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INTRODUCTION

While psychologists say that “people make careers,” sociologists claim that “careers make people” and the career literature shows a dearth of cross-referencing between these two frames of reference (Van Maanen, 1977:8).

Indeed, theory and research on careers have developed along two dominant, independent and sometimes conflicting streams of thought over the last fifty years. As discussed by Gysbers (1984), these may be characterized as (1) primarily psychological in nature (e.g., self-development within a career, career motivation, career orientation) and (2) primarily sociological in nature (e.g., career paths and occupational streams, career stages within organizations, the nature of various occupations in society).

It has also been observed that traditional epistemologies that place stock in observable, structural, and measurable social facts are increasingly set in contrast to cognitive (often phenomenological) views that, focusing on language, sense making and symbolic processes, proceed from a premise that reality is largely socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Pfeffer, 1981:1–52). Examining the social reality of careers may in fact provide an opportunity to achieve some degree of integration between these contrasting perspectives.

As articulated in this volume by Barley (Chapter 3) on the Chicago School of Sociology, careers link individuals to the social structure by fusing the objective and the subjective, the observable facts and the individuals’ interpretation of their experience. The dialectical nature of career dynamics calls for an epistemological framework that can address this ontological duality in a comprehensive manner.

It is suggested here that the concept of culture may actually provide such a framework. To the extent that “culture mediates between structural and individual realms” (Van Maanen and Barley, 1985:35), a cultural framework should help to couple a psychological or personal perspective of career with a sociological or organizational point of view. These two dimensions of career, which have been labeled in the literature as the internal and external career, will be presented here as inseparable and interactive elements in the social construction of career reality. As career dynamics is embedded in the cultural texture of social groups and institutions such as nations and organizations (Schein, 1984a), a cultural model of career dynamics will be proposed as an attempt to integrate different research traditions and to suggest new research directions.
THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CAREER

Schein's (1975, 1978) development of the “career anchor” concept is a conceptual breakthrough in assessing career orientations. Briefly stated, Schein asserts that people begin their work lives (often as young adults in school) with certain ambitions, fears, hopes and illusions and through early work experiences uncover initial interests, motives, values and skills. Over time and with much more life experience, they gradually realize what they need and like, what they more deeply believe or value about work and life, what they are good at and what skills and abilities are critical to their work. These motives, values and talents gradually coalesce in a total career self-concept. That most people must spend on-the-job time to obtain the self-discovery information necessary to bring this career identity into focus is an important underpinning of the theory. Schein writes:

Talents, motives and values come to be inter-related into a more or less congruent total self-concept through a reciprocal process of learning to be better at those things we are motivated to do and value, learning to want and value those things we are good at, and avoid those things we are not motivated to do or do not value, resulting in loss of abilities or skills in those areas. (1982:2)

He goes on to point out that the career anchor is an “over-riding concern or need that operates as a genuine constraint on career decisions. The anchor is the thing the person would not give up if he or she had to make a choice” (1982:8). Moreover, Schein's research has uncovered several career anchors: managerial, technical/functional, autonomy, creativity, security, service, pure challenge, identity and life-style. Schein and Van Maanen (1977) postulate that one's self-definition of a career, or the internal career, is a person's own subjective idea about work life and his or her role within it.

Driver (1979, 1980, 1982) has also published seminal work on the idea of different career self-concepts or internal careers. Driver developed four diverse career concepts (linear, spiral, steady state and transitory), and he postulated that this internal career map is interdependent with certain cognitive styles, thus serving to guide an individual's long-term career choices.

Derr (1986) builds on Schein's and Driver's work and postulates five diverse internal career success maps: getting ahead, getting secure, getting free, getting high and getting balanced. He also discusses changes and major transitions of the internal career, asserting that while any career orientation is long term and basic (as opposed to short term and transitory), events may trigger shifts in the internal career map. These alterations of the internal career may occur not only due to major events at work, but also when events in one's personal life (e.g., a divorce or a mid-life crisis) provoke a change in our lifefocus.

Other career theorists such as Super (1953) and Holland (1973) have advanced important theories of diverse personal orientations toward work. Super maintains that vocational self-concept is a part of total self-concept and maturity. Holland believes personality impacts vocational behavior, which in turn is influenced by various career opportunities and external events. Numerous scholars have linked individual career decision making to some definition of internal psychological needs or values (e.g., Allport, Vernon and Lindzey, 1960; Kuder, 1977; Roe, 1956).

