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# Cultural Orientations as Antecedents of Career Anchors: An Exploratory Study

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CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS AS ANTECEDENTS OF CAREER ANCHORS:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Kathrine S. Agger

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

### CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS AS ANTECEDENTS OF CAREER ANCHORS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by Kathrine Agger

In this study the relationship between cultural dimensions and career anchors was examined. The objective was to uncover whether cultural orientations, measured through cultural dimensions, could be perceived as antecedents of career anchors. Responses from 283 people, distributed over 24 countries and five continents, were collected and a canonical correlation analysis was conducted. Results showed that the relationship between cultural orientations and career anchors could be explained through a smaller set of variables. Specifically, results indicated that the cultural dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation were related to the career anchors of job security/stability and, furthermore, that the cultural dimensions of power distance and masculinity were related to the career anchors of service/dedication to a cause and lifestyle. Theoretically, this study expands on the current career anchors' theory by focusing on antecedents beyond demographic characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, and personality traits. Practically, this study provides organizations with greater insight into factors affecting employee motivation and engagement.

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## **Introduction**

Twenty years ago, Evans (1996) noted that due to a great amount of competition, organizations were turning their attention towards optimizing and adjusting management structures and processes. More than two decades later, the issue of organizations dealing with high levels of competition is still highly relevant (Guest, 2016). Industries and technologies change rapidly and, hence, organizations are no longer able to rely solely on building and maintaining a good and reliable product in order to stay competitive. Instead, many companies find themselves in a continuous race to keep up with other companies at the pace at which innovation is occurring (Guest, 2016). This has created a fundamental challenge for organizations: matching their own rapidly changing needs with the ever-changing needs of their employees (Schein, 1992).

In order to deal with the pressures of staying competitive, keeping up with technology, and satisfying the needs of their employees, one initiative that organizations have been taking is to place the responsibility of being agile onto their employees (Evans, 1996). The shift of responsibility from the organization to employees has applied not only to business-related challenges, but also to career-related challenges, meaning that employees have been placed in charge of their own career management. Having a career for life is no longer considered a possibility for many employees (Bacal, 2016), and this might be partly due to the rapid changes in demands at the organizational level. For the past decades, much focus has been on preparing individual employees for the challenges they will face in the future and they have thus been encouraged to be proactive, self-driven, responsible for their own

careers, and not reliant on organizations to provide them with opportunities to grow and succeed (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009; Evans, 1996).

At the same time, because the nature of work has become more complex than before, organizations are finding it harder to predict the qualifications and skills necessary in the future for specific jobs (Bacal, 2016; Schein, 1996). Consequently, it has become much harder for organizations to find and attract the right people (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009; Schein & Van Maanen, 2016). Additionally, despite being more important now than before, retaining employees has become a challenge for many companies (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). High turnover rates are costly, not only in terms of replacing and training employees, but also in terms of maintaining the development, productivity, and quality of organizations' systems and products (Chang, 2010). Furthermore, acquiring and developing skilled employees has become a major differentiating factor for organizational success, as these employees are important for organizations to gain competitive advantage (Kannabiran, Dominic, & Sarata, 2014).

The higher value organizations are beginning to place on their employees' expertise has been a contributing factor to the shift from employees being viewed as "replaceable goods" to being viewed as important assets. It is, therefore, imperative that organizations not only identify and hire the right people, but also to retain their employees, in particular, their top talent (Chang, 2010; Samuel & Chipunza, 2009). Although much focus has been placed on encouraging employees to take charge of their own careers, investing in career development programs that support employees' career management has also been found to be highly beneficial to companies in terms of employee loyalty and retention (Gomez, 2014).

Schein's (1975) career anchors theory is a theoretical framework that has been widely used to empower employees and assist them with their career management (Leong, Rosenberg, & Chong, 2014). Career anchors are defined as a combination of one's perceived talents and abilities, motives and needs, as well as self-concept, attitudes, and values, and are thus associated with one's "career self-concept" (Schein, 1992). Extensive research has been conducted examining the relationship between career anchors and work outcomes such as job satisfaction, engagement, turnover, and organizational commitment. Although studies on the antecedents of career anchors have shown that some demographic information and personal characteristics are related to specific career anchors, few studies have been conducted that look beyond the relationship between these characteristics and career anchors.

This study proposes that culture might be an antecedent of career anchors. For example, Chia, Koh, and Pragasam (2008) examined potential differences in career drivers, defined as inner forces such as desires and needs that drive career-related decisions (Francis, 1985), among students from Singapore, Hong Kong, and Australia. They found that these students from these different countries differed in career drivers such as expertise (e.g., having specialized knowledge, skills, and competencies), security (e.g., the desire to know the future and avoid unpredictable risks), and creativity (e.g., being able to come up with new, innovative ideas). More specifically, the Australian students tended to place more emphasis on creativity than the students from Singapore and Hong Kong. The researchers explained this finding as being partly due to the individualistic culture in Australia that made the Australians more receptive to failure. Because career drivers are conceptually closely related to career anchors, it might be assumed that the same type of results could be found

between different nationalities/cultures and career anchors. Therefore, this study investigates cultural orientations as an antecedent of career anchors; more specifically, it looks at how dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 1984) relate to the career anchors proposed by Schein (1985).

The knowledge gained from this study has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it expands on previous career anchors research by exploring culture as an antecedent of career anchors. Practically, the knowledge gained from this study can enable management to make better decisions in regards to its workforce planning and employee retention strategies.

### **Career Anchors Theory**

The concept of career anchors arose from a longitudinal study conducted by Schein during the 1960s and 1970s. The study was intended to examine the factors that influenced how people defined themselves in relation to their jobs (Schein, 1978). In this study, people in various stages of their careers were interviewed. These interviews uncovered that throughout these people's careers, there seemed to be different underlying themes, which were later labeled career anchors. Career anchors were consistent with people's understanding of themselves, and acted as an influencing factor on their career-related decision making processes. While studying career anchors over the years, Schein found that in events where people had deviated from their identified theme, they found themselves steering back towards jobs with a better fit. This notion of being "pulled back" to one's base is why Schein decided to name the themes career *anchors* (Chapman & Brown, 2014; Evans 1996; Schein, 1992).

A person's talents and abilities, motives and needs, as well as self-concepts, attitudes, and values are represented in a career anchor. Schein (1987) describes a

career anchor as “that one element in a person’s self-concept, which he or she will not give up, even in the face of difficult choices” (p. 11). Initially, Schein found that the themes identified in his study could be sufficiently represented through five universal anchors. These five anchors were labeled technical functional competence, managerial competence, security/stability, autonomy/independence, and entrepreneurial creativity (Schein, 1978). Based on continuous research, Schein later added three anchors to his theory: service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle (Schein, 1992).

For those scoring high on technical functional competence, having the possibility to apply and sharpen their professional skills is essential. For people who fall within the managerial competence anchor, directing the activities of others and climbing to higher levels within the organization is most important. For those who score high on security/stability, it means they will not give up the opportunity for employment certainty or tenure in a job, whereas autonomy/independence indicates that people would have a hard time giving up the opportunity to define their work in their own way. Entrepreneurial creativity is defined as the unwillingness to give up the opportunity to create an enterprise or organization of one’s own, whereas service/dedication to a cause relates to the unwillingness to give up the opportunity to pursue work that one believes contributes something of value in the larger society. Pure challenge is described as not being willing to give up the opportunity to work on solutions to seemingly difficult problems, to win out over worthy opponents, or to overcome difficult obstacles. Lastly, lifestyle is connected to the desire to integrate and balance personal and family needs, while meeting the requirements of a work career (Schein & Van Maanen, 2016).

Several other researchers have suggested that additional and alternative anchors exist beyond the original eight anchors proposed by Schein (1987). For example, Suutari and Taka (2004) proposed an additional anchor, internationalism, which is defined as excitement about working and developing competencies within an international environment, in unfamiliar countries, and different cultures in order to enhance career opportunities and gain new experiences. DeLong (1982) identified identity, defined as obtaining status by working for a powerful or prestigious organization, and variety, defined as performing different tasks and taking on new challenges. Ituma and Simpson (2007) found being marketable, defined as striving for continuous learning and skill development in order to enhance career-related opportunities and employability, to be an additional anchor.

However, due to the fact that Schein's eight-construct model still remains the most researched and empirically supported model, and his original career anchors are still frequently used in career counseling (Chapman, 2015), this study solely focuses on and investigates the eight career anchors originally proposed by Schein (1978).

