

Life domain preferences among women and men in Israel: The effects of socio-economic variables

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Abstract. *Based on the findings of the 2006 “Meaning of Work” survey, this article examines the relative “life domain centrality” of work, family, leisure, community and religion across a representative sample of the Israeli labour force comprising 463 men and 446 women. While confirming that family centrality remained stronger among women than men, male and female respondents ranked work equally high, marking a departure from women’s traditionally weaker preference for this life domain. Regression analysis identifies socio-economic factors that partially explain the attitudinal differences between men and women. Overall, the results suggest a growing risk of work–family conflict among Israeli women.*

One of the most meaningful global economic and social changes in recent decades has been the increase in women’s labour force participation (Lips and Lawson, 2009). The historically gendered division of labour, whereby men were breadwinners and women were homemakers, changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century (Laville, 1999; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010). In recent decades, women have been entering the global workforce at a rapid rate (Carli, 2010; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010). In the United States, women’s labour force participation rose to about 59 per cent in 2010 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). In China, women account for 46 per cent of the workforce (Carli, 2010). And, more generally, in over 60 per cent of the countries surveyed by the United Nations Statistics Division in the late-2000s, the majority of women were economically active (Lips and Lawson, 2009). This trend has been accompanied by an increase in women’s educational attainment, occupational status, income and expectations (Laville, 1999; Carli, 2010; Lips and Lawson, 2009). This, in turn, raises the chances of

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work–family conflict for both women and men (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Hoobler, Wayne and Lemmon, 2009; Westman and Etzion, 2005). Indeed, these changes affect women’s expectations regarding the centrality of work, family, leisure and other life domains.

Weber’s (1930) seminal work, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, focused on the relationship between the Protestant work ethic, which conceives work to be of supreme value both in an individual’s life and to society, and the degree of prosperity of societies that upheld that ethic. Over the course of time, the values of both individuals and societies change, entailing changes in people’s work, family and leisure values that can affect the economic success of organizations and societies (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007 and 2010). Among both men and women, changes in gender role socialization and expectations regarding work and family life are related to social, economic and political factors which can thus help explain the changes in work values among societal subgroups as well as whole societies (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995; Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2004; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007 and 2009a).

Within this broad analytical framework, this article explores the centrality of major life domains among men and women in Israel and explains gender differences by using regression analysis to evaluate the influence of socio-economic variables on those life domains. The remainder of the article is organized into five main sections. The first briefly reviews the developments and factors that have shaped societal change in Israel in recent decades. The second section considers the findings of previous research on life domain centrality, the nexus of work, family and gender, and other determinants of work and family centrality in developed countries. This literature review leads to the formulation of several research hypotheses. The third section presents the data and methodology, while the fourth reports the findings of this research. The fifth section discusses the findings and concludes.

The Israeli context

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the economy has grown at a rapid rate. Until the worldwide recession of the mid-1970s, the economy grew about 10 per cent per year and since then, average economic growth has been higher than in most developed countries (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2010; Tzafir, Meshoulam and Baruch, 2007). Since the 1970s, Israel has shifted from a centralized socialistic economy, with virtually guaranteed employment for all, to a capitalist market economy (Harpaz, 2008; Sharabi, 2008). Since the beginning of the 1990s, globalization has benefited Israel’s economy and society by promoting the country’s trade, its high-technology industry, increased foreign investment, and the rapid development of an information society. However, it has also had negative effects, especially in terms of rising unemployment, declining trade unions, and worsening working conditions (Harpaz, 2008).

Ben-David (2003) notes that the last four decades of the twentieth century witnessed a decrease in male labour force participation rates while the propor-

tion of women in the labour market increased steadily. In the 1960s, the norm was that a woman's role was to be a housewife while a man's role was to work outside the home to provide income and economic benefits for the family. In the 1970s, however, there was an increasing awareness of the need for women's employment outside the home. By the 1980s, their labour force participation was increasing rapidly. From 26 per cent in the early 1960s, female participation thus grew to 36 per cent in the early 1980s, about 40 per cent in the early 1990s, and about 50 per cent by the end of that decade. During this period, women's roles in the workforce became more and more meaningful, and their representation in managerial positions also increased significantly (*ibid.*).