Holland's model relating the personality to the external environment poses a
conceptual counterpart to the internal career, or, in Schein’s terms, brings forth the external career: the realities, constraints, opportunities and actual job sequences in the world of work. A crude way of differentiating the internal and the external career would be to conceive the former as primarily “subjective” and owned by the careerist and the latter as “objective” and reflecting a real world of constraints and opportunities in organizations and occupations.

The core of the internal career is the individual’s career self-concept within the context of organizations and occupations; the core of the external career, however, is one’s perception of the organizational and occupational context itself. A critical personal question regarding the internal career is “What do I want from work, given my perceptions of who I am and what’s possible?” A companion question that illuminates the external career is “What’s possible and realistic in my organization and occupation, given my perceptions of the world of work?”

However, both the internal and external careers can be considered psychological constructs and social typifications. While the external career is said to represent objective work realities, it is highly subjective in that it is influenced by our own perceptions of ambiguous, complex and fast-changing phenomena. Dealing with the historical roots of contemporary cognitive science, for example, Gardner (1987) captures the essence of this perspective while describing Kant’s attempts to reconcile rationalism and empiricism: “[Objective reality] cannot be perceived directly: there is no privileged access to the thing itself (das Ding an sich). We must deal always with the phenomena — appearances — and not with noumena — the unknowable external world” (p. 58).

In their seminal work on the social construction of reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966) further describe the processes by which individuals objectify and typify their experiences:

I apprehend the reality of everyday life as an ordered reality. Its phenomena are prearranged in patterns that seem to be independent of my apprehension of them and that impose themselves upon the latter. The reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before my appearance on the scene. (pp. 21–22)

In the careers field, where our research is still in its infancy and where it is difficult to know what is really happening in fast-changing organizations and occupations, the work on social typifications is especially important. The internal career is obviously one’s own subjective map, but the external career is likewise a construction and interpretation of selected external events and stimuli. Nevertheless, the usefulness of delineating these concepts (the internal and external careers) lies in differentiating two important foci of career dynamics: individual aspirations and occupational “realities.” This framework stresses the dialectical nature of a career by locating it at the interface between the person and his or her work environment, while recognizing the careerist’s perceptually constructed and individualistic view of the “realities” of work.

CAREER AND CULTURE

Kelly’s (1955) personal construct theory argues that human conceptualization is the result of attempts to construct an unequivocal and predictable environing situation, and from this contemporary base a rich tradition of schema-oriented cognitive literature has developed to elucidate the foundations of individual be-
behavior. Studying the impact of individuals, cultural anthropologists locate the foundations of individual behavior beyond the realm of the person. As noted by Kluckhohn (1951:960–961), "how the individual is oriented to his situation is, in the concrete sense, 'within' the actor, but not in the analytical sense, for modal orientations cannot, by definition, be determined from observing and questioning a single individual – they are culture."

In recent years, many students of organizations have adopted such a cultural perspective on social reality by focusing on the concept of organizational culture (Davis, 1984; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Frost et al., 1985; Kilmann et al., 1985; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1981; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Sathe, 1985; Schein, 1985). Smircich (1983), building on Geertz (1973), for example, views organizational culture as the product of a "commonly held fabric of meanings" and asserts that these meanings are available:

by analyzing the knowledge that individuals possess about their situations and by examining the understandings that the individual has of him or herself, the boss, colleagues, and the wider context within which the organization operates. (p. 162)

Another stream of organizational research has investigated the effects of the wider societal or national culture on the structuring and functioning of organizations (e.g., Maurice, Sorge, and Warner 1980).

By contrast, and with the notable and exemplary exception of recent work reported by Gerpott et al. (1988), much of the career literature has remained acultural or blindly unicultural, thus failing to account for either symbolic or cross-cultural issues in career dynamics.

It is our contention that a cultural and cross-cultural perspective of career dynamics may help to broaden our understanding of the socially constructed reality of careers.