Schein (1996) has argued that a person only has one true anchor, meaning that one of the anchors over time will be dominant and overshadow the others. Yet, he has acknowledged that people often do not know which anchor is most important to them, because they are rarely forced to give up all other anchors (Schein, 1980). In fact, most careers satisfy various anchors but as careers develop or change, people may find themselves at a career-related crossway where they have to choose between staying (and satisfying several anchors that fulfill various needs) or leaving their jobs (and meeting their primary anchors in another job).

According to Schein, individuals must have a sufficient amount of work experience, roughly five to ten years, before the dominant anchor can be properly developed and identified. In this sense, career anchors evolve and act as stabilizing forces over time, ultimately steering careers in certain directions that are in accordance to the career anchor, their dominant career anchors in particular. Furthermore, even if people become aware of their true anchor, possessing a predominant career anchor does not necessarily mean that they immediately choose the option where they can satisfy their dominant career anchor. Rather, it means that in cases where the dominant career anchor is not fulfilled, people are much more likely to become disengaged, dissatisfied with their jobs, and leave their jobs at a later point in time (Schein & Van Maanen, 2016).

However, Feldman and Bolino (1996) argued that people could have multiple anchors instead of only one primary anchor. Other researchers also showed evidence that people were in fact capable of having multiple dominant career anchors (Ituma & Simpson, 2007; Quesenberry & Trauth, 2012; Ramakrishna & Potosky, 2003). Schein and Van Maanen (2016) explained that a career path could satisfy several anchors at once and the dominant anchor may not be clear to the individual. In these types of cases, they argued that people's true anchors would need to be assessed through interviewing (e.g., by asking hypothetical questions about future career-related decisions). Thus, finding multiple anchors could be due to a premature assessment of individuals' career anchors, or because people who score high on multiple career anchors have been fortunate enough to be on a career path that neither forced them to think about nor make decisions based on their anchors. In these cases,



they might never have had the chance to become aware of their true career anchor or to develop their career self-concepts.

### **Career Anchors Theory and Person-Environment Fit**

The main assumption behind career anchors theory is that both the individual and the company will experience positive outcomes by being mindful of what a specific job has to offer and aligning this with the individual's career anchor (Barth, 1993; Chapman, 2015). Schein's career anchors theory relates to the person-environment fit approach, defined as the compatibility between people and aspects of their work environment (Kristoff-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Person-environment fit is a multidimensional concept consisting of person-vocation, person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-individual fit. Fit within each of the constructs is determined by one's individual needs, abilities, and interests and the degree to which these are aligned with the supplies and demands of the work environment at a vocation, job, organization, group, or individual level. The more aligned these needs-supplies and abilities-demands are between people and their work environment, the more satisfied and committed they will be as well as less likely to leave the organization (Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005).

Career anchors relate to the person-environment approach because it also draws on a type of "fit" between people's talents and abilities, motives and needs, self-concepts, attitudes, and values, and the specific characteristics of their work environment. Some of the outcomes related to increased alignment between people's jobs and their career anchors are similar to the outcomes of increasing person-environment fit. For example, Danziger and Valency (2006) examined the congruence between people's jobs and their career anchors and found that perceived

congruence had a positive impact on their job satisfaction. This means that the more compatible people's career anchors are with their job characteristics, the more likely they will be satisfied with their jobs. Chang, Jiang, Klein, and Chen (2012) also investigated the alignment of job characteristics with people's career anchors and looked at the relationship between this alignment and outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover. They found that better alignment between people's dominant career anchors and their job characteristics positively affected job satisfaction levels, which in turn negatively affected turnover intentions. This means that matching people's jobs with their career anchors is likely to decrease turnover intentions indirectly through higher job satisfaction.

As stated earlier, workforce planning has become a great challenge for organizations in terms of attracting and hiring the right people for the jobs, as well as retaining top talent and performers. One of the earliest recognized and most well-documented ways to enhance employee retention is to increase job satisfaction (Bowling, 2013; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014). Amongst the different strategies organizations follow to increase employees' job satisfaction are implementing incentive plans or providing employees with different kinds of monetary rewards (Holtom et al., 2008). However, for many companies, providing employees with pecuniary incentives is not always a possibility, especially during times of recession. Furthermore, some of the studies conducted on this topic suggest that using these types of extrinsic incentives may only have a temporary effect and that employees are likely to return to old behaviors and attitudes as soon as the rewards run out (Kohn, 1993). Given the positive outcomes associated with the alignment of career anchors and job characteristics, matching employees' job-related

roles and tasks with their primary career anchors offers an alternative, and possibly more efficient, way for organizations to enhance job satisfaction and decrease turnover. Therefore, career anchors theory is relevant to study in order to gain valuable insight into the diversity of employees' career preferences and patterns. Such research will help organizational leaders and individual employees make better career-related decisions and ultimately increase employees' satisfaction, engagement, and retention rates (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010).

### **Research on Antecedents of Career Anchors**

Career anchors theory has been studied and used to increase employee and organizational success for several decades (Barclay, Chapman, & Brown, 2013). Up until now, much of the research relating to the antecedents of career anchors has been focusing on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and occupation.

**Age.** After studying 423 graduate business students from five different countries, Marshall and Bonner (2003) found that age impacted career anchors. More specifically, they found that the likelihood of having service/dedication to a cause or autonomy as a dominant career anchor significantly increased with age, whereas the likelihood of having security/stability as a dominant career anchor significantly decreased with age. Kniveton (2004) conducted a study examining 540 managers' career anchors. He found that age impacted career anchors in the sense that younger managers (19 - 39 years) were drawn towards the managerial competence and entrepreneurial creativity anchors, whereas older managers (40 - 64 years) were drawn towards the security and autonomy anchors. However, Igbaria, Greenhaus, and Parasuraman (1991) investigated the career anchors of 464 managers and professionals in the management information systems field and found that age was

unrelated to career anchors, which is consistent with a study conducted by Yarnall (1998) who studied 374 UK employees from a service organization and found that age was unrelated to career anchors. Therefore, research on the relationship between age and career anchors has been inconsistent in its findings and it is still unclear whether age impacts career anchors.

**Gender.** Marshall and Bonner (2003) found that men were significantly more likely to have managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, and pure challenge as their dominant anchors than were women. Danziger and Valency (2006) examined the distribution of Schein's career anchors on a sample of 1,846 people (899 males and 947 females) and, similar to Marshall and Bonner (2003), found women were significantly more likely to have lifestyle as a career anchor than men, whereas men were significantly more likely to have managerial competence, autonomy, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause, and pure challenge as a career anchor. Furthermore, they found no difference between men and women on the technical/functional competence and security/stability anchors.

Similarly, Igarria et al. (1991) found that women were significantly more oriented toward lifestyle than men and that men were significantly more oriented towards technical/functional competence than women. However, Yarnall (1998) found that gender was not related to career anchors among 374 UK employees from the service organization he surveyed and interviewed. In summary, a majority of these studies found a relationship between gender and career anchors, such that women valued lifestyle, whereas men valued managerial competence and autonomy.

**Occupation.** Looking into the relationship between occupation and career anchors, Tan and Quek (2001) found that among educators in Singapore, the

predominant career anchor was lifestyle, whereas managerial competence was the least dominant. Chang (2010) studied the career anchors of Taiwanese and U.S. management information systems (MIS) professionals and found that although American and Taiwanese MIS professionals differed in their preferred career anchors, they were alike in the sense that only few of them had service/dedication to a cause, autonomy, or creativity as their dominant career anchors. However, these findings are inconsistent with research conducted by Burn, Tye, and Ma (1995), who found that Hong Kong based information system (IS) professionals, in fact, valued creativity as part of the job characteristics within the IS-profession. This discrepancy suggests that additional research is needed on this particular topic.

**Psychological career resources.** Coetzee and Schreuder (2009) investigated psychological career resources as predictors of career anchors. Psychological career resources are reflections of a person's career consciousness, which is defined as a combination of a person's conscious and career-related cognition. A career-related cognition is the perception, awareness, and self-evaluation of one's career preferences, values, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are understood and regarded by oneself as being helpful in realizing one's goals and achieving career success. Psychological career resources consist of career preferences and values (e.g., cognitive and conceptual structures that guide one's view on the definition and meaning of a career), career enablers (e.g., transferable skills, such as practical or managerial skills, that can help one succeed in one's career), career drivers (e.g., attitudes that energizes and motivates one to experiment with one's career and employment opportunities), and career harmonizers (e.g.,

psychological attributes that act as promoters of flexibility and resilience, such as one's self-esteem, behavioral adaptability, emotional literacy and social connectivity). The researchers found that several dimensions of psychological career resources were significantly related to Schein's (1978) original eight career anchors. For example, career purpose (i.e., working for the feeling of fulfillment that one's job has to offer) was positively related to service/dedication to a cause, suggesting that such personal characteristics are capable of predicting people's career anchors.