Similar to the trends observed in other countries (Carli, 2010; Lips and Lawson, 2009), these social changes in Israel have been driven by several factors. The first was the steady increase in the standard of living and consumption, which required reliance on two family incomes in order to maintain the normative standard. The second factor was women's growing expectation of self-fulfilment beyond the family, mainly driven by the rise in their educational attainment. The third factor was the development of support systems that allowed women to work full time (kindergarten until the late afternoon and throughout the year, after-school activities, cooperative spouses, etc.). The fourth factor was the increasing rate of divorce, which created pressure for single parents to spend more hours at work in order to pay the economic costs. Finally, social changes have of course also been driven by recognition of the fact that women are an important human resource for organizational success and that economic achievement depends on their participation at all levels of the labour market and in the armed forces (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2009b).

Centrality of work, family and other life domains

In the industrialized and post-industrialized world, work plays a central role in the life of individuals and in society in general. According to the European Values Survey, less than 20 per cent of the respondents in almost all European countries indicated that work was not very important or not important at all in their life (Davoine and Méda, 2010). In central and eastern European countries and in southern Europe, the majority of the survey respondents do not wish to reduce the importance of work in their life (see *idem*, 2009).

For most people, the meaning of work has generally been explained in terms of three points of view: the most prominent is the economic or instrumental view; the second sees commitment to work as part of human nature and human needs; while the third sees it as socio-psychological (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007). Work itself fills many hours of an individual's life. Beyond work *per se*, employees invest many additional hours in furthering their education, training, upgrading their qualifications and searching for jobs, so that about a third of a person's actual waking hours over their life cycle are related to working life. The time and effort that an individual spends in work-related activities is often at the expense of other life domains, such as family and leisure.

Studies by Dubin, Hedley and Taveggia (1976) regarding work as a “central life interest” contributed to the development of the concept of work centrality, which refers to the degree of general importance attributed to work in one’s life at a given time. Work centrality has thus been defined in terms of the general importance of work in an individual’s life compared to other activities such as leisure or spending time with friends or family (Kanungo, 1982). In practice, work centrality has usually been conceptualized through two main approaches. The first is relative work centrality, which compares the importance of work to the relative importance of other major life domains or roles, such as family, leisure, community, and religion. The evaluative framework this implies is complex but structured, involving self and work versus self and other major life domains (MOW, 1987; Kanungo, 1982; Mercure, Vultur and Fleury, 2012). The second approach is absolute work centrality, which focuses on the meaning and importance of work to the individual, without reference to comparative standards, hence an absolute or scaled measure of work centrality (MOW, 1987; Mercure, Vultur and Fleury, 2012).

Several studies have attempted to assess the importance of work, family and other important aspects of people’s lives. In the “Meaning of Work” project conducted in the early 1980s (MOW, 1987), respondents from Belgium, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States ranked family as the most important aspect of life, before work, leisure, community, and religion. Only in Japan and Yugoslavia did work rank first, before family.¹ In all eight countries surveyed, leisure was ranked third. A second examination of the meaning of work in Belgium, Germany, Israel, Japan and the United States carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s showed a similar pattern: work was ranked second in importance, following family, in all countries except Germany, where leisure was second to family and work came third (Harpaz and Fu, 2002; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007). Based on the European Values Survey of the early 1990s, Harding and Hipspoors (1995) found that work was ranked second in importance to family in all 13 countries covered by the survey. More recent findings among professional employees in Germany, Poland and Russia indicate that family ranks first in all three countries, followed by work and leisure, with community and religion at the bottom of the ranking (Kuchinke et al., 2009). A similar ranking of family, work and leisure was found among mid-level professional employees in the United States, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Poland, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Brazil (Kuchinke et al., 2011). Davoine and Méda (2009) found that family came first in the hierarchy of “spheres of life” across Europe. Work was ranked second, higher than friends, religion or politics, except in a few countries where leisure was deemed more important than work.

¹ A similarly uncommon ranking was found in China at the end of the 1990s (see Westwood and Lok, 2003).