For the purposes of this chapter, a closer consideration of Schein's culture model is appropriate. Schein (1984b, 1985) defines culture as the "basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization" (1985:8), and he discusses three levels of culture. The first level Schein labels "artifacts," which refer to the visible manifestations of a culture such as behavioral patterns, dress codes and the most obvious configurations of time and space. Artifact culture is easily observed but deciphered with difficulty.

The second level in Schein's cultural model is labelled "values." This refers to guiding beliefs, preferences or norms, the manifest or espoused values of a culture, for instance, its emphasis on achievement or affiliation, on competition or collaboration and on confrontation or avoidance of conflict. This level is more difficult to assess but can be partly inferred from the analysis of artifacts.

The third level or deep culture is termed "basic assumptions." These are the invisible, preconscious or unconscious, nondebatable, taken-for-granted, underlying cognitive structures that determine how group members perceive, think and feel. Basic assumptions confer meaning to manifest values and overt behavior and can be considered the fundamental assumptions about humankind, nature and activity that are patterned into cultural paradigms. Examples of such underlying assumptions are: time is limited, nature is there to be mastered and shaped by man and people can change their behavior at will. Such infrastructure is very difficult to uncover but, once unearthed, is highly meaningful in interpreting social reality. While artifacts may easily illustrate differences across
cultures, the interpretation of such differences will require some understanding of these fundamental assumptions.

It is our contention that the basic assumptions of Schein's model can best be understood in terms of broad societal or ecological contexts such as national cultures. Such homogeneous contexts are formative through early educational experience, family patterns, institutional arrangements, religious experiences and language. Organizational cultures, while important, constitute an individual's "situation" and are less likely to exert such a profound effect or to impact people at such a deep level. On the other hand, organizational cultures may exert a substantial impact on the upper layers of the cultural edifice, that is, on behavioral norms and artifacts.

This cultural framework will be employed to approach the internal–external career construct. The internal career, we argue, is a personal and subjective map that operates at the basic assumption level. National culture is therefore basic and critical in influencing the internal career. Additionally, we believe that national culture influences the external career, particularly through the mediating effects of different organizational cultures.

Since both the internal and external dimensions of the total career concept are constructed views of reality and affected by the basic assumptions of a careerist, a career will have different meanings in different cultures and, therefore, evidence different dynamics. Considering culture as "the fabric of meaning" (Geertz, 1973; Smircich, 1983) undergirds these propositions.

The sections that follow present some preliminary evidence for the contention that internal and external careers are culturally derived concepts whose formulation is significantly shaped by national culture.

**THE EXTERNAL CAREER**

The external career includes perceived realities of the world of work (e.g., job market, demographics, obsolescence, opportunity structure). Important elements of the external career can therefore be studied by collecting and analyzing various perceptions regarding careers and how careerists are being managed by employing organizations. Collective perceptions by numerous informed observers about the same career opportunities and career realities generate consensual validity. Argyris (1982) points out, for example, that espoused theories of action (ideals) are validated as theories-in-use (realities) if they have been confirmed as such by numerous informed and experienced observers.

One important element of the external career is what the organization values and rewards in its employees. And this can be examined, according to the preceding line of reasoning, by asking knowledgeable informants how they perceive the determinants of career success in their companies. We can ask, for example, which employees' traits, attitudes or behaviors do they perceive as being particularly valued and rewarded by their companies?

Laurent (1981a) developed such an approach as a tool for the diagnosis of organizational cultures and later reconstituted the methodology in a comparative research instrument he applied in a multinational context. Other studies (Inzerilli and Laurent, 1983; Laurent, 1981b) have indicated the substantial impact of national cultures on basic conceptions of management, organization and work values, (Hofstede, 1980). It has been established that cultural differences in man-
The internal and external career

Managerial assumptions are not mitigated by the corporate culture of large multinational firms (Laurent, 1983).

In order to assess the validity of these findings as they apply to career success, a large U.S.-based multinational corporation was approached because of its high professional reputation in human resource management (Laurent, 1986). This corporation had for years implemented a standardized worldwide system for the multiple assessment of managerial potential and performance. The research objective was to assess whether this common administrative system would standardize managers' perceptions of career success criteria across various national affiliated companies. Laurent conducted open-ended interviews of a representative sample of 100 upper-middle managers throughout the corporation. Among other questions, all interviews included the following one: “In your view, what does it take to be successful at XY?”