**Cognitive modes.** Pathak (2013) studied the extent to which cognitive modes related to career anchors. Cognitive modes are defined as composites of attitude; introversion (e.g., being introspective, withdrawn, and preoccupied with internal affairs) vs. extraversion (e.g., more socially active and preoccupied by interactions with people), as well as psychological functions; sensing (e.g., a conscious, internal experience), intuition (e.g., an unconscious, internal drive), thinking (e.g., making judgments based on objective facts), and feeling (e.g., making judgments based on a personal value system) (Singer, 1984). It was found that several of the cognitive modes were significantly related to career anchors. For example, those who scored higher in introverted sensing and introverted thinking were more likely to have technical/functional competence as their dominant career anchor, whereas those who scored high on extroverted intuition and extroverted thinking were more likely to have managerial competence as their dominant career anchor, which indicates that introverted people might prefer technical ("heads-down") roles, whereas extroverted people might prefer more people-oriented ("heads-up") roles.

**Personality traits.** Lastly, a few researchers have studied the influence of personality traits on career anchors. For example, Van Sittert (2006) looked at the

relationship between personality preference and career anchors among South African police officers. Personality preference was measured based on the Myers-Briggs' Type Indicator (MBTI) scale. The MBTI assesses people's personality types on the continuum of four dichotomies; judgment vs. perception, extraversion vs. introversion, sensing vs. intuition, and thinking vs. feeling. In this sense, the MBTI is conceptually closely related to cognitive modes and includes the same attitudes and psychological functions defined in Pathak's (2013) study, however, it adds a fifth dichotomy; judgment (e.g., evaluating external stimuli and coping with these through structure and control) vs. perception (e.g., seeking to understand and adapt to life based on external stimuli) to the measure of personality types (Van Sittert, 2006).

Van Sittert (2006) found that the personality traits measured in the MBTI scale were significantly related to career anchors in that people who scored high on extroversion (vs. introversion) were significantly more likely to prefer managerial competence, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and entrepreneurial creativity; however, they were significantly less likely to prefer technical/functional competence and security/stability. It was also found that people who scored high on sensing (vs. intuition) were significantly more likely to prefer technical/functional competence and security/stability and significantly less likely to prefer autonomy, pure challenge, and entrepreneurial creativity. Lastly, people who scored high on thinking (vs. feeling) were significantly more likely to prefer managerial competency, whereas people who scored high on judgment (vs. perception) were significantly more likely to prefer technical/functional competency and security/stability.

Järilström (2000) also studied the relationship between the personality traits measured in the MBTI scale and career anchors among Finnish business students and found that the personality traits introversion, sensing, thinking, and judgment were significantly and positively related to technical/functional competence; extroversion, sensing, and judgment were significantly and positively related to managerial competence; sensing and judgment were significantly and positively related to security/stability; sensing and judgment were significantly and positively related to lifestyle; and introversion, intuition, and perception were significantly and positively related to entrepreneurial creativity.

Van Rensburg, Rothmann, and Rothmann (2003) studied the relationship between the Big 5 personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1989) and career anchors among pharmacists. Big 5 refers to the personality traits of neuroticism (i.e., the tendency to feel psychological distress), extroversion (i.e., the tendency to be sociable), openness to experience (i.e., the tendency to be intellectually curious and behaviorally flexible), agreeableness (i.e., the tendency to be trusting, sympathetic, and corporative), and conscientiousness (i.e., the tendency to be scrupulous, well-organized, and diligent) (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Van Rensburg et al. (2003) found that those who scored higher on extraversion were more likely to have service/dedication to a cause and pure challenge as their dominant career anchor; those lower on openness to experience were more likely to have security/stability as their dominant anchor, but those higher on openness to experience were more likely to have entrepreneurial creativity as their dominant career anchor. Respondents higher in conscientiousness were more likely to have managerial competence as their dominant anchor.



Byrd (1998) looked at the relationship between personality types and career anchors among business students. The personality types were measured based on Holland's (1992) Personality Typology Theory which discriminates among six personality types; realistic (e.g., "values material rewards for tangible accomplishments"), investigative (e.g., "values developing or acquiring knowledge"), artistic (e.g., "values creative expression of ideas"), social (e.g., "values fostering the welfare of others"), enterprising (e.g., "values material accomplishment and social status"), and conventional (e.g., "values material or financial accomplishment and power in social, business, or political arenas") (Byrd, 1998, p. 34-35). The social, enterprising, and conventional personality types were found to be significantly related to career anchors such that people with the social personality type were more likely to prefer lifestyle and less likely to prefer technical/functional competence and managerial competence; people with an enterprising personality type were more likely to prefer managerial competence and less likely to prefer service/dedication to a cause; and people with a conventional personality type were more likely to prefer lifestyle and less likely to prefer managerial competence.

Based on the findings from previous career anchors research, it appears that some types of personal characteristics are able to predict career anchors. However, beyond these personal and demographic characteristics, very little research has been conducted on the antecedents of career anchors. Rodrigues, Guest, and Budjanovcanin (2013) suggest that career anchors are "partially shaped in the broad social and family context" (p. 1), and because cultural values are thought to derive from people's "interaction with their external environment" (Zolfaghari, Möllering, Clark, & Dietz, 2016, p. 1), it is reasonable to assume that cultural orientation might also act as an

antecedent of career anchors. In order to investigate the relationship between career anchors and cultural orientation, it is important to gain a thorough understanding of culture as a construct. Therefore, the following section provides the definition of Hofstede's cultural dimensions' theory, which is a framework for cross-cultural communication, and specifies the rationale for the study.

### **Cultural Dimensions**

Hofstede (1984) defined culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one category of people from another. Cultural dimensions theory arose from a study Hofstede conducted during the 1960s and 1970s while working for a large multinational company (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The study was based on more than 115,000 employees from 40 different countries. From the results of the study, Hofstede identified four dimensions in which there seemed to be differences among the various nationalities (Hofstede, 1984). He named these dimensions power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity, and they formed a four-dimensional model of differences among national cultures. Overall, people from different nationalities score differently on those four dimensions.

The insight that was derived from uncovering these dimensions is that values, norms, and logic within one society significantly differ from values, norms, and logic within other societies. This indicates that people's way of thinking is, to a large extent, culturally constrained and can be properly represented through Hofstede's four cultural dimensions (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In the late 1980s, however, following studies on Chinese culture (Bond, 1988; Yau, 1988), Hofstede added a fifth dimension to his cultural dimensions theory, which he labeled long-term orientation (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) and almost two decades later, based on research conducted

by a Bulgarian anthropologist, Michael Minkov, Hofstede added yet another dimension to his theory, indulgence vs. restraint (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). The indulgence vs. restraint dimension is fairly new and there is thus a limited amount of research and knowledge available on it. Therefore, this study only examines the first five dimensions; power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation.

The power distance dimension is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (including families) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 46). This means that in societies scoring high on the power distance, hierarchy is clearly established and executed without doubt or reason, whereas people within societies that score low on the power distance tend to question authority and thus attempt to distribute power more equally among their members.

The definition of the individualism dimension relates to the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. That is, individualism relates to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. In contrast, collectivism relates to “societies in which people from birth are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 76).

The uncertainty avoidance dimension is defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 167). This means that people in societies scoring high on this dimension tend to opt for stiff codes of behavior, guidelines, laws, and believe in one

absolute truth, whereas people in societies scoring low on uncertainty avoidance tend to impose fewer regulations and display a higher level of acceptance of different ideas and thoughts.

For the masculinity dimension, a society is defined as masculine when “emotional gender roles are clearly distinct, meaning that men are expected to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are expected to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 120).

Feminine societies are identified as “societies where gender roles overlap, meaning that both men and women are expected to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 120).

The long-term orientation dimension relates to virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift. Short-term orientation, however, relates to the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of face, and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This means that in long-term oriented societies, people view adaptation and circumstantial, pragmatic problem-solving as a necessity. Oppositely, in short-term oriented societies, traditions are honored and kept, while steadfastness is valued (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

### **How do Cultural Values Relate to Career Anchors?**

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) highlighted that although cultural values were developed based on peoples’ social environments, cultural values could still influence people’s core personal values. As previously stated, career anchors are defined as a combination of a person’s talents and abilities, motives and needs, as well as self-concepts, attitudes and values (Schein, 1992). Thus, if culture is able to influence

personal values, the part of peoples' career anchors that relate to their self-concepts, attitudes, and values are assumed to be influenced by their cultural backgrounds. Therefore, although career anchors are described by Schein to be a person's "inner calling" and an innate rather than contextually influenced process (Schein & Van Maanen, 2016), this study builds on the assumption that people's cultural values influence their personal values and thus influence their career anchors as well.

