

# FOSTERING CAREER MANAGEMENT USING CAREER ANCHOR THEORY

*Jared R. Chapman*

For more than 35 years, Schein's (1975) career anchor theory has been an important branch of career research and provided individuals with insight into their career decisions. Research has shown that a better fit between individuals' work environments and the talents, interests, and values described by their career anchors can lead to stronger work outcomes. These outcomes include job satisfaction, job stability, organizational commitment, work quality and quantity, and retention (Ellison & Schreuder, 2000; Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Igbaria, Kassicieh, & Silver, 1999; Schein, 1990b). In addition, employees and employers can gain better insight into motivation (Barth, 1993) and effective career development (Evans, 1996) by understanding individuals' career anchors. These factors are important to both the employee's and the organization's success.

In this chapter, I summarize the history and principles of career anchor theory, describe how career anchors are used in career counseling, and present the approaches taken to studying career anchors. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for future research. Thus, this chapter describes where career anchor theory began, how it has developed, what it looks like today, how it is used, and what it could become. The hope is that having this information all in one place will make it easier to understand and apply the principles of career anchor theory in practice and encourage applicable and interesting research questions in the future.

## BACKGROUND

In 1961, Schein began a longitudinal study to determine the mechanisms and effects of organizational socialization (Schein, 1975). His objective was to understand the socialization processes within organizations that cause individuals to conform to their norms, customs, and ideologies. In other words, he wanted to understand what happened in organizations that caused individuals to become a better fit for the company environment. For each of the following 3 years, he chose a random group of 15 male MBA students graduating from Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan Business School. He followed this group of 44 participants (one dropped out) for the next 13 to 14 years. Beginning with interviews and various attitude and value surveys before graduation, group members were evaluated at various points in their careers up until a major review and resurvey of the group was conducted in 1973 through 1974.

To Schein's surprise, rather than finding that individuals were being socialized to become a better fit for the organization, he discovered that on the basis of their talents, interests, and values, individuals chose to opt out of organizations where they did not fit and opt in to organizations to which they were more aligned. From the data he gathered, Schein (1975) distilled five career anchors describing the collection of talents, interests, and values that governed the outcome of individuals' career

choices: general managerial competence, technical–functional competence, security–stability, autonomy–independence, and entrepreneurial–creativity.

During the 1970s, Schein’s career anchor theory became an important part of career research (Derr & Briscoe, 2007). Schein’s (1975, 1980) landmark research on career anchors laid the theoretical groundwork for the study of internal careers, and his work became a key contribution to how career scholars understand individuals’ career identity and choices (Feldman & Bolino, 1996). Building on Schein’s original work, Derr (1980) and DeLong (1982a) did the first large-scale studies examining career anchors. In his study of U.S. naval personnel, Derr observed that some individuals did not align well with the career anchors defined by Schein. For example, he found that the careers of some fighter pilots were driven by the need to do the impossible, to achieve against insurmountable odds. As a result of Derr’s and DeLong’s studies, Schein (1990a) added three more career anchors to his original list of five: service–dedication to a cause, pure challenge, and lifestyle (Schein, 1990a).

## CAREER ANCHOR PROFILES

Schein (1980) summarized the characteristics of people with each career anchor in career anchor profiles. These profiles describe specific motivators and traits for each career anchor category. Career anchor profiles are frequently used in career counseling to help succinctly illustrate career orientations for employees. The sections that follow provide a summary of Schein’s eight career anchor profiles.

### General Managerial Competence

Although many people will say they want to be managers in the beginning of their careers, only those focused on three areas find it to be a true driver (Schein, 1980). The first area is interpersonal competence: “the ability to influence, supervise, lead, manipulate, and control people toward the more effective achievement of organizational goals” (Schein, 1974, p. 7). Second is analytical competence: “the identification and solving of conceptual problems under conditions of uncertainty and

incomplete information” (pp. 7–8). Third is emotional stability: “the capacity to be stimulated by emotional and interpersonal crises rather than exhausted or debilitated by them, the capacity to bear high levels of responsibility, and the capacity to exercise authority without fear or guilt” (p. 8).

People with the general managerial competence career anchor desire to lead and advance quickly in the organization. Making lots of money and using their abilities to influence the organization are important to them. Their identity and sense of success come from the success of the organization (Schein, 1980). As hierarchies flatten in modern organizations, there is more need to have general management skills lower within the organization (Schein, 1996).

### Technical–Functional Competence

People with the technical–functional competence career anchor are driven by the challenge of the actual work they do (Schein, 1975, 1980). The longer they stay in a specific area of expertise, the more their self-image becomes linked to performing well in this area (Schein, 1980). They are not interested in being promoted out of their functional responsibilities (Schein, 1975, 1980); instead, they have a strong desire to simply get better at what they do (Schein, 1980).

Care should be taken in organizations to manage this group well because they are the base of the organization’s competence and are likely managed by people who do not understand their needs and values. People with technical–functional competence are often mismanaged by managers who pull them away from their area of expertise in an effort to create a well-rounded work experience for them. Instead, managers of employees driven by technical–functional competence should work to create environments in which they can excel in their proficiency. Career development can be a challenge with this career anchor because skills may become obsolete in quick-changing industries (Schein, 1980). In addition, many people feel frustrated when organizations try to move them up the organizational hierarchy to influence others (DeLong, 1982b). In this situation they may rise to the level of their incompetency, being repeatedly promoted

from the jobs they are good at until they achieve a position sufficiently outside of their abilities so that they are no longer promoted. If they do become managers, they are often much happier if they stay attached to the functional area in which they are expert (Schein, 1980).

Pay and rank advancements for people with technical–functional competence are often limited compared with managers. They want to be recognized for performing well, but organizations may find it difficult to challenge them. Thus, they may move jobs frequently to find the right mix of challenge and recognition (Schein, 1980). In addition, many will leave the organization rather than be promoted out of their functional area (Schein, 1975, 1980). In the modern economy, this group is more valuable as individual contributors than as managers (Schein, 1996).