Individual responses were systematically recorded, and these responses produced a list of sixty different items. This list was divided into two balanced lists of thirty items (to reduce cognitive overload) and developed into a survey questionnaire format. National samples of around fifty managers (matched according to education, job level, age, experience with the company and function) were then surveyed in five affiliated companies in France, West Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. The respondents were asked in a confidential survey to select and check from each list of thirty items those ten that they perceived as being most important in determining career success at XY.

Of the original sixty-item list, the following ten items were chosen most frequently by the overall group of 262 respondents:

**Rank**

1. Ambition and drive (82% selected this item).
2. Leadership ability (77%).
3. Skills in interpersonal relations and communication (75%).
4. Being labeled as having high potential (72%).
5. Managerial skills (69%).
6. Achieving results (69%).
7. Self-confidence (65%).
8. Creative mind (60%).
9. Ability to handle interfaces between groups (58%).
10. Hard work (58%).

These results represent the aggregate perception of the overall sample about employee characteristics valued by the company. A comparative analysis further revealed important differences between the five national groups in spite of the convergence that could be expected from a similar worldwide career system.

The most significant cross-cultural variations in the preceding top-ten criteria were the following:

1. While only 57% of the Dutch managers selected skills in interpersonal relations and communication as a most important determinant of career success, 89% of the British did.
2. Being labeled as having high potential was perceived as most important by 54% of the Germans as opposed to 81% of the French.
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3. Achieving results had a high American score of 88% and a low French score of 52%. Similarly, 81% of the Americans selected self-confidence while only 42% of the French did.

4. Finally, creative mind was perceived as the top success criterion by the Germans (rank 1 among 60, checked by 77%) while it was seen as much less relevant by the French (rank 21, checked by 40%).

National differences of even higher magnitude were observed on many other criteria. For instance, job visibility and exposure provided the following spread:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of choice</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>West Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the study also indicated important differences as to the amount of consensus within each national affiliate. For instance, while six criteria were selected as most important for career success by more than 80% of the American managers, the corresponding figures were three criteria selected for the British, one for the Dutch and the French and none for the Germans. Thus the degree of perceptual clarity, fit and comfort with the overall career success culture of the firm was much higher for the American managers who were, of course, culturally closer to the system designers.

Laurent (1986:96) summarizes some of his findings concerning the German, the British and the French managers in the following way:

German managers, more than others, believed that creativity is essential for career success. In their mind, the successful manager is the one who has the right individual characteristics. Their outlook is rational: they view the organization as a coordinated network of individuals who make appropriate decisions based on their professional competence and knowledge.

British managers hold a more interpersonal and subjective view of the organizational world. According to them, the ability to create the right image and to get noticed for what they do is essential for career success. They view the organization primarily as a network of relationships between individuals who get things done by influencing each other through communicating and negotiating.

French managers look at the organization as an authority network where the power to organize and control the actors stems from their positioning in the hierarchy. They focus on the organization as a pyramid of differentiated levels of power to be acquired or dealt with. French managers perceive the ability to manage power relationships effectively and to "work the system" as particularly critical to their success.

Thus, collective perceptions of one aspect of the external career (i.e., career success from an organizational perspective) vary according to national culture in a single multinational corporation where the occupational, administrative and organizational contexts are similar. This finding raises two questions: Do the various managers simply view the same organization through their own cultural lenses and arrive at different subjective interpretations of reality? Or, do the various affiliates operate and reward differently within their cultural settings, indicating there is no objective multinational reality of career success – regardless of what head office desires or designs? The answer to both questions may be yes.

In another study of 150 European executives undertaken at INSEAD (the Eu-
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European Institute of Business Administration) (Derr, 1987), another collective perception of external career dynamics in major European firms was obtained. The inquiry asked the respondents to identify which kind of employees their companies most valued. In general, the executives reported that their companies attached the greatest value to future high-level general managers. However, there were some interesting variations on this theme according to the national origin of the company.