Although culture's influence on individual career patterns has been touched upon in the career anchors literature, very little is known about the actual relationship between cultural values and career anchors. More specifically, Sullivan (1999) highlighted how increased globalization called for more research on the cross-cultural generalizability of career anchors theory, more specifically, how relevant and useful career anchors theory is outside of the U.S.

Marshall and Bonner (2003) studied the relationship between culture and career anchors and found that culture significantly impacted the entrepreneurial creativity and technical functional competence anchors, such that some cultures were more likely than others to value these anchors. However, the term culture was used as a synonym for geographic region and only distinguished between five geographic regions: Australia/New Zealand, UK/Ireland, North America, Africa, and Asia. Therefore, although the results suggested that culture influenced career anchors, the study's definition of the five cultures was highly generalized, meaning that many subcultures were grouped as one (e.g. Chinese and Japanese as "Asia"), leaving it difficult to derive any valuable insights from the findings.

Chang (2010) studied the career anchors of management information systems (MIS) professionals in Taiwan and found their top five career anchors differed from

the top five career anchors of MIS professionals in the US. Although these findings also suggested culture had an impact on career anchors, no information was provided regarding which specific cultural elements or characteristics might cause the anchors to differ. Therefore, there seems to be a gap in the literature in terms of investigating exactly how culture impacts career anchors, which is what this study intends to investigate in further depth.

Schein (1984) mentioned how different notions exist within different cultures about how one should pursue careers, how much emphasis one should give to career versus family, and what makes careers legitimate. He highlighted how people in different cultures had different understandings and definitions of the word career. He noted that for many people, career is synonymous with ambition. However, socialist cultures tended to view ambition as being egocentric, whereas in more individualistic cultures, ambition tended to be praised.

Schein (1987) believed that everyone needs some degree of security and stability, and that financial security in particular can be important at certain stages of life, such as while one is raising a family or approaching retirement. However, he emphasized that for some people, security and stability could become an overriding concern that guides and constrains all of their major career decisions. People scoring high on the uncertainty avoidance dimension might be likely to share some of these concerns and thus seek out careers where elements of uncertainty are kept at a minimum.

Therefore, in cultures where uncertainty avoidance is high, people might be more likely to score high on the security/stability anchor. Contrary to the people who find peace in knowing that they “made it” and will have a predictable and manageable future, there are also people who have a hard time accepting being bound by other

people's rules, procedures, working hours, dress codes, and norms. These types of people wish to do things their own way, at their own pace, and with their own agenda. They tend to see the organizational life as restrictive and irrational and thus seek out careers that are more independent (Schein, 1987). The fact that people who are not submissive to other people's rules and regulations pursue more autonomous careers gives reason to believe there might be a relationship between power distance and autonomy. This indicates that people may be more likely to score high on autonomy, in cultures that are low in power distance.

Although many assumptions can be made about the relationship between culture and career anchors, this topic has never been investigated in depth. Thus, it is unclear how or whether culture impacts career anchors. To date, personal characteristics have been the primary focus for a vast majority of the research conducted on the antecedents of career anchors. The intention of this study was therefore to expand the research on the antecedents of career anchors and gain a greater understanding of the relationship between cultural values and career anchors.

Given the fact that this is an exploratory study, I posited the following research question.

Research question: How will cultural dimensions be related to career anchors?

## Method

### Participants

A total of 314 individuals participated in the study. Among them, 31 were removed due to ineligibility (either being retired or unemployed and having five or less years of work experience), which decreased the final sample size to 283 individuals.

The reason for excluding retired participants was that memories might be distorted and/or influenced by emotional filters that come with age (Terr, 1994). In this sense, retired people might view their careers and career-related decisions differently looking back on them than they would if they were still active in the workplace. The reason for excluding participants who were unemployed with fewer than five years of work experience and students without a job and fewer than five years of work experience was to avoid having participants with very limited experience in the workplace. However, it was decided that anyone currently employed would have a good reference point and they were therefore included in the final sample.

Table 1 describes the demographic information of the participants. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 72 years, with an average age of 43.38 years ( $SD = 12.80$ ). The sample had a wide age distribution and the participants were also distributed relatively equally across four age groups: 21-30 (22.97%), 31-40 (20.14%), 41-50 (28.97%), and 51-60 (22.62%).

The nationalities of the participants were distributed over 24 countries on five continents. The majority of the participants (84.81%) identified themselves as European, with the following nationalities represented: Danish (69.96%), German



Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 283)*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Age</b>		
21-30	65	22.97
31-40	58	20.14
41-50	82	28.97
51-60	63	22.62
Over 61	15	5.30
<b>Nationality</b>		
Asian	7	2.47
Australian	7	2.47
European	240	84.81
North American	27	9.54
South American	2	.71
<b>Residency</b>		
Asia	2	.71
Australia	6	2.12
Europe	204	72.08
North America	71	25.09
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Asian	10	3.53
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	.35
Hispanic/Latino	9	3.18
Middle Eastern	4	1.41
White/Caucasian	253	89.40
Other	5	1.77
Do not wish to answer	1	.35
<b>Still in school?</b>		
Yes	51	18.02
No	231	81.63
Do not wish to answer	1	.35
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	6	2.12
High school or equivalent	19	6.71
Some college, no degree	10	3.53
Associate/technical	32	11.31
Bachelor's degree	115	40.64
Master's degree	79	27.92
Professional degree	13	4.59
Doctorate (PhD)	9	3.18

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full-time employed	192	67.84
Part-time employed	37	13.07
Contractor/temporary	3	1.06
Self-employed/freelancer	25	8.83
Unemployed	6	2.12
Student (not working)	3	1.06
Intern	8	2.83
Other	9	3.18
<b>Work Experience</b>		
5 years or less	109	38.52
6-10 years	43	15.19
11-20 years	49	17.31
21 years or more	79	27.92
Do not wish to answer	3	1.06

(5.30%), Norwegian (3.18%), French (2.12%), Dutch (.71%), Polish (.71%), Swedish (.71%), Swiss (.71%), Bosnian (.35%), Croatian (.35%), Lithuanian (.35%), and Russian (.35%). A small percentage of the participants (9.54%) identified themselves as North American, including American (5.65%), Canadian (2.12%), Mexican (1.06%), Honduran (.35%), and Costa Rican (.35%). A few participants (2.47%) identified themselves as Asian, with the represented nationalities being: Indian (1.41%), Chinese (.35%), Jordanian (.35%), and Pakistani (.35%). Of the remaining participants, 2.47% identified themselves as Australian, and .71% of the participants identified themselves as South American, with the represented nationalities being Argentine (.35%) and Peruvian (.35%).

In terms of residency, 16 countries across four continents were represented in the sample. The majority of the participants (72.08%) reported that they resided in Europe. Among them, 63.25% lived in Denmark, 3.18% in Norway, 2.83% in Germany, .71% in Holland and Sweden, and .35% France, Hungary, Luxembourg,

and Switzerland, respectively. A smaller percentage of the participants (25.09%) reported living in North America, with the United States accounting for 21.20%, Canada for 3.18%, and Mexico and Guatemala for .35% each. Of the remaining participants, 2.12% reported living in Australia, and .71% living in Asia, with China, and Yemen accounting for .35% each.

A majority of the participants identified themselves as White/Caucasian (89.40%), followed by Asian (3.53%), Hispanic/Latino (3.18%), “Other” (1.77%), Middle Eastern (1.41%), and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (.35%).

When asked whether they were still in school or considering going back to school, 81.63% of the participants answered “No,” whereas 18.02% answered “Yes,” and the remaining .35% did not respond to this question. With respect to the participants’ educational levels, their responses varied widely. Most participants (40.64%) reported that their highest completed education was a bachelor’s degree or equivalent, followed by 27.92% reporting a master’s degree or equivalent, 11.31% reporting an associate or technical degree, 6.71% reporting to have completed high school or equivalent, 4.59% reporting a professional degree, 3.53% reporting to have completed some college but no degree, 3.18% reporting to have completed a doctorate (PhD), and lastly, 2.12% reporting to have completed less than a high school.

In terms of the participants’ employment status, the majority (67.84%) reported being full-time employees, 13.07% part-time employees, and 8.83% self-employed or freelancers, 2.83% interns, 2.12% unemployed at the time of data collection, 1.06% reported being students and not working, and 1.06% were contractors or temporarily employed. Additionally, 3.18% of the participants reported to be otherwise employed, with no further specification. When asked about their total years of work

experience, 38.52% reported that they had been in the workplace for 5 years or less, 27.92% reported 21 or more years of work experience, 17.31% reported 11- 21 years of work experience, and 15.19% reported 6-10 years of work experience.