### Security–Stability

People with the security–stability career anchor seek jobs with tenure or in organizations that have a reputation for never laying off employees, good retirement plans and benefits, and the image of being strong or in a reliable industry (e.g., government and civil jobs; Schein, 1980, 1990a). They are willing to accept an organizationally determined definition of career to preserve stability rather than pursue their own interests (Schein, 1975, 1980, 1990a). Members of this group may not feel a need to rise in the organization. They may feel they have made it even though they are not very high up in the hierarchy. This group often takes a defensive position or may feel guilty because of the negative perceptions of managers who feel they should be trying to climb the career ladder (Schein, 1980). Shifts in modern career environments mean fewer organizations guarantee employee security, thus security–stability-minded people have to shift from dependence on the organization to dependence on themselves for security (Schein, 1996).

Statistical work with career anchors indicates this group can be split in two. The first group seeks organizational stability. They are tied to a specific organization and socialized to organizational values and norms. They will do whatever the organization asks of them. The second is geographically oriented. This

group has laid down roots in the community and will move from company to company to stay in the same area (DeLong, 1982b; Schein, 1980).

### Autonomy–Independence

People in the autonomy–independence career anchor group are focused first and foremost on freedom and autonomy. They find organizations restrictive, irrational, or intrusive in their personal lives (Schein, 1975, 1980). Modern work environments that do not ensure guaranteed employment are acceptable for people with this career anchor (Schein, 1996). They often prefer to be consultants or contract workers. However, some organizations and job descriptions are broad enough to accommodate them, including some engineering, research and development, sales, data processing, market research, financial analysis, plant security, and automated production units. The key is that although target and deadline may be locked in, method and pace are flexible (Schein, 1980). It is difficult for this group to hold management jobs because responsibilities for budgets and other people's performance and outcomes limit freedom. However, these types of jobs may be tolerable for some because the manager often has more flexibility in work methods (Schein, 1980).

### Entrepreneurial–Creativity

People with the entrepreneurial–creativity career anchor feel a strong need to create something of their own (Schein, 1975, 1980). This career anchor drives growth in the modern economy (Schein, 1996). These people often try new projects, preferring ones that are central to and visible in the organization (DeLong, 1982b). People in this group have challenges working in large organizations unless given lots of freedom. For them, money is not the reward but a measure of their success (DeLong, 1982b; Schein, 1975, 1980). Recent research has suggested that this career anchor actually factors into two groups: entrepreneurial and creativity. The emphasis for entrepreneurial is creating a new organization or business (Schein, 1980). It is unlikely that an organization will retain these individuals unless they are given ownership. For creativity, the focus is creating in a manner that does not involve

building new organizations (Danziger, Rachman-Moore, & Valency, 2008). People in the creativity group would be comfortable as “intrapreneurs.” This type of person helps to drive innovation and develop ideas creatively within an organization.

### **Service–Dedication to a Cause**

This and the next two career anchors were not included in Schein’s original five. These career anchors were added after other researchers found evidence of additional career anchors (DeLong, 1982b; Derr, 1980; Schein, 1990a). Originally, this career anchor was studied as two separate career variables (DeLong, 1982b). The first was service, being concerned with using one’s interpersonal skills to help others, and the second was cause, being aligned to a specific cause, such as environmentalism (Schein, 1980). Later, these variables were combined to form the service–dedication to a cause career anchor. People with the service–dedication to a cause career anchor see their career entirely in terms of achieving their core values. These people will leave their organization if it does not let them fulfill those values. This career anchor grows as people become more aware of the world’s problems and as more opportunities to address them in one’s career develop (Schein, 1996).

### **Pure Challenge**

People with the pure challenge career anchor need to always feel that they are overcoming impossible barriers, meeting tough challenges, or winning over challenging competitors. What they do is less important than being able to overcome. They tend to define situations as either winning or losing, and they only get true satisfaction if they win (Schein, 1990a). As society develops and challenges become more complex, this group will find ample opportunity to exercise their values (Schein, 1996).

### **Lifestyle**

People with the lifestyle career anchor feel that work life and career should be integrated and balanced with all aspects of life (e.g., family and personal needs). Often, this career anchor comes into play when two spouses work and arrangements need to

be made to ensure all aspects of life are taken care of. People in this group will make sacrifices in their career to maintain life balance (Schein, 1990a). This career anchor has grown more than any other since the 1960s and 1970s (Danziger & Valency, 2006; Schein, 1996).

### **Other Career Anchors**

Although Schein’s eight career anchors are by far the most researched, some studies have produced statistical and qualitative support for others. On the basis of these studies, it appears that additional career anchors could be identified in general populations if work were done to define and test for them. For example, the identity career anchor, being driven by the status of belonging to a powerful or prestigious organization, has been found in several studies of information systems professionals (e.g., Jiang, Klein, & Balloun, 1995) after it was originally suggested by DeLong (1982b). Also, Baruch (2004) suggested that spiritual purpose may also be a career anchor.

Some career anchors appear to be contextual in nature. These career anchors are identified when examining specific populations. For example, Derr (1980) identified being a warrior (i.e., needing high, even life-or-death, adventure) as a career anchor among naval officers. Internationalism, defined as being excited by working in international environments and experiencing unfamiliar countries and cultures, was identified by Suutari and Taka (2004) among global managers. However, Cappellen and Janssens (2010) questioned the need for this career anchor. Ituma and Simpson (2007) identified a career anchor unique to the Nigerian context: being marketable, which involves an interest in continual learning and skill development to enhance career opportunities and employability. Among information systems employees, Ituma (2006) also found the project career anchor as the desire to work on challenging projects.