Changes in the centrality of work, family and leisure

The 1980s witnessed a significant decline in the importance of work in the United States and Germany, and a marginal decline in Japan (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007). This trend decline in work centrality and the work ethic in developed countries has been widely documented over the past three decades, in conjunction with the reduction of working time and the development of a culture of leisure (Haworth, 1997; Peterson and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 2003; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Twenge et al., 2010; Davoine and Méda, 2010). Twenge et al. (2010) compared the values of high school seniors in the United States based on cross-sectional studies conducted in 1976 (baby boomers), 1991 (Generation X) and 2006 (Generation Y/Me). They discovered that between 1976 and 2006, every new generation attached higher importance to leisure values and lower importance to work. Chao (2005) concluded that the baby boomer generation in the United States lived to work while “Generation X” worked to live and “Generation Y/Me” – today’s young individualistic workers – is more interested in having their work meet their family and leisure needs. Based on data from 1981, 1990 and 1999, Davoine and Méda (2010) identified an increase in the percentage of people wishing to reduce the importance of work in their lives in most European countries. This trend was more pronounced between 1990 and 1999 and particularly notable in France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium, Ireland and Austria, while Spain and Portugal displayed the opposite trend.

Family centrality has generally remained high and stable over the past three decades. Throughout the 1980s, its ranking did not change in the United States, Japan, Israel and Germany (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007). According to the more recent findings of the European Values Survey, over 90 per cent of respondents in all European countries indicated that family was very important or quite important in their life (Davoine and Méda, 2010). Although “Generation X” and especially “Generation Y/Me” are looking to achieve a better work–family balance, they attach similar importance to family life (Chao, 2005; Twenge et al., 2010). The young generation has a longer adolescence than previous generations, and it is delaying marriage and childbearing to a later age for the sake of leisure time and friends; these young people have fewer children, although their family orientation is just as strong as that of previous generations (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Leask, Fyall and Barron, 2013; Chao, 2005).

Work, family and gender

It has long been debated whether gender roles are a product of socialization or biological differences. Evolutionary and socio-biological approaches claim that “women’s nature” makes them more capable of domestic chores and raising children than men, and less suited to work that requires competitiveness, aggressiveness and organizational politics. However, many other studies argue that gender roles are the result of socialization processes which take place throughout each individual’s life, especially during early childhood

(e.g. Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010; Lips and Lawson, 2009). These studies see gender differences as being dependent on culture and therefore changeable over time with shifting social trends: gender-role socialization thus guides individuals to occupations perceived as “feminine” or “masculine” at a given time (Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2004).

Several studies have found that work centrality is significantly weaker among women than among men (Harpaz, 1990; Kuchinke et al., 2009; Mannheim, Baruch and Tal, 1997). In Israeli samples from 1981 and 1993, this difference was significant, especially among men and women with children (Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009). Harpaz and Fu (1997) found that men in the United States, Germany, Japan and Israel exhibited stronger work centrality than women, while MOW (1987) found similar gender differences in eight countries. It may therefore be concluded that this is a universal phenomenon related to the life events that women, especially married women, go through (such as pregnancy, childbirth and childcare) and the different socialization and social expectations they face relative to men, making family much more important to them than work (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2004). The increasing pressure on women to join the labour market, develop careers and support the family economically leads to conflict between work demands and traditional family roles and expectations (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Hoobler, Wayne and Lemmon, 2009; Westman and Etzion, 2005). In the developed countries, this work–family conflict is more salient among women than among men (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2004; Westman and Etzion, 2005). Indeed, recent findings show that European women wish to devote less time to work compared to men (Davoine and Méda, 2009).

Responsibility for the family’s economic well-being is normatively perceived as men’s duty, leading them to “prefer” work over family as a central life domain (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2004; Matthews and Barnes-Farrell, 2010; Devetter, 2009). This is reflected in the fact that fathers typically invest more hours at work than childless men (Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009). By contrast, responsibility for the family’s social needs and emotional support is normatively perceived as women’s duty. Yet, involvement in the family sphere is extremely time-consuming and thus competes directly with work (Davoine and Méda, 2009). This is reflected in the fact that a higher percentage of women, compared to men, work part time in order to cope with domestic responsibilities (Laville, 1999). Furthermore, single childless women rank work centrality higher and work more hours in gainful employment than married women, especially mothers, reflecting the latter’s tendency to “prefer” family over work as a central life domain (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009).