In summary, the sample included participants from a variety of backgrounds, who were widely distributed in age, nationality, residency, education, and work experience. A majority of the participants were White Europeans (mainly Danes) or Americans living in Denmark or the United States, with a bachelor's or higher degree, who worked full-time and most had been working for either less than five years or more than 21 years.

## **Measures**

**Cultural orientation.** The items used for measuring cultural dimensions were taken from the 26-item Cultural Values Scale, or CVSCALE, which is a measurement tool developed and validated by Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz (2011) that measures Hofstede's cultural dimensions at an individual level. The CVSCALE is intended to uncover people's cultural orientation rather than their culture, as culture as a concept is determined at a broader level (i.e., a national or organizational level) (Yoo et al., 2011).

The 26 items in the CVSCALE measure five out of the six cultural dimensions: power distance (5 items), uncertainty avoidance (5 items), individualism (6 items), masculinity (4 items), and long-term orientation (6 items). Because Yoo et al.'s (2011) assessment of the scale demonstrated sufficient reliability, validity, and across-sample and across-national generalizability, no items were altered or removed prior to adding the CVSCALE to this study's survey.

For all the dimensions, except long-term orientation, items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Items in long-term orientation were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very unimportant* (1) to *very important* (5).

Power distance was defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (including families) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 46). A sample item was “People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions made by people in higher positions.” Cronbach’s alpha was .60, indicating somewhat low reliability. Higher scores indicated stronger beliefs that power should be distributed unequally among people.

Individualism relates to the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. A sample item was “Group success is more important than individual success.” Cronbach’s alpha was .69, indicating slightly low reliability. Lower scores indicated higher levels of individualism, whereas higher scores indicated higher levels of collectivism.

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 167). A sample item was “Rules/regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.” Cronbach’s alpha was .73, indicating good reliability. Higher scores indicated stronger desire to avoid uncertainties.

Masculinity is defined as a society where emotional gender roles are clearly distinct. A sample item was “Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition.” Cronbach’s alpha was .68, indicating

slightly low reliability. Higher scores indicated stronger masculinity orientation, whereas lower scores indicated a stronger feminine orientation.

Long-term orientation relates to virtues oriented towards future rewards. A sample item was “Working hard for success in the future.” Cronbach’s alpha was .61, indicating somewhat low reliability. Higher scores indicated stronger long-term orientation, for example, believing that adaptation and circumstantial, pragmatic problem-solving is a necessity. Lower scores indicated stronger short-term orientation, for example, having respect for traditions and a desire to fulfill social obligations.

**Career anchors.** The items used for measuring career anchors were taken from the Career Orientation Inventory, or COI, which is a measurement tool initially developed by Schein (1992). The COI consists of 40 items, with five items dedicated to measure each of the eight career anchors: technical functional competence, managerial competence, security/stability, autonomy/independence, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. Originally, Schein (1992) supplemented the COI with personal interviews to verify the outcome, (i.e. checking that the right career anchor had been identified). However, in consideration to the anonymity of participants, personal interviews were not conducted in this study.

Items were scored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from *never true for me* (1) to *always true for me* (6). Therefore, the higher an item was rated, the more the participants identified with the related career anchor. After rating each item, the COI requests that participants identify the three statements they agree with the most and add 4 points to each of these three statements. The cumulative scores from each of

the eight career anchors then determine which career anchor a person's dominant career anchor is.

The definition of technical functional competence is to have the possibility to apply and sharpen one's professional skills. A sample item was "I will feel successful in my career only if I can develop technical or functional skills to a very high level competence." Initially, Cronbach's alpha was .54, indicating very low reliability. By removing one of the five technical functional competence items (i.e., "I would rather leave my organization than accept a rotational assignment that would take me out of my area of expertise"), Cronbach's alpha increased to .62, indicating somewhat low reliability. Managerial competence relates to having the opportunity to direct the activities of others and climb to higher levels within the organization. A sample item was "I will feel successful in my career only if I become a general manager in some organization." Cronbach's alpha was .69, indicating slightly low reliability. The security/stability is defined as unwillingness to give up the opportunity for employment certainty or tenure at a job. A sample item was "I seek jobs in organizations that will give me a sense of security and stability." Cronbach's alpha was .75, indicating good reliability.

Autonomy/independence is defined as having a hard time giving up the opportunity to define one's own work in one's own way. A sample item was "I am most fulfilled in my work when I am completely free to define my own tasks, schedules and procedures." Cronbach's alpha was .81, indicating high reliability. Entrepreneurial creativity is defined as the unwillingness to give up the opportunity to create an enterprise or organization of one's own. A sample item was "I dream of starting up and building my own business." Cronbach's alpha was .86, indicating

high reliability. Service/dedication to a cause relates to an unwillingness to give up the opportunity to pursue work that one believes contributes something of value in the larger society. A sample item was “I dream of having a career that makes a real contribution to humanity and society.” Cronbach’s alpha was .78, indicating good reliability. Pure challenge is defined as the unwillingness to give up the opportunity to work on solutions to seemingly difficult problems. A sample item was “I seek out work opportunities that strongly challenge my problem solving and/or competitive skills.” Cronbach’s alpha was .83, indicating high reliability. And lastly, lifestyle is defined as the desire to integrate and balance personal and family needs, while meeting the requirements of a work career. A sample item was “I feel successful in life only if I have been able to balance my personal, family, and career requirements.” Cronbach’s alpha was .71, indicating good reliability.

### **Procedure**

In this study, the main channels used for recruiting participants were social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Gmail, and WhatsApp. Though most participants were from my personal and professional network, the online-administered survey was shared on my personal wall on Facebook as a public post and was afterwards shared by 58 people both within and outside of my personal network.

The only requirement for participating in the survey was that the participants had to be 18 years or older. On the introduction page of the survey, the participants were informed of this requirement and would, by clicking the “Start survey” button, verify that they were 18 years or older.

The first page of the survey was a consent form informing the participants about the purpose of the survey, the anonymity of participation, their rights as participants,



and the basic requirements that needed to be met in order to participate. By clicking the “Start survey” button, participants accepted the terms and conditions of the survey and verified their eligibility to participate. However, if they regretted their participation, respondents could close the browser window and opt out of the survey at any time before the final submission.

On the first page, after clicking the “Start survey” button, participants were asked to answer some demographic questions about themselves, followed by the items that measured cultural orientations and career anchors. After all items had been completed, the participants were presented with the career anchors items that they had rated the highest. Out of these items, participants were asked to indicate which three of the items they agreed with the most. The three chosen items would then receive four extra points for a potential of 10 points total per item. In the event where a participant scored one or two items higher than the other items, these would automatically receive extra points and the participant would be asked to select the last one by choosing between the items scoring second-to-highest for a total of three highest-rated items. After this step was completed, participants were directed to the last page, which informed them that the survey was completed and that their participation was much appreciated.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the cultural orientations and career anchors. Overall, the sample indicated somewhat low levels of the power distance ( $M = 1.85$ ,  $SD = .49$ ) and masculinity ( $M = 2.05$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) dimensions. These results indicated that the participants were more likely to question authority and attempt to distribute power equally and that they viewed gender roles as overlapping and certain behaviors and/or skill sets as being non-specific to male or female. In contrast, the overall ratings of the dimensions of individualism ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = .52$ ), uncertainty avoidance ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .54$ ), and long-term orientation ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = .41$ ) were relatively high, indicating that participants were more likely to look after themselves rather than relying on other people, that they appreciated having guidelines and codes of behavior to follow, and that they tended to view adaptation and problem-solving as a necessity for success.

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach Alphas of Cultural Dimensions and Career Anchors*

	Variable	M	SD	$\alpha$
Cultural Dimensions				
	Power distance	1.85	.49	.60
	Individualism	3.35	.52	.69
	Uncertainty avoidance	3.56	.54	.73
	Masculinity	2.05	.70	.68
	Long-term orientation	3.78	.41	.61
Career Anchors				
	Technical functional competency	4.29	1.22	.62
	Managerial competency	2.72	.91	.69
	Security/stability	3.56	1.06	.75
	Autonomy/independence	4.02	1.32	.81
	Entrepreneurial creativity	2.92	1.48	.86
	Service/dedication to a cause	4.28	1.32	.78
	Pure challenge	3.81	1.19	.83
	Lifestyle	5.03	1.29	.71

In terms of career anchors, the sample displayed lowest levels of interest in general managerial competence ( $M = 2.72, SD = .91$ ) and entrepreneurial creativity ( $M = 2.92, SD = 1.48$ ), which means that participants were less likely to value jobs in which they were responsible for managing other people and jobs where they would work as independent contractors or be self-employed.