Schein (1980, 1990a) argued that some career anchor candidates are actually subsumed in others and for reasons of theoretical parsimony should not be considered career anchors. For example, the career anchors variety and change, seeking careers that provide the maximum number of different

types of challenges, as well as power and influence, are often met in the general managerial competence career anchor (Schein, 1980, 1990a).

### A SUMMARY OF SCHEIN'S CAREER ANCHOR THEORY

Careers are a symbiotic relationship that involves the needs and desires of both the employee and the organization. Although the organization's needs are generally fixed, individuals bring with them a variety of requirements. Schein (1975) referred to these individual requirements as career anchors. Put another way, Schein described career anchors as stable syndromes in personality that drive career decisions. They are a career self-concept that includes one's abilities, talents, motives, needs, and values (DeLong, 1982b; Schein, 1975).

The metaphor of an anchor is used to illustrate how career anchors operate in career decisions. Marine anchors are fixed in a central point but allow a degree of flexibility for a boat connected by a rope to move around. However, as a boat drifts away from the central anchor, it begins to feel the pull of the rope. If the boat stretches too far, the drag of the rope slows its drift and eventually arrests it completely. At this moment, the boat will tend to rebound and return toward the central point of its anchor. Similarly, career anchors are stable personality traits that influence career decisions. As people move away from the central tendencies of their career anchor, they feel dissatisfaction and dissonance and respond to the pull of their career anchor by making career decisions aligned with their specific talents, needs, and values.

Schein (1990a) believed that people generally do not know their career anchor before they begin their career and in its early stages. He felt that it took a person 5 to 10 years to gain enough experience to understand the needs, talents, and interests that drive their career decisions (Schein, 1990a). People discover their career anchor by identifying the themes that emerge as they explore the pattern of their career decisions and the reasoning behind them. Enlisting the aid of a trusted friend enhances this exploration process. Though the longitudinal data were insufficient to be sure, Schein (1980)

predicted that career anchors become more stable and are unlikely to change over time.

Schein (1980) theorized that individuals could only have one career anchor. By definition, a career anchor is that set of personality constructs that would not be given up if a choice had to be made, thus there can only be one. However, he suggested that most situations do not require people to give up all other values, so they are unaware which is their top-most value. He felt that knowing the top-most value helps individuals make intelligent career decisions (Schein, 1980). However, several recent empirical studies have demonstrated evidence for individuals having multiple career anchors (Danziger & Valency, 2006; Ramakrishna & Potosky, 2003). Feldman and Bolino (1996) contended that some individuals may have primary and secondary career anchors and that they may try to satisfy both. Multiple career anchors may arise from satisfying multiple categories (i.e., talent, need, or value) or pursuing equally attractive career goals. Feldman and Bolino also asserted that juggling multiple career goals would result in poorer outcomes.

When people achieve congruence between their career anchor and their work environment, they are more likely to achieve positive career outcomes such as work effectiveness, specific job satisfaction (e.g., satisfaction with type of work, pay and benefits, promotion system, and advancement opportunities), and job stability (Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Schein, 1990b). Some careers are inflexible to the degree that individuals are unable to express their career anchor in their occupation (e.g., production workers) so they may express it in hobbies or other non-work activities (Schein, 1990a).

Feldman and Bolino (1996) summarized four contributions that Schein's career anchor theory made to the study of career identity. First, rather than endorsing a model in which youths should make career choices on the basis of their interests or hobbies, the theory recognizes that career identities are immature at first and develop through real experiences over time. Second, rather than choosing an occupation (e.g., marketing), people choose career paths within occupations (e.g., a technical track in marketing research, a managerial track in brand management, an entrepreneurial

path in product development, an autonomy track in marketing consulting, a security track as a marketing professor). Third, career paths of people in the same vocation can be as different as people in different industries, and the paths of people with the same career anchor may be similar across industries (DeLong, 1982b). Career anchors constrain the career choices of individuals in predictable ways.

Perhaps the most interesting of these observations is the notion that given an industry, one cannot predict which career anchor will be most prevalent or successful. For example, one might assume that service to others might be the career anchor for someone in the nursing industry; however, it could just as well be technical–functional, managerial, or any other anchor. All career anchors can find a home within the different roles of each industry. For example, someone with the pure challenge career anchor could be satisfied as an AIDS researcher, a Wall Street analyst, a search and rescue ranger, or a concert pianist. Each of these environments would provide opportunities aligned with their unique talents, interests, and values. Similar examples could be given for all career anchors.

### Distribution of Career Anchors

Although statistical weaknesses in past studies make it difficult to accurately evaluate trends in career anchors (Danziger & Valency, 2006; Feldman & Bolino, 1996), there is some evidence that the distribution of career anchors has changed significantly during the past 35 years. During the 1970s and early 1980s, Schein's career anchor studies revealed a rough career anchor distribution of general managerial competence accounting for about 25% of the population; technical–functional, 25%; autonomy and security, 10%; and the remaining career anchors, 30% (Schein, 1996). Both Schein (1996) and Feldman and Bolino (1996) suggested that this trend has changed with time, resulting in a decline in the general managerial competence and technical–functional competence career anchors and an increase in the lifestyle career anchor (Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Schein, 1996).

### Career Anchor Evaluations

Beginning with Schein's original research starting in 1961, a variety of methods have been used to evaluate career orientations. Schein based the concept of career anchors on his original longitudinal study data. He later created an open-response self-evaluation form to explore career anchors (Schein, 1980). DeLong and Schein then developed a Likert-scale assessment with 48 questions that culminated in the Career Orientations Inventory (COI; DeLong, 1982b). Schein (1990b) suggested that the open-response self-evaluation and the COI taken together give the best insight into one's career anchors.

