Arabs (mainly Muslims, Christians and Druze), comparing work values between all the religion groups can contribute to a better understanding of the differences and similarities between the ethno-religious groups. Further qualitative research can add another perspective on the effect of this ethnic conflict on work values and to a better understanding of the causes for this gap values.

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