Indeed, Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch (2009) found that family centrality in Israel scored higher among women than among men, with mothers investing more hours per week in childcare and in core housework tasks (cleaning, cooking, etc.) than fathers. These researchers did not find significant gender differences regarding the other unpaid work activities (house maintenance,

shopping, and other house/family-related chores). Overall, however, Israeli mothers invested more hours per week in work (both paid and unpaid) than fathers. Devetter (2009) found that French women have lower time availability for work than men. This can be explained in part by two factors linked to the domestic sphere, namely, maternity and cohabitation. These two factors were found to influence both women's relationship to work and the amount of time they were prepared to devote to the labour market.

Even (or especially?) when they work full time and have professional or managerial careers, many women are in a role conflict between family and job expectations. Many women in Israel are unwilling to give up their traditional role of motherhood, whether due to emotional needs or because of traditional and social expectations, while they develop demanding careers (Lavee and Katz, 2003; Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009).

Based on the above findings, I have formulated the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1a: *Work centrality is higher among men, while family centrality is higher among women.*

Hardly any studies on Israel have compared rankings of life domains between men and women. One study of the employees of high-tech firms in Israel found that women ranked family first and work second, while men ranked work first and family second (Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009). Based on this study and other previous findings regarding life domains centrality, my second hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1b: *Women rank family centrality first and work second, while men rank work centrality first and family second. Additionally, both men and women rank leisure third (ahead of community and religion).*

Determinants of life domain centrality

The literature suggests that, aside from gender, the variables that determine an individual's relationship to work and family are age, education and occupational status. These are the variables examined here.

Age

Throughout a working life, an individual goes through several important stages and events, which have an impact on his or her attitude to work in general and work centrality in particular. According to Abramson and Inglehart (1995), the "life course" approach assumes that ageing and various events occurring over the course of life tend to affect one's values. The common view is that one becomes more materialistic with age, as a result of entry into frameworks of greater commitment and financial pressures (marriage, children, and the consequent cost of maintaining a home and a family). Such growing economic responsibility over the course of life may increase identification with work as a means of dealing with economic pressures (and pursuing self-esteem and fulfilment), thereby increasing work centrality over time (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2010). At the same time, responsibility for marriage, children, household tasks

and family affairs will increase family centrality to the detriment of leisure (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995).

This life course effect on work, family and leisure was also identified in a study of a representative sample of the Israeli labour force from 1992 (Sharabi, 2000). This found a positive correlation between age and the importance attached to the life domains of family and work, and a negative correlation between age and leisure. Various studies have indeed shown that the older people get, the higher their work centrality (Bal and Kooij, 2011; Mercure, Vultur and Fleury, 2012; Kuchinke et al., 2009; Mannheim, Baruch and Tal, 1997; MOW, 1987; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Warr, 2008). As noted above, Davoine and Méda (2010) found that in most European countries the young and middle generations see work as less important than do the older generations. Based on two Israeli labour force samples surveyed in 1981 and 1993, Snir and Harpaz (2002) found that with ageing, work centrality increased while leisure centrality decreased. Kuchinke et al. (2011) reached the same conclusions based on data from eight countries. They did not, however, find an ageing effect on family centrality.

A comparison of the attitudes of men and women over their life cycles shows patterns that differ from those described above. Men's work centrality increases after marriage and the birth of children in the family (including investment of more hours per week in paid work than childless men), while women's work centrality decreases in response to those events – including investment of fewer hours per week in paid work than childless women – in favour of increasing family centrality, especially between their mid-20s and mid-40s (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009; Misumi and Yamori, 1991; Sharabi, 2000; Warr, 2008). Based on the life course approach and these findings, I formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *Women's ageing contributes to an increase of family centrality and a decrease of work centrality, while men's ageing contributes to an increase of work and family centrality. Moreover, ageing contributes to a decrease of leisure centrality among both men and women.*

Education

Many studies conducted over the years have found a significant relationship between education and individuals' values and beliefs in most countries, even when other factors such as sex, age, socio-economic status and work experience were statistically controlled (e.g. Kohn and Schooler, 1983). Indeed, according to most studies of work values, the higher the level of education, the higher the individual's work centrality (e.g. Harpaz, 1990; Mannheim, 1993; Mannheim, Baruch and Tal, 1997; MOW, 1987). Tausky (1969) even found that education was the most important predictor of work centrality. Significantly, non-financial commitment to work has also turned out to be positively related to educational attainment (Harpaz, 2002; Sharabi, 2000).