To decrease the time it takes to evaluate career anchors, Igarria and Baroudi (1993) developed a short form of Schein's COI that produced similar construct validity with only 25 questions. In addition, Derr (1980) also conducted interviews and developed a forced-choice tool to evaluate career anchors. Similarly, Nordvik (1991) developed a forced-choice tool in which seven forced-choice items, each with four alternatives, were used. Finally, some researchers have continued to evaluate career anchors using semistructured interviews (e.g., Ituma, 2006). The advantage of this technique is that it may reveal previously undiscovered career anchors that are obscured by using measures limited to evaluating specific career anchors. This technique also gives insight into population-specific meanings associated with a career anchor.

### CAREER ANCHORS IN CAREER COUNSELING

Career anchor surveys are often used as part of the career counseling process (Evans, 1996). For example, in a career development workshop, participants are typically presented with a brief introduction to career anchors, what they mean, and how they are used. Then the COI is used to help participants discover their work-related talents, interests, and needs. After participants have identified their dominant career anchor using the COI, they are presented with a detailed profile for that career anchor. This profile may also include strengths associated with that career anchor, as well as weaknesses and common risks. After reviewing the profile,

participants are then asked to reflect and articulate their thoughts. For example, the following types of questions might be used to promote self-discovery:

- What does having your career anchor mean to you?
- Do you feel your profile describes you well? What parts sound right or wrong?
- What experiences can you identify that illustrate your career anchor in your decisions?
- Have you ever made a career decision in opposition to your career anchor? What happened? How did you feel?
- What should you look for in a work environment that is a good fit for your personal career-related talents, needs, and interests?
- Why does a good work environment to career anchor fit matter?
- What might you do to capitalize on and maximize the strengths of your career anchor?
- What steps should you take to manage the risks and weaknesses of your career anchor?
- Think of someone with whom you have conflict at work; what career anchor might this person have? How might you benefit from drawing on that person's strengths?

After participants are given the opportunity to explore their primary career anchor, this process can be repeated with their secondary career anchor if they have one. Finally, as part of the workshop, participants can be asked to write goals for managing their career on the basis of what they have learned about their career anchor. If it is appropriate, these goals can be shared with their manager and may be followed up on in the future.

Reflecting on one's career anchor can provide participants with valuable insights that can assist them as they make career decisions or work with others. For example, consider the following replies to the question "How might you benefit from working more effectively with coworkers that have a career anchor that clashes with you?" (Targeted Learning, 2012):

- "I might learn that focus on the present is important. If the issues at hand are not confronted properly, all the planning for the future could be for naught."

- "I could gain a great deal of knowledge and be introduced to the contacts I need to work with. I would benefit from this by being more self-reliant and independent (not having to ask/interrupt my manager so often). I would be able to give 'my customers' answers quicker. My customers can call me rather than wait for my manager to get back to them."
- "They prevent me from being impulsive and jumping to conclusions. They make me think and rethink situations to stop me from assuming facts. They assist with clarifying the facts and the true concerns that needs [sic] to be addressed. I believe that working with them will help me achieve more as my goals and contributions will be tempered and focused."
- "They would help me take a step back before charging in with energy."
- "D. has many ideas, some of which are excellent; others are misguided. By learning to listen to each other, we have been able to help each other identify the right problems to fix and how to fix them."
- "R. is much more careful than I am about offending others. I think between the two of us, we can get the message across without being offensive (on my own, I think I'd be offensive)."
- "How to get ideas across more forcefully. How to make people listen to me. How to show people I'm an expert in my field. How to climb the ladder."
- "B. could help me learn to better blend work/life balance and integrate them more. L. highly values leading. Could help me meet my drivers more effectively. K. pushes me to be more of an expert and foster innovation to get away from having a reason to blame."
- "They can help me become more confident in my skills by becoming more self-reliant. This may also help me have more control of my outcomes from my decisions." (These quotes are taken from more than 2,000 similar comments found in the Targeted Learning database; Targeted Learning, 2012).

## CAREER ANCHOR RESEARCH

Since the development of career anchor theory, more than 80 articles, book chapters, and

dissertations have been published on the topic. This research can be classified into three categories: analyzing career anchors within populations, analyzing the relationship between career anchor theory and other theoretical frameworks, and advancing career anchor theory. The next three sections briefly describe each.

### Understanding Career Anchors Within Specific Populations

The first area of career anchor research involves examining the career anchors held by specific populations. These studies seek to gain insight into the motivations held by members of a population, demonstrate the degree to which career anchor theory can be used to describe the group, or both. For example, Derr (1980) explored career anchors held by naval officers, and DeLong (1984) investigated career anchors in professional educators. Unsurprisingly, Albertini (1982) found that managers often had managerial competence as a career anchor. It is interesting to note, however, that he found that service to others was also a strong career anchor in this population. Kniveton (2004) found that younger managers tended to be focused on talent-based career anchors (managerial competence and technical–functional competence), whereas older managers tended to be focused on need-based career anchors (independence). This finding suggests that career anchors change over time or that patterns align with cohorts. Educators in Singapore were found to have career anchors oriented more toward lifestyle, service, or security (Tan & Quek, 2001), and numerous studies have been done on research and development professionals (e.g., Igbaria et al., 1999; Y. Kim & Cha, 2000). Other studies have examined career anchors for the self-employed (Feldman & Bolino, 2000), mid-career employees (Ellison & Schreuder, 2000), student affairs professionals (Wood, Winston, & Polkosnik, 1985), MBA alumni (DeLong, 1982a), nursing (Kaplan, Shmulevitz, & Raviv, 2009), mid-level managers (Anderson & Sommer, 1980), hospitality and tourism educators (La Lopa, Beck, & Ghiselli, 2009), virtual organizations (Dumitrescu, 2009), expatriates (Cerdin & Pargneux, 2010), and corporate trainees (Lokas, 2007).