German firms relied more on formal authority and structure and, along with the Swiss, attached higher value to technical competence and functional expertise. The French companies valued most those managers who came from elite schools with strong technical backgrounds but who quickly became general managers (avoiding all appearance of remaining narrow technical specialists). The British attached great importance to recruiting and developing persons with a more classical education and broad general approach to management and were currently debating the value of MBA training as opposed to this broader orientation. The Swedish firms maintained a delicate balance between differentiating some as high potential candidates and future “leaders” with special developmental experiences versus adherence to strong cultural norms of equality, social democracy and collaboration where no individual is singled out for special treatment.

It seems clear that career success from the organizational point of view, whether assessed by the careerists or by the policymakers and career systems designers, is no more culture free than other facets of the management and organizational world. In fact, it may be important and useful to view the external career as a cultural artifact. What about the internal career?

THE INTERNAL CAREER

In the study at INSEAD mentioned, Derr also derived a list from career orientation theory (DeLong, 1982; Derr, 1980, 1986; Derr and Chilton, 1983; Driver, 1982; Schein, 1978, 1982) of thirty-six different ideas about career success. Respondents were asked to select twelve (i.e., one-third of the items) that were most important to them as indicators of career success. The respondents were also asked to circle those four items among the twelve checked that were considered the most important. The questionnaire format was modeled after the one used by Laurent. In Laurent’s survey, however, the respondents were asked to check the items they perceived as being the most important determinants of career success in their company (i.e., external career perceptions). The Derr questionnaire asked respondents to report their personal definitions of career success rather than the company point of view (i.e., internal career orientations). The top ten items chosen from the list of thirty-six, weighted before being ranked in order to reflect the structure of choices in the instrument, are:

**Rank**

1. Being influential enough to get exciting and challenging assignments.
2. Being in the “inner circle” regarding important decisions.
3. Being able to influence events and policies in support of my values and philosophies.
4. Achieving a balance in my progress at work, in my relationships (family life, friendships) and in self-development activities.
Being able to keep personal and professional life in equilibrium.
Becoming a general manager (e.g., director, vice president).
Working for a firm whose values are congruent with mine.
Being able to sell my ideas to others.
Using my creative talents.
Creating new products, ideas, services or organizations.

A number of the top items that comprise the internal career are associated with upward mobility, power and influence (see ranked items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8). Achieving some sort of balance between personal and professional life is also an important internal career objective (see ranked items 4 and 5). Furthermore, there is an entrepreneurial aspect to several of the top ten items (see items ranked 9 and 10).

According to Derr’s theory (1986), there are five different internal career success maps: getting ahead (upward mobility), getting secure (company loyalty and sense of belonging), getting free (autonomy), getting high (excitement of the work itself) and getting balanced (finding an equilibrium between personal and professional life). A forced-choice instrument, the Career Success Map (CSM) questionnaire (see Derr, 1986:189–193), was administered to the respondents to further ascertain their career orientations. Figure 22.1 is a graphical representation of the career orientation differences of four European nationalities using the CSM questionnaire. The lower the mean score on a scale of 1–12, the less a group has that particular career orientation.

One surprising feature of these data is the extent to which the entire population has a getting-balanced orientation. In what would be predicted as a very getting-ahead group of respondents (high potentials in an exclusive executive development program), 29% had a predominantly getting-ahead profile, while 26% were judged to be primarily getting balanced. There are fewer getting-high (20%) internal career orientations in this sample and relatively few getting-secure (16%) and getting-free (9%) orientations.

Some of this overall getting-balanced profile may be explained by response bias. Many of the INSEAD executives surveyed had been away from home for several weeks at the time of taking the survey. They may have been missing their families. Several sessions prior to responding, they had also participated in a lecture on the subject of balancing personal and professional life, and this class may have influenced them.

Another possible explanation is that managers often see themselves as more balanced and family oriented than do their spouses, children or those who know them well (Burke and Weir, 1977; Renshaw, 1977). They might report these skewed self-perceptions in the questionnaire. Still, the possibility exists that many considered “high flyers” by their companies are really getting-balanced careerists in disguise. That is, their subjective internal career maps are disguised from their employers because they perceive that they would be punished were they to reveal their true intentions. Given the first opportunity, they may make a career choice that promotes their actual internal career orientations.