Overall, the sample displayed the highest interest in the lifestyle anchor ( $M = 5.03, SD = 1.29$ ), which means that the participants on average valued jobs that allowed for a good work/life balance. This was followed by technical functional competence ( $M = 4.29, SD = 1.22$ ) and service/dedication to a cause ( $M = 4.28, SD = 1.32$ ), indicating that the participants on average valued being an expert in their field and serving the greater good through their work.

### **Pearson Correlations**

Pearson correlations were computed to examine the relationship between the cultural dimensions and the career anchors. This is displayed in Table 3. Results showed that power distance was significantly related to the service/dedication to a cause ( $r = -.17, p < .01$ ), pure challenge ( $r = -.15, p < .05$ ), and lifestyle ( $r = -.19, p < .01$ ) anchors. This means that the more participants accepted and expected power to be distributed unequally, the less likely they were to value service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. Individualism was significantly related to service/dedication to a cause ( $r = .17, p < .01$ ), meaning that the more individualistic the respondents were (e.g. believing that everyone should look after themselves and their immediate families), the more likely they were to value service/dedication to a cause.

Table 3

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations Among the Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Power distance													
2. Individualism	.03												
3. Uncertainty avoidance	.19**	.21**											
4. Masculinity	.39**	.08	.15*										
5. Long-term orientation	-.03	.10	.28**	-.08									
6. Technical functional competency	-.05	.00	.11	-.09	.19**								
7. Managerial competency	.01	-.02	-.00	.05	.15*	.28**							
8. Security/stability	.07	.11	.48**	.12*	.24**	.07	-.01						
9. Autonomy/independence	-.10	.02	-.30**	-.05	-.01	.00	.20**	-.35**					
10. Entrepreneurial creativity	-.02	-.04	-.14*	-.02	.04	.07	.22**	-.20**	.48**				
11. Service/dedication to a cause	-.17**	.17**	.05	-.11	.10	.04	.10	.01	-.03	.05			
12. Pure challenge	-.15*	-.04	-.01	-.07	.14*	.38**	.37**	-.06	.19**	.18**	.14*		
13. Lifestyle	-.19**	.08	.13*	-.12*	.05	-.14*	-.17**	.07	-.07	-.09	.10	-.05	

Notes.  $N = 283$ . \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Uncertainty avoidance was significantly and positively related to security/stability ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ) and lifestyle ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), but negatively related to autonomy ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ), and entrepreneurial creativity ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ), meaning that the more threatened respondents felt by ambiguous and unknown situations, the more likely they were to value security/stability and lifestyle, and the less likely they were to value autonomy and entrepreneurial creativity.

Masculinity was significantly related to security/stability ( $r = .12, p < .05$ ) and lifestyle ( $r = -.12, p < .05$ ), meaning that the more respondents believed in clear gender roles, the more likely they were to value security/stability and the less likely they were to value lifestyle. Long-term orientation showed a significant relationship with the career anchors of technical functional competence ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ), general managerial competence ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ), security/stability ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ), and pure challenge ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ), meaning that more future-oriented respondents were, the more likely they were to value technical functional competence, general managerial competence, security/stability, and pure challenge.

### **Canonical Correlation**

The purpose of this analysis was to identify and assess the strength of the relationships between the cultural dimensions and the career anchors. Specifically, the purpose was to uncover a smaller number of significant dimensions (roots) between the cultural dimensions and the career anchors. Since no previous research has been performed assessing the relationship between cultural dimensions and career anchors, a canonical correlation analysis was conducted with the purpose of identifying a smaller number of significant roots.

The five cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation) were included in this analysis. These were the set of variables representing cultural dimensions. Eight outcome variables (technical functional competency, managerial competency, security/stability, autonomy/independence, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle) were included in this analysis. As a set, these eight outcome variables represented career anchors.

Results of the canonical correlation analysis showed that the five cultural dimension variables were significantly related to the eight career anchors,  $\lambda = .57$ ,  $F(40, 1179.70) = 4.11$ ,  $p < .001$ . The redundancy index provided an 11.82% estimate of the amount of variance the five cultural dimension variables accounted for in the eight career anchors. The redundancy index provided a 7.94% estimate of the amount of variance the eight career anchors accounted for in the five cultural dimension variables. Results of the canonical correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.

The dimension reduction analysis identified the number of statistically significant roots amongst the five cultural dimension variables and the eight career anchors. This analysis revealed that, after the first two roots were removed, the remaining three roots were not significant,  $\lambda = .91$ ,  $F(18, 769.82) = 1.38$ ,  $p > .05$ . Therefore, two roots were found to be significant. The canonical correlation between the two weighted functions on the first root was  $r = .54$ , and the canonical correlation between the two weighted functions on the second root was  $r = .36$ .

In order to determine which cultural dimension variables and career anchors were associated with the first root, standardized and structure coefficients were assessed. Standardized coefficients indicate the strength of a variable's unique contribution to

the function on each root, whereas structure coefficients indicate the strength of a variable's individual contribution to the function on each root. On the first root, two cultural dimension variables, uncertainty avoidance (-.91, -.94) and long-term orientation (-.26, -.52), were found to have high unique and individual contributions.

Table 4

*Canonical Correlation of Cultural Dimensions and Career Anchors*

	1 <sup>st</sup> Root		2 <sup>nd</sup> Root	
	Standardized coefficient	Structure coefficient	Standardized coefficient	Structure coefficient
<b>Cultural Dimensions</b>				
Power distance	.22	.04	<b>.66</b>	<b>.83</b>
Individualism	-.01	-.22	-.44	-.37
Uncertainty avoidance	<b>-.91</b>	<b>-.94</b>	.22	.24
Masculinity	-.03	-.06	<b>.33</b>	<b>.61</b>
Long-term orientation	<b>-.26</b>	<b>-.52</b>	-.19	-.79
<b>Career Anchors</b>				
Technical functional	-.21	-.28	-.28	-.22
General managerial	-.04	-.06	.20	.01
Security/stability	<b>-.80</b>	<b>-.90</b>	.18	.27
Autonomy	.22	.48	-.49	-.43
Entrepreneurial creativity	-.04	.20	.15	-.11
Service/dedication to a	-.13	-.20	<b>-.59</b>	<b>-.63</b>
Pure challenge	-.10	-.11	-.19	-.36
Lifestyle	-.28	-.31	<b>-.50</b>	<b>-.51</b>

*Note.* High loading variables are bold faced.

For the career anchor variables, security/stability (-.80, -.90) was found to have a high unique and individual contribution. Therefore, the first root uncovered that the lower people scored on uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation, the less likely they were to have security/stability as their primary career anchor. In this sense, the first root suggests that the less people felt threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and the less they viewed adaptation and circumstantial, pragmatic problem-solving as a necessity, the less likely they were to think of employment certainty as an important aspect of their job.

The second root revealed that the two cultural dimension of power distance (.66, .83) and masculinity (.33, .61) had high unique and individual contributions. The two career anchors of service/dedication to a cause (-.59, -.63) and lifestyle (-.50, -.51) were found to have high unique and individual contributions. Therefore, the second root uncovered that the higher participants scored on the power distance and masculinity dimensions, the less likely they were to value jobs that satisfied the service/dedication to a cause or lifestyle anchors. In this sense, the second root suggests that the more people expected and accepted power to be distributed unequally as well expected there to be clearly distinct gender roles, the less likely they were to value jobs that contributed something of value to the larger society or jobs that integrated and balanced personal and family needs.



## **Discussion**

Because both the individual and the organization are likely to experience positive outcomes by being mindful of what a specific job has to offer and aligning this with the individual's career anchor (Barth, 1993; Chapman, 2015), it is important to understand how career anchors are formed and what factors influence the development of career anchors.

Current research has mainly focused on the relationship between demographic information or personal characteristics and career anchors. This study proposed that cultural orientations could act as an antecedent to people's career anchors. Thus, the relationship between cultural dimensions and career anchors was examined in order to (1) determine if an overall relationship between cultural dimensions and career anchors could be found, and (2) determine which of the cultural dimensions were the strongest predictors of career anchors.

### **Summary of Findings**

Results showed that the sample displayed somewhat low levels of power distance orientation and masculinity, indicating that participants were more likely to question authority and view gender roles as overlapping. In contrast, the dimensions of individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation were relatively high, indicating that participants were more likely to look after themselves rather than relying on other people, that they appreciated having guidelines and codes of behavior to follow, and that they tended to view adaptation and problem-solving as a necessity for success.