In contrast to these research findings, a limited number of studies have found that educational attainment is either not related or negatively related

to work centrality (Bal and Kooij, 2011; Harpaz and Fu, 1997; Warr, 2008). For example, Mercure, Vultur and Fleury (2012) find that, among workers in Quebec, absolute and relative work centrality are the lowest among those with low educational attainment, the highest among those with post-secondary attainment and intermediate among those with academic degrees. Family centrality has been found to be negatively correlated with education (Kuchinke et al., 2011; Sharabi, 2000).

Based on the above findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: *The higher women's and men's educational attainment, the higher their work centrality and the lower their family centrality.*

Occupational status

The higher one's position and occupational status, the more willing one is to engage in paid work (while investing less in other life domains), and the more central work becomes in life (Basini and Hurley, 1994; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2010; Mercure, Vultur and Fleury, 2012). Among Israeli workers, Mannheim and Rein (1981) found that the centrality of work declined with occupational status: work centrality was high among professionals, scientists and technicians, but very low among production workers. In Japan and the United States, occupational status was also found to be positively correlated with work centrality, with work centrality higher among managers and professionals than among the other four occupational groups studied. In addition, senior managers displayed higher work centrality than junior managers within organizations (Basini and Hurley, 1994). This was found to be true for both men and women in managerial positions (Mannheim and Schiffrin, 1984). Based on the above, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 4: *The higher women's and men's occupational status, the higher their work centrality and the lower their family centrality.*

Methodology

Sample and data collection

In 2006, the MOW questionnaire was administered to 1,201 respondents. Given the length and complexity of the questionnaire, respondents were interviewed in their homes by trained interviewers in order to increase the valid response rate. Each interview lasted about 25 minutes on average. Although this sample was closely representative of the labour force, it was condensed to 909 individuals to match as much as possible the 2006 composition of the labour force according to the Statistical Abstracts of Israel (2007). The final sample included 463 men and 446 women. Table 1 presents their distribution according to the selected variables, by sex.

The data indicate that men work more hours than women, but that women are more educated than men and earn less. There is a higher percentage of men than women in blue collar, managerial and professional jobs.

Table 1. Socio-economic distribution of men and women, 2006
(percentages, except for age and hours)

	Men	Women
Age (means)	41.4	37.4
Working hours (means)	48.5	40
Education		
<i>Primary</i>	8.9	5.3
<i>Secondary</i>	36.5	34.5
<i>Post-secondary</i>	29.8	31.6
<i>Academic degree</i>	24.8	28.7
Net monthly income (NIS)		
<3000	5.5	17.2
3001–4000	7.4	19.5
4001–5000	12.2	23.3
5001–6000	21.7	17.7
>6000	53.2	22.4
Occupational status		
<i>Blue-collar worker</i>	25.3	4.5
<i>White-collar worker</i>	10.5	12.7
<i>Blue-collar supervisor</i>	12.4	9.8
<i>White-collar supervisor</i>	8.1	10.5
<i>Manager</i>	18.3	9.8
<i>Self-employed</i>	11.3	4.5
<i>Professional</i>	14.2	12.7

Notes: N = 463 men and 446 women. Net monthly income in NIS (New Israeli Shekels). US\$1=4.2 NIS in 2006. Source: Statistical Abstracts of Israel (2007).

Measurement

As noted above, there are two main means of measuring the centrality of work: the importance attached by individuals to work in general (absolute centrality) and its importance relative to other aspects of life (relative centrality). While absolute work centrality circumscribes the importance of the work itself for an individual, relative work centrality demonstrates its importance in a hierarchy of values: this makes it possible to evaluate work in relation other spheres of life such as family, friends, social life and community (Mercure, Vultur and Fleury, 2012; Kanungo, 1982). Since the aim of this study is to rank and evaluate the importance of work and other life domains by sex, the appropriate measure is “relative work centrality”.

In this study, the measurement of relative work centrality is based on the “Meaning of Work” questionnaire constructed by the MOW International Research Team (MOW, 1987). Specifically, respondents were asked to reply to the following question: “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 any particular domain, the

Table 2. Differences in life domain preferences among men and women: Means, standard deviations and t-test values, 2006

Life domains	Men		Women		t value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Leisure	20.03	13.82	18.98	13.22	1.17
Community	6.31	8.53	3.83	6.44	4.93*
Work	28.38	17.03	27.93	15.72	.42
Religion	5.54	9.87	3.35	6.54	3.94*
Family	40.11	18.02	45.73	17.86	-4.72*

Note: * $p < .001$.
Source: Author's calculations based on Statistical Abstracts of Israel (2007).

greater its centrality relative to the other life domains.² Snir and Harpaz (2005) found this measure to have high test–retest reliability, with correlation coefficients for relative work and family centrality scores of 0.7 and 0.8, respectively.