As an illustration, Derr conducted an in-depth career interview with a young German executive at INSEAD. This executive had already deferred his gratification through a Ph.D. and M.B.A. program. His spouse was in medical training in Germany. He had all the proper qualifications and profile to be classified a
Figure 22.1. Career success map across four national cultures; statistics based on Kruskal–Wallis one-way analysis of variance test (abbreviations: GA, getting ahead; GS, getting secure; GF, getting free; GB, getting balanced; GH, getting high)

very high-potential executive. His plan, nevertheless, was to continue in his large German company, work hard for three to five years and establish himself, get located in the south of Germany (location of headquarters and key plants figured prominently in his choice of company) and then voluntarily plateau and become a balanced careerist. This plan was synchronized to correspond with his wife’s medical training so she would be ready at the moment of his voluntary plateauing to establish a part-time practice. Together, once established, they would begin a family and spend much of their time in recreational pursuits. This person was quite sure that he did not want to work as hard as his father had done.

The other interesting point of the data presented in Figure 22.1 is the cross-cultural differences. The British and Swedes are significantly more getting-ahead oriented than are the French. The French, on the other hand, have a significantly higher getting-balanced orientation than the other national groups. Other clinical data indicate that the French, while working hard, view their time away from the workplace as sacred personal time and, hence, see themselves as more bal-
anced. The big surprise is the Swedish data, where a more getting-balanced orientation would be predicted. Interviews reveal, however, that the respondents in this sample are from a small group of self-selected Swedish executives who choose to pursue the high-potential career track. One of the problems in Sweden is to find persons willing to opt for the high-potential track since this normally means being willing to relocate geographically and upset the spouse's career.

This cross-cultural analysis supports our contention that nationality is also a major factor influencing a person's internal career orientation. The basic assumptions of national culture, we argue, come from national or dominant subgroup experiences (e.g., common early childhood experience, educational systems, languages, religious experiences, geography), and these cultural assumptions are critical factors in influencing one's perspectives about life and work even though they are later influenced by real-world external career events and by corporate culture at the espoused values and norms and artifact levels.

Moreover, as pointed out in the preceding, nationality also influences how people perceive the external career. Thus, we see significant perceptual differences between national groups about what is important for career success within the same company.

Individuals may perceive the outside world (external career) according to their own cultural lenses and internal inclinations. Alternatively, individuals may also define their own subjective inclinations according to their assessment of the more objective cultural context. While the interaction between the internal and external careers is likely to work in both directions, the complicating factor is that the total career concept is defined both by the perceptual constructs of reality and by the larger cultural environment.

A CULTURAL MODEL OF CAREERS

Based on these research findings and the earlier theoretical discussion, it may be useful to propose a new model of career dynamics. This model serves to link together the careers perspective and the concept of culture. It also promotes understanding of how major culture variables interact with one another and, as such, may help guide future research. Figure 22.2 illustrates one component of our theoretical formulation: the levels of culture depth.

In this figure, the Schein culture model is drawn as a triangle to indicate that basic assumptions are at the foundation of culture and that artifacts, while important, are the more superficial layer. Espousing and subscribing to values and norms and speaking and behaving in certain ways are significant manifestations of culture, but they are not as profound a representation of the culture as are basic assumptions. In multinational corporations employees from all nations act out the part of the organizational culture, even changing through socialization some of their beliefs and values to correspond to those of the organization, but at the deepest level, they do not alter their fundamental assumptions about life and work.

Basic assumptions are mostly rooted in broad cultural settings such as nations. Common early childhood practices, language, religion and philosophy, geography, early education and educational systems and attitudes about work and life in the family of origin and the society are formative in determining the basic assumptions of a given culture. Values and norms and artifacts – while important,
The internal and external career

![Figure 22.2. Levels of culture triangle](image)

Influential and key manifestations of basic cultural assumptions—emerge as differentiated translations and representations through different organizational histories. They are less deep or culturally embedded, more apt to change over time and more symbolic of social reality. Organizational culture usually operates at this artifact and values and norms level of the cultural edifice.

It is possible that the concept of national culture is most salient in countries with more common early childhood and formative patterns. In more heterogeneous countries, where common formative experience is less pronounced, one’s religious or ethnic subculture may play an important basic assumptions function somewhat analogous to that of a more homogeneous national culture. Nevertheless, our research supports the proposition that nationality alone is a significant parameter in determining the internal career.