Starting in the 1990s, understanding career anchor profiles in the burgeoning information systems field became a focus of career anchor research. The most significant finding during this period was that a wide variety of career anchors could be found in information systems professionals, not just general managerial competence and functional–technical competence, as had been found earlier (Jiang et al., 1995). Studying career anchors in the information systems field continues to be done today (e.g., Chang, Jiang, Klein, & Chen, 2012).

A recent focus of career anchor research has been the relationship between career anchors and demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and nationality. For example, a study of employees in the oil and gas industry found that lifestyle was the most dominant career anchor of local Norwegian employees, whereas expatriates were better characterized by pure challenge, perhaps reflecting the fact that they took the challenge to leave their native country. Lokas (2007) has also found that women seemed to be more oriented toward security and men toward autonomy. Chia, Koh, and Pragasam (2008) examined career anchors in accounting students from Singapore, Australia, and Hong Kong and found that both gender and nationality had an impact on career anchor. N. Kim and McLean (2008) looked at how career anchors are affected by age, years of work experience, employment level, gender, and type of job in South Korean employees. Erwee (1990) reported the top career anchors for professional women as service, variety, and job security. Marshall and Bonner (2003) assessed the career anchors of 423 graduate students enrolled in management courses in Western Australia, the United States, Malaysia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Age, gender, and culture were all found to have an impact on observed career anchors. Interestingly, 31% of the respondents reported that their job had changed because of downsizing. Of this group, 51% had a lifestyle career anchor. This may suggest that career anchors may not be as stable as Schein predicted and can be influenced by life circumstances or that employees with lifestyle as a career anchor are less valued by organizations and more likely to be laid off. Other demographic groups studied include convention and exhibition

industry professionals in Asia (Weber & Ladkin, 2011), faculty members (Ghalavandi et al., 2011), female academics in South Africa (Riordan & Louw-Potgieter, 2011), and Iranian software engineers (Alavi, Moteabbed, & Arasti, 2012).

### Understanding the Relationship Between Career Anchors and Work Outcomes

The second focus of career anchor research investigates Schein's (1975) claim that career anchors would have an impact on work outcomes. Most of these studies involve empirical research on the correlation between career anchors and specific work outcomes and other career-related constructs. Examples include job satisfaction (Danziger & Valency, 2006; Ellison & Schreuder, 2000; Igbaria & Baroudi, 1993; Y. Kim & Cha, 2000; Sukal & Lopez, 2007), career satisfaction (Igbaria & Baroudi, 1993; Igbaria et al., 1999; Weber & Ladkin, 2011), career identity (Weber & Ladkin, 2011), gender discrimination and women's subjective career success (Herrbach & Mignonac, 2012), organizational commitment (Ghalavandi et al., 2011; Igbaria et al., 1999; Y. Kim & Cha, 2000), retention (Igbaria et al., 1999; Y. Kim & Cha, 2000), job involvement (Igbaria et al., 1999), occupational types (Ellison & Schreuder, 2000), job discretion (Igbaria et al., 1999), stages in professional development (Wood et al., 1985), career resilience (Van Vuuren & Fournie, 2000), job attitudes (Y. Kim & Cha, 2000), turnover (Chang et al., 2012; La Lopa et al., 2009), technical outcomes (Y. Kim & Cha, 2000), downsizing (Marshall & Bonner, 2003), career routes (Petroni, 2000), promotion stress (Carlson & Rotondo, 2001), domestic relocation (Mignonac, 2002), career aspirations (Mignonac & Herrbach, 2003), employability satisfaction and emotional intelligence (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011), and work-family conflict (Sukal & Lopez, 2007).

In addition to empirical studies, several articles were published that argued the theoretical relevance of career anchors to other conceptual frameworks, including personal career development (Evans, 1996; Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Schein, 1975, 1980, 1990a), supportive work environments (Barth, 1993), motivation (Barth, 1993; Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Y. Kim & Cha, 2000), promoting job satisfaction

(Barth, 1993; Schein, 1990b), work effectiveness (Schein, 1990b), personality characteristics (Van Rensburg, Rothmann, & Rothmann, 2001), job stability (Schein, 1990b), retention (Barth, 1993), university career placement (Feldman & Bolino, 1996), and organizational job and role planning (DeLong, 1982b; Feldman & Bolino, 1996; Schein, 1975).

### Advancing Career Anchor Theory

Finally, research also focuses directly on developing the career anchor theory. Rather than using career anchor theory to understand a population or another framework, research in this category has attempted to clarify and improve on career anchor theory itself. In 1996, Feldman and Bolino criticized Schein's career anchor theory, stating that it had undergone little refinement or reframing in the prior 15 years. Their article reconceptualized the nature of career anchors and suggested moderators for the theory. It also detailed 15 propositions derived from Feldman and Bolino's revised career anchor theory that could be evaluated in future research.

Specifically, Feldman and Bolino (1996) suggested the following moderators of impact of career anchors: how self-aware individuals are of their career anchor, how much they use them to guide their career decisions, the degree to which work is central to one's life, the number of job opportunities, the culture of the organization, and life circumstances such as family commitments and financial requirements. Also, they hypothesized that if an individual held more than one career anchor, the nature of career anchors would make some complementary (e.g., technical-functional competence and security-stability) and others mutually inconsistent (e.g., entrepreneurial and security-stability). Finally, they speculated that although most career anchors can be pursued in most industries, some industries lend themselves to specific career anchors, for example, social work might be more aligned with service-dedication to a cause.