In terms of career anchors, the sample displayed low interest in general managerial competence and entrepreneurial creativity, indicating that participants

were less likely to value jobs in which they were responsible for managing other people as well as jobs where they would work as independent contractors or be self-employed. In contrast, the sample displayed interest in lifestyle, technical functional competence, and service/dedication. This indicated that participants valued jobs which allowed for a good work/life balance, being an expert in their field, and being able to serve the greater good through their work.

When looking at the relationship between cultural dimensions and career anchors, results showed that power distance was negatively related to service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle. This means that the more participants accepted and expected power to be distributed unequally, the less likely they were to value jobs that were characterized by doing something for the greater good, overcoming difficult obstacles, and having work-life balance. These results might indicate that people who expect power to be distributed unequally might not see it as their responsibility to go above and beyond on their job, e.g. doing something good for others or taking on unnecessary challenges. These findings are somewhat contradictory to the findings from Chia et al. (2008) who found that students from Singapore and Hong Kong, countries which, according to research conducted based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions' theory, score high on the power-distance index (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018), value the career driver searching for meaning. The similarities between this career driver and the career anchor service/dedication to a cause are strong enough that one would assume findings would be somewhat similar. The reason for this discrepancy might be that Chia et al. (2008) looked at culture from a national perspective, whereas this study looked at cultural orientations at an individual level. This interpretation is presented with caution as further research is needed in order to

draw any conclusions on the relationship between the national culture of Australia and career anchors.

The cultural dimension of individualism was found to be positively related to service/dedication to a cause, meaning that those who believed people should look after themselves and their immediate families were in fact more likely to value doing something for the greater good. These findings seem counter intuitive because one would expect individualistic people to value jobs that first and foremost contribute to their own and immediate family's lives. However, these findings are consistent with Chia et al. (2008) who found that Australian students highly valued the career driver search for meaning, which is conceptually close to the career anchor service/dedication to a cause. Since research has showed that Australia scores high on the individualism dimension (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018), it seemed reasonable to assume that those who scored high on the cultural dimension individualism would be more likely to value service/dedication to a cause.

Furthermore, results showed that uncertainty avoidance was positively related to security/stability and lifestyle, but negatively related to autonomy and entrepreneurial creativity. This means that the more respondents wished to avoid unknown situations the less interested they were in jobs with high levels of independence and the more interested they were in jobs that supported employment stability work-life balance. The cultural dimension of masculinity was similarly found to be related to security/stability and lifestyle in the sense that the more respondents believed in clear gender roles, the more likely they were to wish for security/stability in their job and the less likely they were to value work-life balance. These findings are consistent with Chia et al.'s (2008) results that found Australian students placed higher value on

the career driver security than students from Hong Kong and Singapore, which are countries that each display lower levels of masculinity than Australia (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018).

Lastly, the cultural dimension of long-term orientation was positively related to technical functional competence, general managerial competence, security/stability, and pure challenge. This means that the more future-oriented respondents were, the more likely they were to value being viewed as experts, managing other people, feeling confident in their employment, and wanting to take on challenges. These findings are consistent with Chia et al.'s (2008) research which found that students from Hong Kong, a country associated with very high levels of long-term orientation (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018), highly valued the career driver expertise, which is conceptually closely related to technical functional competency.

Results from the canonical correlation analysis showed that the relationships between the two sets of variables (i.e., cultural dimensions consisting of the variables power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation, and career anchors consisting of the variables technical functional competence, general managerial competence, security/stability, autonomy, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle) could be reduced to two significant interpretable roots. The first root uncovered that uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation were related to job security/stability. This indicated that the less people felt threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and the less they viewed adaptation and circumstantial, pragmatic problem-solving as a necessity, the less likely they were to think of employment certainty as an important aspect of their job.

These findings suggest that people from countries low on uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation might value jobs with higher levels of security/stability. When investigating the countries scoring low on both uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation, an interesting observation is that these countries can be separated into two groups; (1) the highly-developed, wealthy countries such as United Kingdom, United States, Norway, Sweden, Australia, the Netherlands, and Singapore, and (2) the under-developed, poor countries such as Philippines, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018).

It would be interesting to study the underlying reasons for this clear distinction of countries scoring low on both uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. One interpretation might be that people within the first group (i.e. the highly-developed and wealthy countries) feel secure in their everyday lives and therefore neither have to worry about what the future brings nor how to best prepare for it; and that people in the second group (i.e. the under-developed and poor countries) live under unstable conditions and are forced to focus their attention on the now rather than worrying about what will happen in the future. This interpretation is presented with caution as this study focused on how individual's cultural orientations were related to various career anchors. It is therefore necessary to study the relationship between cultural dimensions at a national level and career anchors prior to discussing potential cross-country differences amongst people with similar career orientations.

The second root of the canonical correlation analysis suggested that power distance and masculinity were related to the two career anchors of service/dedication to a cause and lifestyle. This indicated that the more people expected and accepted power to be distributed unequally and the more they expected there to be clearly

distinct gender roles, the less likely they were to value jobs that contributed something of value to the larger society or jobs that balanced personal and family needs.

These findings suggest that people from countries scoring high on power distance and masculinity are less likely to value jobs that support the career anchors service/dedication to a cause and lifestyle. Examining the countries associated with high power distance and masculinity dimensions (i.e. Venezuela, Mexico, China, Ecuador, and Poland) (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018), there is no apparent link among these countries other than the fact that they are associated with cheap labor (Malone, 2012). This, however, might in fact be the reason why this study's results showed that people with cultural orientations similar to those displayed by these five countries were less likely to value lifestyle as a career anchor; simply because offering cheap labor while attempting to adjust one's job to one's lifestyle would be dichotomous. Again, this explanation is interpreted with caution as this study focused on how individuals' cultural orientations were related to various career anchors. It is therefore necessary to study the relationship between cultural dimensions at a national level and career anchors prior to investigating potential cross-country similarities amongst people with comparable career orientations.

Another interesting observation is that Venezuela, China, Ecuador, and Poland are all perceived as socialistic/communistic countries (Espasa, 2012; Rapoza, 2016), yet the results from this study showed that people with cultural orientations similar to those generally displayed in these four countries were less likely to appreciate jobs serving the greater good, which seems counter intuitive. An explanation could be that the people from socialistic/communistic countries experience low levels of effectiveness and accountability. That is, if power is believed to be distributed

unequally and gender roles to be pre-determined, taking initiative to make changes or make an impact that goes beyond oneself might not be perceived to be one's responsibility. Once again, this interpretation is presented with caution as further research is needed to better understand the underlying reasons for the specific relationship between cultural orientations and career anchors for people within each of the individual countries.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The present study expands the current knowledge of career anchors' antecedents by including cultural orientations as another antecedent and show how cultural orientations might predict individual career anchor development. Previous research has focused on the relationship between career anchors and employee/organizational success (Barclay et al., 2013), whereas research regarding the antecedents of career anchors has focused on studying demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and occupation, as well as personality traits (Chang, 2010; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2009; Costa & McCrae, 1989; Danziger & Valency, 2006; Marshall & Bonner, 2003; Pathak, 2013; Van Sittert, 2006; Yarnall, 1998). This study suggests that it is relevant to study antecedents of career anchors when trying to understand the development and consolidation of people's individual career anchors. Additionally, this study shifted the research focus from examining personal and innate factors, such as demographic characteristics and personality traits, to other types of influencers and external stimuli (i.e., one's cultural orientations), ultimately opening up a new approach to and perspective on career anchors theory.

## **Practical Implications**

This study may provide organizations insight into factors that affect employee motivation and engagement. In particular, the study showed how the cultural backgrounds of individual employees might impact their perception of and appreciation for their jobs. By leveraging some of these results, e.g. that people who expect and accept power to be distributed unequally and expect there to be clearly distinct gender roles are less likely to value jobs that contribute something of value to the larger society or that integrate and balance their personal and family needs, organizations might be able to identify and build out efficient individual employee development plans.

The knowledge and awareness this study provides regarding individuals' cultural orientations' impact on career anchors might be particularly important for (1) international and multicultural organizations with employees from different cultural backgrounds with their own cultural tendencies and values, and (2) organizations with employees from various cultural backgrounds located in the same office that are not necessarily international organizations. For example, this study's finding that people who scored low on uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation were less likely to have job security/stability as their dominant career anchor might be used by organizations to determine locations for departments with job functions and roles that are unstable or short-term. Locating these departments in countries or cultures that score low on uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation might increase their candidate pool, resulting in a higher likelihood of finding right people for their jobs.

Because this study found that aspects of cultural orientations were significantly related to specific career anchors, and because previous research showed that career



anchors were related to positive job outcomes such as job satisfaction and turnover (Chang et al., 2012; Danziger & Valency, 2006), it is suggested that a one-size-fits-all approach to attracting, selecting, and motivating employees might not be the optimal approach for international and/or multicultural organizations in order to retain their workforce.