The statistical analysis is based on a multiple linear regression aimed at assessing the impact of each independent variable on life domain centrality. This analysis allows us to estimate the relationships between a given independent variable and each life domain, holding all other variables constant.

Findings

Table 2 presents the means and t-test results for the differences in life domain centrality between men and women. In 2006, community and religion were more central among men than among women, while family centrality remained higher among women than among men. No gender difference is found in work centrality, however.

These findings partially support hypothesis 1a, since family centrality was, as expected, higher among women, but women's work centrality was similar to men's. Hypothesis 1b regarding life domain rankings is also partially supported. Men and women ranked the centrality of family first, work second and leisure third, while it had been hypothesized that men would rank work first and family second.

Since there are differences between men and women regarding occupational status, education, working time and income,³ a linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the influence of these socio-economic variables on the five central life domains by sex.

As shown in table 3, these factors can partially explain gender differences. Contrary to my second hypothesis, however, ageing does not reduce women's

² While this ranking measure may not be optimal, it was constructed and used by the MOW research team in eight countries (MOW, 1987) and subsequently adopted in studies conducted in the United States, Germany and Japan (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007), China (Westwood and Lok, 2003) and several other countries.

³ See the literature review above and the sample characteristics.

Table 3. Regression analysis (Standardized Beta) of determinants of life domain centrality among men and women, 2006

Variables	Men					Women				
	Leisure	Community Work	Religion	Family		Leisure	Community Work	Religion	Family	
Age	-.27*** (.05)	.16*** (.03)	-.04 (.07)	-.06 (.04)	.18*** (.07)	-.19*** (.06)	.14** (.03)	.00 (.07)	.14** (.03)	.04 (.08)
Working hours (weekly)	-.16** (.04)	.00 (.02)	.15** (.05)	-.01 (.03)	-.02 (.05)	-.06 (.05)	-.06 (.02)	.17*** (.06)	-.07 (.02)	-.06 (.07)
Occupational status	.02 (.31)	-.01 (.20)	.21*** (.40)	-.05 (.23)	-.16** (.42)	.07 (.37)	.02 (.18)	.03 (.44)	-.09 (.18)	.06 (.51)
Education	.10* (.69)	.08 (.44)	-.13** (.87)	-.21*** (.51)	.11* (.93)	.05 (.77)	.11* (.38)	.03 (.93)	-.02 (.38)	-.09 (1.07)
Income	.02 (.55)	-.21*** (.35)	-.03 (.69)	.01 (.41)	.11* (.74)	-.04 (.54)	-.05 (.26)	.02 (.65)	-.10 (.27)	.08 (.75)
R ² (adjusted)	.11	.05	.06	.04	.04	.05	.02	.02	.04	.01
F	11.99***	5.51***	6.71***	4.80***	5.11***	5.79***	2.37*	3.07**	4.53***	1.69

Notes: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. * P < .05; ** P < .01; *** P < .001.
Source: Author's calculations based on Statistical Abstracts of Israel (2007).

work centrality, nor does it increase women's family centrality or men's work centrality, though it does increase men's family centrality ($\beta = .18, p < .001$). Moreover, t-tests on the means of work and family centrality between women with and without children show that family centrality is significantly higher among those with children (48.78 vs 37.64, $t = 6.13, p < .001$, respectively), while there is virtually no difference as regards work centrality (27.56 vs 28.90, $t = 6.13, p < .81$, respectively).

Ageing has a negative effect on both men's and women's leisure centrality ($\beta = -.27, p < .001$ and $\beta = -.19, p < .001$, respectively); thus, the second hypothesis is partially supported. The third hypothesis is refuted since education does not influence work or family centrality among women and, contrary to my assumption, education among men is positively correlated with family centrality ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) and negatively correlated with work centrality ($\beta = -.13, p < .01$).