In addition, Feldman and Bolino (1996) suggested that research methods used by Schein and others limit career anchor theory's empirical value and suggested more rigorous methods. Specifically, they felt Schein's interviews relied too heavily on

one interviewer (Schein himself) to code replies. In addition, career anchor evaluation tools assume only one career anchor, making investigation into multiple career anchors and their implications difficult. Finally, most career anchor studies have focused on managers and used samples that were too small, which makes it difficult to know whether findings have descriptive power for other populations. In fact, the research that Schein conducted to delineate his original five career anchors was done with only 44 male managers who had graduated from the same business school, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Feldman and Bolino (1996) recommended that future research use a factor analysis of Schein's COI to determine the factor structure underlying the career anchor typology. In addition, they recommended that statistical methods be used to discover which career anchors are complementary and which are mutually inconsistent. They also recommended that a categorization system be developed that allows for multiple career anchors per individual. In addition, they encouraged research into whether combinations of career anchors might be meaningful for describing people. For example, a person with a combination of technical–functional competence and pure challenge might be more comfortable at a cutting-edge research lab in the private sector, whereas a person with technical–functional competence and security–stability combination might do better in civil service. Also, they suggested that behavioral as well as attitudinal dependent variables should be used to evaluate career anchors. Rather than simply using self-report data, archival data such as job stability and performance ratings could enhance career anchor assessment. A correlation between job anchors and actual job titles and types would also help. Finally, large heterogeneous samples and databases should be used to improve external validity.

The Feldman and Bolino (1996) article became a new landmark in career anchor theory and a framework for modern career anchor theory research. Ironically, although Feldman and Bolino criticized Schein's career anchor theory for being undertested empirically, they provided little empirical evidence for their own theoretical propositions. The validity

of their propositions, arguments, and criticisms is currently unclear, and examining them has become a research focus.

Ramakrishna and Potosky (2003) conducted a study testing two of Feldman and Bolino's (1996) arguments: Individuals can have more than one career anchor, and juggling multiple career anchors would result in poorer work. They found evidence for multiple career anchors but did not find evidence that multiple career anchors resulted in poorer work outcomes. Suutari and Taka (2004) conducted a qualitative study in which they performed semiunstructured interviews with 22 global managers. Their study addressed Feldman and Bolino's criticism that Schein's career anchor typology required further empirical validation because of the inconsistency of past results. They found support for Schein's original eight career anchors and an additional anchor: internationalism.

Danziger and Valency (2006) conducted a study to address Feldman and Bolino's (1996) criticism that past career anchor studies were conducted on small, homogeneous populations. They administered 1,847 questionnaires and surveys to a mix of men and women differing in education, age, and type of employment. The study found support for all eight of Schein's career anchors. They also found support for Feldman and Bolino's proposition that congruency between work environment and career anchor will increase job satisfaction. Finally, they responded to Feldman and Bolino's call to use behavioral variables to assess career anchor differences by correlating job types with career anchor groups.

Ituma (2006) conducted a qualitative study among Nigerian information systems professionals that supported Feldman and Bolino's (1996) argument that individuals can have multiple career anchors. In a second study, Ituma and Simpson (2007) responded to Feldman and Bolino's call for an investigation into Schein's career anchor typology by identifying a career anchor unique to the Nigerian context related to marketability. Quesenberry and Trauth (2007) addressed the critique that past career anchor research has been too homogeneous by conducting a study of career anchors in women. They found support for the theory that some career

anchors are mutually inconsistent, specifically technical–functional competence and general managerial competence. They also found support for multiple career anchors. Contrary to Schein’s and Feldman and Bolino’s argument that career anchors are stable, Quesenberry and Trauth found support for career anchors changing over time as the needs of individuals change.

Danziger et al. (2008) addressed Feldman and Bolino’s (1996) argument that Schein’s career anchor typology has not been rigorously evaluated. They outlined the challenges with past studies, explaining why they are statistically insufficient. In response, they analyzed a large heterogeneous population. Their results found support for a nine-anchor model identical to Schein’s but with the entrepreneurial–creativity anchor split into two distinct anchors. They also offered several suggestions for improving the COI. Finally, Wils, Wils, and Tremblay (2010) explored Feldman and Bolino’s proposition that the relationship between career anchors can be described as complementary or mutually exclusive. They empirically demonstrated these relationships and suggested an underlying structure for understanding them.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Feldman and Bolino’s 1996 propositions for improving career anchor theory remain an excellent guidepost for future research. Research in many of these areas remains limited and inconclusive. For example, although several studies have related specific frameworks to specific career anchors—identifying which career anchor is more inclined to be paired with specific characteristics—little work has been done to investigate how the level or degree of fit between an individual’s career anchor and the organizational context affects work outcomes such as work effectiveness, job satisfaction, job stability, work role adjustment, and overall psychological well-being. This is likely because there are no strong methods for measuring fit. Understanding this relationship involves both the individual’s career anchor, which can be measured with the COI, and the characteristics of the work environment, which have not been well catalogued and are not readily

assessable. Moderators of this relationship, such as the consistency between an individual’s career anchor and the dominant organizational culture, availability of alternative jobs, personal life constraints, and consistency of the individual’s career anchor with the dominant profile of the occupation, should also be explored. In addition, little or no research has been done to investigate the impact of outside roles on career anchor fit to work environment.

Although some research has seemed to indicate that career anchors change over time, no longitudinal studies have been performed to discover whether career anchors are stable, as Schein suggested, or whether they are contextual to individuals’ life situation. It would be valuable to investigate whether age, length of time in the workforce, number of jobs held, and number of organizations at which employed have an impact on the durability and salience of the career anchor and whether career anchor durability and salience have any impact on work outcomes.

The historical foundations of career anchor theory also provide an opportunity for future research. Most career anchor research continues to be based on variations of Schein’s original COI. This assessment was derived decades ago from a narrow, homogeneous population. Performing current research using this tool limits today’s findings to concepts it was designed to identify. This artificial limitation may prevent meaningful and applicable findings. Future research would benefit from reproducing and reaffirming these foundational interviews and assessments among large and diverse populations. The results may yield new and more applicable career anchors. In addition, variations on the item types used in the COI should be explored. It may be that Likert scales produce too much acquiescence bias to accurately investigate the relationships among multiple career anchors.