HR professionals could potentially strengthen their workforce strategies by using insights gained from this study. For example, by identifying cultural orientations that are more likely to value the main career anchors fulfilled in a position, recruiters might be better able to target and attract talent by writing job descriptions that appeal to the desired candidates. Similarly, knowing more about the cultural tendencies of candidates and how these relate to their career anchors, recruiters might be better able to select new employees by having a good starting point for a conversation that can help uncover person-job fit.

Lastly, being aware of the relationship between cultural values and career anchors might help organizations in other major decision-making processes (e.g. determining a location for outsourcing). Identifying which cultures are more (or less) likely to foster which career anchors might be helpful in order to identify the optimal location for the company's outsourcing activities. Although the relationship between cultural dimensions and career anchors is far from being perfect, having an increased awareness of how cultural orientation might affect career anchors can be a good starting point for organizational decision-making.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research**

One strength of this study is that the sample was very large and diverse in its demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, educational background, and employment

status). Furthermore, this study collected information from people from all over the world (24 countries across five continents), thereby representing many different nationalities and cultural orientations. Therefore, the results of this study might be generalizable. However, some parts and subcultures of the world, such as South America, Asia, and Australia, were underrepresented in the sample, which could have skewed the results, because the respondents' scores might not have been normally distributed within each cultural dimension, potentially leading to Type I and Type II errors.

Although this study found some interesting results, there are a few limitations that are worth mentioning. First of all, the results are based on data from questionnaires. That is, any information provided was based on respondents' self-assessment. This required respondents to not only have good insight into their own minds and motives, but also were honest about their thoughts and feelings. Based on the person's background and social environment, certain responses could be perceived as more or less politically or socially "correct." Therefore, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the information provided by the respondents was accurate or if they responded based on what they believed was most socially or politically acceptable. This might be one of the factors causing the somewhat low reliability of the scales since reliability is affected by inconsistent answers. If people did not answer based on their personal preferences but instead based on what they thought other people might approve of, responses might not have been consistent.

Furthermore, the sixth dimension of Hofstede's cultural dimensions' theory, indulgence vs. restraint, was not included in the data collection and analysis of this study because there still is very limited knowledge on this dimension and assessment

tools for this dimension are not available or validated to the extent they were for the other five dimensions. Therefore, the data on cultural orientations might not have painted a holistic picture of the relationship between cultural dimensions and career anchors.

A recommendation for future research is therefore to further expand this study's findings by including indulgence vs. restraint in the collection and analysis of the cultural dimensions for more well-rounded insights. Conducting a similar study, increasing the amount of data collected from people from regions and nationalities not well represented in this study (e.g., South America, Asia, and Australia), is another suggestion for future research. By increasing the amount of data collected from poorly represented regions and nationalities, results might become more generalizable and Type II errors (false positives) might be reduced.

Based on the findings from this study, it would be interesting to look at the relationship between career anchors and culture at a national level. Specifically, it would be interesting to study if people from countries scoring low on both uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation dimensions, such as the United Kingdom, Philippines, United States, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Australia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, the Netherlands, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Singapore (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018) value jobs with employment security and stability less than other nationalities. Likewise, it would be interesting to study if people from countries scoring high on both power distance and masculinity, such as Venezuela, Mexico, China, Ecuador, and Poland (Clearly Cultural, 2004-2018) value jobs that serve a greater purpose or can be adjusted to their lifestyle less than other nationalities.

Furthermore, because some of this study's findings on the relationship between cultural dimensions and career drivers were consistent with findings from research on the relationship between national cultures and career drivers, it would be interesting to study the relationship between career drivers and career anchors. If research can conclude that career anchors and career drivers are strongly related, future career anchors research can leverage career drivers literature and research to further expand on career anchors theory.

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this study was to uncover if cultural orientations could be considered antecedents of career anchors. This study found that people scoring low on the cultural dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation were less likely to value job security/stability, and that people scoring high on the cultural dimensions of power distance and masculinity were less likely to value service/dedication to a cause and lifestyle.

This study shifted the focus of career anchor research from examining personal and innate factors, such as demographic characteristics and personality traits, to external stimuli and influencers, such as culture. This study also showed that organizations may wish to consider their employees' cultural backgrounds when building employee attraction, selection, motivation, and retention strategies. The findings from this study may also help organizations when making major decisions, such as determining optimal locations for specific job roles.

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## Appendix

### Survey Items

#### **CVSCALE: A 26-Item Five-Dimensional Scale of Individual Cultural Values**

##### *Power Distance*

1. People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.
2. People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.
3. People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.
4. People in higher positions should not disagree with decisions made by people in higher positions.
5. People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.

##### *Individualism*

6. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group.
7. Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.
8. Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.
9. Group success is more important than individual success.
10. Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.
11. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.

##### *Uncertainty Avoidance*

12. It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do.
13. It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.
14. Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.

15. Standardized work procedures are helpful.
16. Instructions for operations are important.

#### *Masculinity*

17. It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women.
18. Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition.
19. Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men.
20. There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman.

#### *Long-Term Orientation*

21. Careful management of money (Thrift)
22. Going on resolutely in spite of opposition (Persistence).
23. Personal steadiness and stability.
24. Long-term planning.
25. Giving up today's fun for success in the future.
26. Working hard for success in the future.

### **Career Orientations Inventory: A 40-Item Scale of Individual Career Anchors**

#### *Technical functional competency*

1. I dream of being so good at what I do that my expert advice will be sought continually.
2. I will feel successful in my career only if I can develop technical or functional skills to a very high level competence.
3. Becoming a senior functional manager in my area of expertise is more attractive to me than becoming a general manager.
4. I would rather leave my organization than accept a rotational assignments that would take me out of my area of expertise.
5. I am most fulfilled in my work when I have been able to use my special skills and talents.

*General managerial competency*

6. I am most fulfilled in my work when I have been able to integrate and manage the efforts of others.
7. I dream of being in charge of a complex organization and making decisions that affect many people.
8. I will feel successful in my career only if I become a general manager in some organization.
9. Becoming a general manager is more attractive to me than becoming a senior functional manager in my current area of expertise.
10. I would rather leave my organization than accept a job that would take me away from the general managerial track.

*Security/stability*

11. Security and stability are more important to me than freedom and autonomy.
12. I would rather leave my organization altogether than accept an assignment that would jeopardize my security in that organization.
13. I seek jobs in organizations that will give me a sense of security and stability.
14. I am most fulfilled in my work when I feel that I have complete financial and employment security.
15. I dream of having a career that will allow me to feel a sense of security and stability.

*Autonomy*

16. I dream of having career that will allow me the freedom to do a job my own way and on my own schedule.
17. I am most fulfilled in my work when I am completely free to define my own tasks, schedules and procedures.
18. I will feel successful in my career only if I achieve complete autonomy and freedom.
19. The chance to do a job my own way, free of rules and constraints, is more important to me than security.
20. I would rather leave my organization than accept a job that would reduce my autonomy and freedom.

*Entrepreneurial creativity*

21. I am always on the lookout for ideas that would permit me to start my own enterprise.
22. Building my own business is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position in someone else's organization.
23. I am most fulfilled in my career when I have been able to build something that is entirely the result of my own ideas and efforts.
24. I will feel successful in my career only if I succeed in creating or building something that is entirely my own product or idea.
25. I dream of starting up and building my own business.

*Service/dedication to a cause*

26. I will feel successful in my career only if I have a feeling of having made a real contribution to the welfare of society.
27. I am most fulfilled in my career when I have been able to use my talents in the service of others.
28. Using my skills to make the world a better place to live and work is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position.
29. I dream of having a career that makes a real contribution to humanity and society.
30. I would rather leave my organization than accept an assignment that would undermine my ability to be of service to others.

*Pure challenge*

31. I dream of a career in which I can solve problems or win out in situations that are extremely challenging.
32. I will feel successful in my career only if I face and overcome very difficult challenges.
33. I have been most fulfilled in my career when I have solved seemingly unsolvable problems or won out over seemingly impossible odds.
34. I seek out work opportunities that strongly challenge my problem solving and/or competitive skills.

35. Working on problems that are almost unsolvable is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position.

*Lifestyle*

36. I would rather leave my organization than to be put in a job that would compromise my ability to pursue personal and family concerns.
37. I dream of a career that will permit me to integrate my personal, family, and work needs.
38. I feel successful in life only if I have been able to balance my personal, family, and career requirements.
39. Balancing the demands of personal and professional life is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position.
40. I have always sought out work opportunities that minimize interference with personal or family concerns.