Occupational status has a negative effect on family centrality only among men ($\beta = -.16, p < .01$) and a positive effect on work centrality ($\beta = .21, p < .001$), which partially supports hypothesis 4. Working hours are positively correlated to work centrality among both men and women ($\beta = .15, p < .01$ and $\beta = .17, p < .001$, respectively).

Aside from this correlation and the positive effect of ageing on community centrality among men and women ($\beta = .16, p < .001$ and $\beta = .14, p < .01$ respectively), the other variables that affect men's life domains do not have a significant impact on women's life domains and vice versa. Only among men do working hours have a negative effect on leisure ($\beta = -.16, p < .01$) and occupational status a negative effect on family ($\beta = -.16, p < .01$), while education has a positive effect on leisure ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) but a negative effect

on religion ($\beta = -.21, p < .001$); income has a negative effect on community ($\beta = -.21, p < .001$) but a positive effect on family ($\beta = .11, p < .05$). Only among women does age have a positive effect on religion ($\beta = .14, p < .01$) and education a positive effect on community ($\beta = .11, p < .05$). It is interesting to note that none of the socio-economic variables explain women's family centrality.

Discussion and conclusions

By comparison with previous research, this study has found interesting changes in the centrality of life domains among men and women in Israel. As in the past, the centrality of family is found to be higher among women than among men. However, while men's work centrality used to be higher than women's, it turns out – for the first time in Israel – that there was no such traditional gender difference in work centrality in 2006 (cf. Harpaz and Fu, 1997; Kuchinke et al., 2009; MOW, 1987). It seems that the increasing percentage of educated women in the labour force and in professional and managerial positions has led to an increase in work centrality among women, to the same level as that observed among men. In contrast to the findings of Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch (2009), the results based on 2006 data show that not only women, but also men, rank family first and work second.⁴

Cross-cultural studies have consistently found that family centrality is ranked the highest in Israel, among Jewish men and women (see Harpaz, 1990; MOW, 1987; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Westwood and Lok, 2003). According to Lavee and Katz (2003), there are several reasons why Israeli society is so family-oriented. The first is the central place of Jewish religious symbols and rituals in daily life and in the foundations of the Israeli State, compounded by the influence of the traditional cultural patterns of Jewish immigrants from Asia and Africa. The second reason is that certain government social and taxation policies (based on coalition agreements with religious parties) have contributed to the establishment of a family-centred life style. A third factor is that internal and external geopolitical conflicts have led to the development of a culture of survival under constant threat which, in turn, has led to increasing marriage and birth rates. A fourth reason is the relatively high degree of social regulation in Israeli society: this is reflected in the country's low rates of divorce, single-parenting and birth to single mothers, and in its high rates of fertility and marriage, as compared to other developed countries (ibid.). The fifth reason is the widespread availability of high-quality and affordable childcare facilities for children from the age of three months throughout the country, which also contribute to Israel's high fertility rate.

Although Israeli men and women alike attach great importance to family life, women still handle most family responsibilities, as in the past. While age, occupational status, education and income have an impact on family

⁴ Admittedly, the reason could be that these authors studied Israeli men in the high-tech industry, where the work load is very heavy and long working hours are the norm.

centrality among men, it was interesting to find that none of these variables influenced women's strong family centrality, not even ageing, which was expected to increase it further still. Thus, although Israeli women are increasingly joining the labour force – like most European and North American women – and work has become more central in their life, they still fulfil their traditional roles as wives and mothers, as reflected in their fertility rate, which is about three times higher than that of any other developed country (*ibid.*). This unique pattern is partly attributable to cultural and traditional values that encourage high fertility, but also to social regulation norms that do not appreciate women who favour work over family (Lavee and Katz, 2003; Toren, 2003). Overall, these findings indicate that the cultural ideal of combining motherhood and paid labour is increasing the potential for work–family conflict among Israeli women.

As expected, leisure was ranked third – after family and work – and was negatively affected by ageing, thus confirming the findings of earlier research (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995; Snir and Harpaz, 2002). In contrast to past research findings, however, ageing did not increase men's work centrality while at the same time increasing their family centrality (*cf.* Bal and Kooij, 2011; Kuchinke et al., 2009; Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009; Warr, 2008). This suggests that the attitudes of Israeli men are changing as they concentrate more on the family while keeping the same level of work centrality with ageing.