Figure 22.3 represents a second part of our theoretical formulation, namely, the factors that influence the role of culture in career dynamics. According to this model, national culture is the most determinant factor in influencing a person’s internal career orientation through the shaping of basic assumptions. The internal career, as described earlier, represents an individual’s basic assumptions about relating to the world of work.

National culture also impacts the culture of organizations by selecting and framing particular sets of organizational values, norms and artifacts that are consistent with its basic assumptions. Such perceived values, norms and artifacts related to the world of work in organizations and occupations constitute the individual’s external career. Thus the external career is depicted as being directly influenced by organizational cultures that themselves mediate and differentiate the broader contextual effect of national cultures.

In summary, the model is meant to suggest that broad and deep ecological contexts like national cultures have a significant impact on career dynamics in two major ways. First, national cultures shape the individual’s self-definition of a career—the internal career—through fundamental ideas about self and work that the individual acquires from early experience in families and schools—the prime carriers and reproducers of culture. National cultures shape the cultural filters of individuals so that they perceive the world of work—the external career—through the same cultural lenses as their compatriots. Second, national cultures
also shape the institutional context or design of work and the individual's perception of it—external career—through the norms, values and assumptions that the individual has already learned in the culture. Thus, careers link individuals to their cultures through their socialization experiences in various institutions. This may help us to understand that careers make people as much as people make careers.

The model is meant to be neither mechanistic nor deterministic. Broad cultural environments are differentiated into subcultures that provide the ground for the emergence of substantial variability among institutions and across individuals. There is also evidence that individuals socialized in a particular culture may adjust quite successfully to the requirements of other cultures. Thus French engineers, for example, whose internal career may have been strongly shaped by their national culture, may nevertheless be able to operate successfully within the context of an American organization's culture and appear to conform to the requirements of a U.S.-oriented external career. Alternatively, when multinational organizations seek to impose on their foreign subsidiaries career policies and practices that run counter to local values, local cultures find their own inventive ways of reinterpreting such requirements.

An important intervening variable in this model is "individual differences." While the concept of national culture as we are using it here is powerful in formulating career constructs, people are noted for their ability to make personal choices and deviate from family and cultural values. There are also many diverse personal experiences within any common context. Hence, it is important to recognize that both the internal and external careers are also influenced by individual differences.

Finally, the model intends to suggest a dynamic interaction between the internal and external career. The internal career is influenced by the external career in that persons from all walks of life cope and perform within organizational
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settings by changing aspects of their internal career or cognitive map to fit their perception of the requirements of the external career. Also, the internal career affects perceptions of reality and so impacts the external career. To show this relationship, the arrows in Figure 22.3 go in both directions between the internal and external careers, as linked by the intervening variable of individual differences. Career-oriented persons also change employers and even careers when their internal career (basic assumptions) become fundamentally threatened by the requirements of the external career. Therefore, one of the areas needing future research, as pointed out by Mihal et al. (1984) and Taylor and Preijor (1985), is coping with internal versus external career mismatches. It is important to understand that culture is a key variable in such coping and compromising.

We are proposing that careers cannot be understood in isolation from their cultural context. The concepts of internal and external career help to better articulate how the individual's constructed view of self in the world of work may be affected by different levels of culture depth. To say the least, we can anticipate that the very concept of career will have different meanings in different cultures. Yet this is still virgin territory in the garden of career theory.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

There are numerous practical implications of this model that are more appropriately elaborated elsewhere. Issues such as how to manage a culturally diverse work force are key concerns for multinational corporations. What is needed is a way to build on cultural and career similarities so that companies can manage effectively in the global economy of the future. On the other hand, how career policies and practices allow for cultural diversity is also a critical issue.

The more critical implications appropriate for this volume, however, are not oriented to practice but, rather, to career theory. At this juncture, our findings and theory yield several important propositions for further consideration.

First, while the "real world" of the career is not so neat as a simple dichotomy, it is useful to organize the careers field into the internal–external categories. Much of the literature about careers (career anchors, career orientations, personal vs. professional life, life stages, dual-career marriages) can be organized around individuals deciding and managing their internal career. Much of the organizational and occupational literature can come under the heading of the external career (career stages, career development systems, internal and external labor markets, career mobility, career planning models for organizations). Dividing career dynamics along these lines helps us to focus on the dialectical interplay between the person and the workplace over the span of time. Career theory currently vacillates between these two foci, and it may be useful to highlight the distinctions and attempt to understand their interaction.