Finally, developing a typology related to the patterns found among individuals with multiple career anchors is an exciting opportunity. Understanding the complementarity and mutually exclusive patterns between career anchors and their impact on work outcomes and interaction with other conceptual frameworks could provide valuable new insight.

## CONCLUSION

For more than 35 years, career anchor theory has been a useful tool for researchers and practitioners in the area of career studies and development. Recent research has tended to confirm Schein's original eight anchors and also indicated that additional career anchors may be applicable, at least in specific populations. Numerous studies have suggested that, contrary to Schein's argument that individuals may have only one career anchor, many people have multiple career anchors. There is a great deal of opportunity for future researchers to begin to profile the complementary and exclusive relationships among career anchors and discover their implications on career development and work outcomes. Feldman and Bolino's (1996) 15 propositions for enhancing career anchor theory provide a rich opportunity for future researchers to confirm, reject, or modify Feldman and Bolino's assertions and further refine and redefine modern career anchor theory.

## References

- Alavi, S. B., Moteabbed, S., & Arasti, M. R. (2012). A qualitative investigation of career orientations of a sample of Iranian software engineers. *Scientia Iranica*, *19*, 662–673. doi:10.1016/j.scient.2011.08.033
- Albertini, W. O. (1982). *Organization managers: A career study* (Unpublished master's thesis). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.
- Anderson, M. E., & Sommer, F. F. (1980). *Career evolution of Sloan Fellows* (Unpublished master's thesis). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.
- Barth, T. J. (1993). Career anchor theory. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, *13*, 27–42. doi:10.1177/0734371X9301300403
- Baruch, Y. (2004). *Managing careers: Theory and practice*. Harlow, England: FT Prentice-Hall.
- Cappellen, T., & Janssens, M. (2010). The career reality of global managers: An examination of career triggers. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *21*, 1884–1910. doi:10.1080/09585192.2010.505090
- Carlson, D. S., & Rotondo, D. M. (2001). Differences in promotion stress across career stage and orientation. *Human Resource Management*, *40*, 99–110. doi:10.1002/hrm.1001
- Cerdin, J.-L., & Pargneux, M. L. (2010). Career anchors: A comparison between organization-assigned and self-initiated expatriates. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *52*, 287–299. doi:10.1002/tie.20350
- Chang, C. L., Jiang, J. J., Klein, G., & Chen, H. (2012). Career anchors and disturbances in job turnover decisions—A case study of IT professionals in Taiwan. *Information and Management*, *49*, 309–319. doi:10.1016/j.im.2012.08.002
- Chia, Y. M., Koh, H. C., & Pragasam, J. (2008). An international study of career drivers of accounting students in Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong. *Journal of Education and Work*, *21*, 41–60. doi:10.1080/13639080801957014
- Coetzee, M., & Schreuder, D. (2011). The relation between career anchors, emotional intelligence and employability satisfaction among workers in the service industry. *Southern African Business Review*, *15*, 76–97.
- Danziger, N., Rachman-Moore, D., & Valency, R. (2008). The construct validity of Schein's Career Anchors Orientation Inventory. *Career Development International*, *13*, 7–19. doi:10.1108/13620430810849506
- Danziger, N., & Valency, R. (2006). Career anchors: Distribution and impact on job satisfaction, the Israeli case. *Career Development International*, *11*, 293–303. doi:10.1108/13620430610672513
- DeLong, T. J. (1982a). The career orientations of MBA alumni: A multidimensional model. In R. Katz (Ed.), *Career issues in human resource management* (pp. 50–64). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- DeLong, T. J. (1982b). Re-examining the career anchor model. *Personnel*, *59*, 50–61.
- DeLong, T. J. (1984). A comparison of the career orientations of rural and urban educators. *Educational Review*, *36*, 67–74. doi:10.1080/0013191840360106
- Derr, C. B. (1980). More about career anchors. In C. B. Derr (Ed.), *Work, family, and the career: New frontiers in theory and research* (pp. 166–187). New York, NY: Praeger.
- Derr, C. B., & Briscoe, J. (2007). The catalytic 1970s: Lessons for the 2000s. In H. P. Gunz & M. A. Peiperl (Eds.), *Handbook of career studies* (pp. 528–541). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781412976107.n29
- Dumitrescu, D. M. (2009). Human resources profile in the virtual organization based on the career anchors of Edgar Schein. *Annals of DAAAM and Proceedings*, *2*, 755.
- Ellison, J. A., & Schreuder, A. M. G. (2000). The relation between career anchors, occupational types and job satisfaction of midcareer employees. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *26*(2), 1–6.
- Erwee, R. (1990). Career anchor profiles of a sample of business and professional women. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, *16*(1), 5–12.
- Evans, C. (1996). A review of career anchors in use. *European Journal of Work and Organizational*