Although most studies have found a positive influence of education on work centrality,⁵ I find a negative influence of education on work centrality among men – in line with the findings of Harpaz and Fu (1997) and Bal and Kooij (2011) – and no influence on women (as found by Warr, 2008). Indeed, while older studies generally found a positive relationship between education and work centrality, more recent studies have not found any such relationship – some have even found negative relationships between the two variables. Education was also positively correlated to family among men, so the above findings may reflect a new trend among educated men, who are more family-oriented and less work-centred than men with lower educational attainment.

Occupational status had a negative effect on family centrality and a positive effect on work centrality, but only among men. These findings strengthen the argument that women in contemporary Israel, regardless of their rising labour force participation and occupational status, do not let their careers interfere with their family commitments since they rank family above work and other life domains. Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch (2009) find that Israeli women in high-tech occupations strive to juggle caring for their families with a career, rather than give up either of them. As Toren concludes, “giving up motherhood for an occupational career is not an endorsed lifestyle choice for most Israeli women” (2003, p. 67). But balancing career and family has its costs for mothers, especially those in higher-stress jobs, in terms of their

⁵ See, for example, Harpaz (1990), Kohn and Schooler (1983), Mannheim, Baruch and Tal (1997), MOW (1987), Mercure, Vultur and Fleury (2012).

having less free time than men. Indeed, this study finds that men display higher centrality of community and religion compared to women. Moreover, working hours are positively correlated with work centrality among both men and women, and hours are the only variable influencing work centrality among women. This positive relationship between work centrality and working hours is also found in other studies (e.g. Sharabi and Harpaz, 2010; Snir and Harpaz, 2002; Warr, 2008). My results show that men invested more hours per week in paid work than women (48.5 vs 41.4, respectively), thereby confirming the findings of other recent studies (Lips and Lawson, 2009; Snir, Harpaz and Ben-Baruch, 2009).

In recent decades, Israeli society has undergone dynamic social, political and economic changes, in addition to being more and more exposed to the values and norms of Western culture. Israel's rapid economic growth has increasingly enabled women to join the labour market. Furthermore, women's educational attainment has risen rapidly over the years, enabling them to enter high-status jobs, including managerial positions (Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2004; Hoobler, Wayne and Lemmon, 2009; Matysiak and Steinmetz, 2008; Westman and Etzion, 2005). These trends also reflect the change that women have undergone in their perception of themselves, from being housewives or secondary breadwinners towards becoming the main breadwinners on a par with men. Yet, although women have been closing the gender gap in work centrality over the years, they still regard family as more important than men do. Women still see themselves as responsible for traditional domestic family activities (e.g. raising children, cooking, cleaning), suggesting that gender socialization, stereotypes, and cultural and social expectations in the family domain have not changed much. Jewish women in Israel are still highly family-oriented because of Jewish religion, tradition and culture (Lavee and Katz, 2003; Snir and Harpaz, 2005; Toren, 2003). However, social expectations of women's labour force participation, career development and economic independence are also having an effect on gendered socialization.

Changes in work values, especially in work centrality, both across society at large and within particular groups, can affect a country's economic success (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2007; Weber, 1930). Accordingly, women's increasing work centrality may ultimately have a positive impact on Israel's economic growth, especially in the light of their increasing labour force participation (Ben-David, 2003). However, the competition between work and family, which women experience with particular acuteness on account of their typical family responsibilities, can translate not only into career breaks, but also into difficulty in reconciling the two, resulting in tensions between the two spheres over hours of work and schedules (Davoine and Méda, 2009). Organizations in Israel should therefore implement work-life balance programmes to reduce work-family conflict in consideration of women's high work centrality if they are to maintain a satisfied and committed workforce and to minimize turnover and absenteeism (Cohen, 2003; Feather and Rauter, 2004; Mannheim, Baruch and Tal, 1997; Sharabi and Harpaz, 2009b).

Further research could usefully investigate the effects of other meaningful variables such as number of children, children's age, and marital status. Also, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies could shed more light on the changes in the importance of life domains and provide further insights into emerging trends. In particular, alongside the work and family domains, a deeper investigation of leisure, community and religion centrality over the life cycles of men and women would yield a better understanding of the overall picture. By combining qualitative and quantitative data, future studies in this field will help to understand better the relationships between gender and life domains over time and the drivers of change.

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