Second, the discussion of culture helps us to focus on the very idea of "career." While some career literature brings forth examples of the meaning of a career to corporate managers and professionals, we have not explored enough what career means in diverse cultures: for example, in non-American or non-Western contexts, in certain definable subcultures (blacks, hispanics), for women, for skilled craftsmen or other kinds of laborers. If the concept of career carries across cultural boundaries, how do diverse cultures interpret this concept? What are the similarities and differences?
Third, our research puts forth the contention that both the internal and external careers are perceptual in nature and, as such, are heavily influenced by deep assumptions, values and perceptions (cultural lenses). This idea questions the concept of a more objective career reality. It lends credence to the theory of socially constructed realities in the career field and supports the proposition that the field is best understood as a symbolic representation of work patterns rather than as a more objective and systemic work reality. Also imbedded in this perspective is the idea that the internal career is more than the individual perspective. It also impinges on and influences organizational practices and systems (i.e., the external career).

Fourth, while the cultural model of career dynamics proposed one way of understanding variables in this conundrum of culture and career dynamics, additional research and theory is needed to help sort out conceptual causality and variable salience. What combination of various early childhood experiences constitute a strong national culture experience and, thus, greatly impact the internal career map? How powerful is organizational culture on one's internal career orientation and on one's basic assumptions? Do organizational cultures in more heterogeneous or fast-changing national cultures have a more salient and formative impact on the internal career than national culture? What about strong subcultures within national cultures: what role do they play in this model?

Fifth, the model and ideas in this chapter have implications for organizational change. One of the underpinnings of the change literature is the idea of intervention depth (Harrison, 1970). How deep must interventionists go in order to impact individuals and systems? Does it suffice, for example, to manage change at the artifact and perhaps the norms and values levels of culture, focusing change interventions on the organizational culture level? Do we inappropriately invade privacy and personal boundaries by attempting to socialize employees at the basic assumption level of culture, especially if they come from a different cultural fabric than those at the top? Or, to really affect change, do we need to intervene at the level of the internal career and basic assumption culture? If so, is it possible to intervene at these deeper levels or are we better off accepting diversity and utilizing contingency models of intervention?

Sixth, the direction of Hofstede's (1984) work is important here because he discusses national culture groupings and patterns. If we are able to group national cultures, we might come to better understand internal careers that are more or less compatible with basic assumptions of organizations. This might help us predict which corporate cultures and career development assumptions would best fit in what parts of the globe or where companies would need to vary their assumptions, policies and programs to better fit the various cultures. It is much more manageable to consider two or three different career management systems operating worldwide than a different one for each country in which the firm has employees.

Finally, it would be useful to differentiate, in future research, the relationship between national culture and the internal career in multinational versus national organizations. It may be that among those expatriates who opt to join MNCs (multinational corporations), many of whom welcome a chance to live abroad and experience cultures other than their own, are those who are less impacted by national culture per se and more open to cross-national or organizational cultures. That is, it is possible that research on national culture and internal careers when
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comparing MNC employees and employees of more local companies would reveal significantly different internal career maps. This leads us to want to explore in greater detail the salience of individual differences as an intervening variable in such research.

We conclude with a quotation that illustrates the oblique yet important status of the concept of culture:

Culture is a blank space, a highly respected, empty pigeonhole. Economists call it "tastes" and leave it severely alone. Most philosophers ignore it — to their own loss. Marxists treat it obliquely as ideology or superstructure. Psychologists avoid it, by concentrating on child subjects. Historians bend it any way they like. Most believe it matters, especially travel agents. (Douglas, 1982:183)

From its diversity of meanings (Driver, 1982:24; Hall, 1976:4; Schein, 1978:1–3) the construct of career could well inspire a parallel quotation. Culture and career appear as important and interdependent concepts, but both are difficult to define operationally. Nevertheless, a theory of careers as it interacts with and upon culture is needed and will prove useful in enhancing our understanding of how people conceive of their work lives and act upon the array of opportunities and constraints presented to them by the world of work.

REFERENCES


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