The factor structure of the Survey of Work Values is examined in a sample of 273 white South African males (M age = 24.4 years). Results indicate the emergence of seven factors (with an eigenvalue > 1.00) as opposed to the six factors of the original instrument. The item composition of the factors also differed in comparison with previous research: the extrinsic work value dimension—Status of the Job—did not emerge as a significant factor in the present study. Cross cultural explanations for this phenomenon are offered.

WORK VALUES IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN MALES

STEPHEN D. BLUEN
JULIAN BARLING

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

The concept of values provides us with a unifying empirical and theoretical network for studying the social sciences (Rockeach, 1973). The importance of work values is indicated by the fact that since the 1920s, hundreds of studies have concentrated on this subject (Rao, 1975). Arguably, the classic work in the area was written by Weber (1904, translated 1958) who presented the concept of the Protestant Ethic. He maintains that the Protestant Ethic is strongly related to the development of capitalism and Western society (Weber, 1958).

Work values have been associated with various aspects of employment. For example Bucholz (1978) developed a conceptual framework for measuring work beliefs. He found that, depending on the scale used, values differed according to occupation, age, sex, race, and education. Similarly, Rosseel (1979) found that values differed according to factors such as age, sex, job tenure, and degree of family responsibility.

Adherence to the Protestant Ethic has been related to job satisfaction (Blood, 1969), work motivation (Aldag & Brief, 1975), higher order need strength (Aldag & Brief, 1975), and performance on specific tasks (Merrens & Garrett, 1975). A
METHOD

SUBJECTS

Useable responses were obtained from 273 white male subjects between the ages of 19 and 50 years (M = 24.4 years; SD = 3.3 years) after 950 questionnaires were sent out (144 non-useable responses were returned). At the time of investigation, all 273 were employed in a wide range of full-time, white-collar jobs. Job tenure ranged from one month to eight years (M = 2 years; SD = 1 year 8 months). All subjects had initially sought vocational guidance at the University of the Witwatersrand's Counselling and Careers Unit at an earlier stage of their careers.

THE SURVEY OF WORK VALUES

The subjects completed the SWV (Wollack et al., 1971), which is based on various dimensions of the construct of secularized Protestant Ethic (Weber, 1958). The instrument comprises six, nine-item subscales, each designed to assess a different value dimension. Three of these are aimed at determining intrinsic work values, namely pride in work (for instance, “One who does a sloppy job at work should feel a little ashamed of oneself”); job involvement (for instance, “One who has an idea about how to improve one’s own job should drop a note in the company suggestion box”); and activity preference (for instance, “A job which requires the employee to be busy during the day is better than a job which allows a lot of loafing”). Two of the subscales reflect extrinsic work values: attitude toward earnings (for instance, “A good job is a well paying job”); and social status of the job (for instance, “My friends would not think much of me if I did not have a good job”). The remaining subscale, Upward Striving (for instance,
significantly less importance on the value of status and prestige than did their black counterparts (p < .05).

Wollack et al. (1971) conceptualized Social Status of the Job as "the effect the job alone has on a person's standing among his friends, relatives and co-workers, in his own eyes and/or in the eyes of others" (p. 332). The concept is operationalized with items that stress positive regard for individuals who hold jobs that are prestigious, "good," and/or regular. In South Africa, the effects of a white minority ruling the country has influenced many aspects of the society (see Barling & Fincham, 1978), one of which is the labor market. Traditionally, the upper level of jobs has been reserved for whites only. This is evident from the most recent available statistics. For the third quarter of 1981, the average gross earnings of the whites was R951 per month. Corresponding figures for blacks was R240 per month (RSA, 1982). The disparity of earnings reflect obvious differences in job status for the two groups. This trend is supported by a survey by Fine Spamer Associates. They found that only 4.6% of blacks currently hold upper echelon "traditionally white" jobs (Moving up the Ladder, 1982).

Thus in South Africa, the impact of the status of a job might not be perceived to be a prevalent work value among whites because the vast majority are endowed with high status jobs by the de facto system of job reservation, which remains evident in most instances despite attempts to dismantle this practice via amendments to legislation. It is not surprising, therefore, that high status emanating from one's job does not emerge as a major consideration for white South African males. Once again, this suggests the influence of racial structure on one's values and shows how cultural nuances can be reflected in a factor analytic study.

These results also suggest that simply comparing the strength of different values (see Orpen, 1978) does not reflect the specific nature of work values for specific groups. Obviously, therefore, work values applicable to an American sample are not necessarily applicable to white South African males.

This may represent an important omission. Research in the South African context has shown that the structure of attitudes emerging from factor analysis invariably reflect specific nuances of the idiosyncratic nature of South African society. This


*Stephen Bluen is a lecturer in the Division of Industrial Psychology, School of Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. His main research interests lie in psychological aspects of labor relations, specifically in the areas of conflict, stress, and racial discrimination in organizations.*

*Julian Barling, Ph.D, is Professor and Head of the Division of Industrial Psychology in the School of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. His major research interests lie in the effects of work experiences on the quality of life, particularly on the quality of family life.*