- Psychology*, 5, 609–615. doi:10.1080/13594329608414883
- Feldman, D. C., & Bolino, M. C. (1996). Careers within careers: Reconceptualizing the nature of career anchors and their consequences. *Human Resource Management Review*, 6, 89–112. doi:10.1016/S1053-4822(96)90014-5
- Feldman, D. C., & Bolino, M. C. (2000). Career patterns of the self-employed: Career motivations and career outcomes. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 38, 53–67.
- Ghalavandi, H., Arbabisarjou, A., Yarmohammadzadeh, P., Soltanzadeh, V., Iman, S., & Sokooti, N. (2011). Relationship between career anchors and organizational commitment among faculty members. *Journal of Studies in Education*, 2, 58–71. doi:10.5296/jse.v2i1.1439
- Herrbach, O., & Mignonac, K. (2012). Perceived gender discrimination and women's subjective career success: The moderating role of career anchors. *Industrial Relations*, 67, 25–26. doi:10.7202/1008194ar
- Igbaria, M., & Baroudi, J. J. (1993). A short-form measure of career orientations: A psychometric evaluation. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 10, 131–154.
- Igbaria, M., Kassiech, S. K., & Silver, M. (1999). Career orientations and career success among research and development and engineering professionals. *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 16, 29–54. doi:10.1016/S0923-4748(98)00027-7
- Ituma, A. (2006, April). *The internal career: An explorative study of the career anchors of information technology workers in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the ACM SIGMIS CPR Conference on Computer Personnel Research: Forty Four Years of Computer Personnel Research: Achievements, Challenges & the Future, Claremont, CA.
- Ituma, A., & Simpson, R. (2007). Moving beyond Schein's typology: Individual career anchors in the context of Nigeria. *Personnel Review*, 36, 978–995. doi:10.1108/00483480710822463
- Jiang, J. J., Klein, G., & Balloun, J. (1995). The diverse career orientations of MIS personnel. *ACM SIGCPR Computer Personnel*, 16(4), 3–14. doi:10.1145/219716.219719
- Kaplan, R., Shmulevitz, C., & Raviv, D. (2009). Reaching the top: Career anchors and professional development in nursing. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 6, Article 24.
- Kim, N., & McLean, G. (2008). Stability and dominance in career success orientation in South Korean employees. *Human Resource Development International*, 11, 19–34. doi:10.1080/13678860701782295
- Kim, Y., & Cha, J. (2000). Career orientations of R&D professionals in Korea. *R&D Management*, 30, 121–138. doi:10.1111/1467-9310.00163
- Kniveton, B. H. (2004). Managerial career anchors in a changing business environment. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 28, 564–573. doi:10.1108/03090590410549984
- La Lopa, J. M., Beck, J., & Ghiselli, R. (2009). The role of biodata and career anchors on turnover intentions among hospitality and tourism educators. *Journal of Culinary Science and Technology*, 7, 196–206. doi:10.1080/15428050903397112
- Lokas, T. (2007). *What are the career anchors of Statoil's corporate trainees (2006–2008)? A guide for their career management* (Unpublished master's thesis). Cranfield University, Bedfordshire, England.
- Marshall, V., & Bonner, D. (2003). Career anchors and the effects of downsizing: Implications for generations and cultures at work. A preliminary investigation. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 27, 281–291. doi:10.1108/03090590310479910
- Mignonac, K. (2002). Understanding willingness to accept domestic relocation: The example of French managers. *Career Development International*, 7, 359–370. doi:10.1108/13620430210444385
- Mignonac, K., & Herrbach, O. (2003). Managing individual career aspirations and corporate needs: A study of software engineers in France. *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 20, 205–230. doi:10.1016/S0923-4748(03)00019-5
- Nordvik, H. (1991). Work activity and career goals in Holland's and Schein's theories of vocational personalities and career anchors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 38, 165–178. doi:10.1016/0001-8791(91)90024-G
- Petroni, A. (2000). Career orientations and career route preferences in R&D organizations. *Career Development International*, 5, 39–49.
- Quesenberry, J. L., & Trauth, E. M. (2007, April). *What do women want? An investigation of career anchors among women in the IT workforce*. Paper presented at the ACM SIGMIS CPR Conference on Computer Personnel Research: The Global Information Technology Workforce, St. Louis, MO.
- Ramakrishna, H., & Potosky, D. (2003). Conceptualization and exploration of composite career anchors: An analysis of information systems personnel. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 14, 199–214. doi:10.1002/hrdq.1060
- Riordan, S., & Louw-Potgieter, J. (2011). Career success of women academics in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 41, 157–172. doi:10.1177/008124631104100205
- Schein, E. H. (1974). *Career anchors and career paths: A panel study of management school graduates*

- (Technical Report). Cambridge: Organizational Studies Group, Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Schein, E. H. (1975). How career anchors hold executives to their career paths. *Personnel*, 52(3), 11–24.
- Schein, E. H. (1980). *Developing your career: Know your career anchors and develop your options* (Sloan School of Management Working Papers). Retrieved from <http://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/1968>
- Schein, E. H. (1990a). *Career anchors and job/role planning: The links between career pathing and career development* (Sloan School of Management Working Papers). Retrieved from <http://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/2315>
- Schein, E. H. (1990b). *Career anchors: Discovering your real values*. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Schein, E. H. (1996). Career anchors revisited: Implications for career development in the 21st century. *Academy of Management Executive*, 10, 80–88.
- Sukal, M. F., & Lopez, P. D. J. (2007). *Linking career anchors with job satisfaction and work-family conflict*. Paper presented at the 115th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Suutari, V., & Taka, M. (2004). Career anchors of managers with global careers. *Journal of Management Development*, 23, 833–847. doi:10.1108/02621710410558440
- Tan, H. H., & Quek, B. C. (2001). An exploratory study on the career anchors of educators in Singapore. *Journal of Psychology*, 135, 527–545. doi:10.1080/00223980109603717
- Targeted Learning. (2012). *Mastering my career workshop*. Retrieved from Targeted Learning database.
- Van Rensburg, S., Rothmann, J. C., & Rothmann, S. (2001, September). *The relationship between personality characteristics and career anchors of pharmacists*. Paper presented at the 13th Conference of the Southern African Institute for Management Scientists, Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- Van Vuuren, L. J., & Fourie, C. (2000). Career anchors and career resilience: Supplementary constructs. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 26(3), 15–20.
- Weber, K., & Ladkin, A. (2011). Career identity and its relation to career anchors and career satisfaction: The case of convention and exhibition industry professionals in Asia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 16, 167–182. doi:10.1080/10941665.2011.556339
- Wils, L., Wils, T., & Tremblay, M. (2010). Toward a career anchor structure: An empirical investigation of engineers. *Relations Industrielles*, 65, 236–256. doi:10.7202/044301ar
- Wood, L., Winston, R. B., Jr., & Polkosnik, M. C. (1985). Career orientations and professional development of young student affairs professionals. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 26, 532–539.