

Career Success

The effects of career anchor-job fit, psychological contract fulfillment and Perceived organizational support on career success

Mahboobeh Arab (corresponding author)

Faculty Member at Rahedanesh Institute of Higher Education, Babol, Iran
mahboobeh_arab2003@yahoo.com

Mir ali Seyyed Naghavi

Faculty of Management, Allameh tabatabai university, Tehran, Iran
asnagavi@yahoo.com

Mohsen Alizadeh Sani

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran
Alizadehsani@umz.ac.ir

Abstract

This research related to effects of different forms of person-environment fit on behaviors and work outcomes, demonstrated that career anchor- job fit positively related to career success. Furthermore the moderator role of psychological contract fulfillment and perceived organizational support help for more clearness this relation and better understanding of career success predictors. This research via mix of qualitative and quantitative methods recognizes a new dimension of career anchor, that contributes in promotion of knowledge for career anchor theory. This research with mix approach uses from qualitative interviews and questionnaire. The Respondents of research includes employees of information technology (IT) and financial departments in three Iranian public banks. The results of research recognize a new dimension of career anchor as “halal income earning”. This dimension was not recognized and discussed in other researches.

Keywords: Career anchor, Career success, Fit theory, Perceived organizational support, Psychological contract, Bank.

1.0 Introduction

The concept of a career has been the focus of studies by researchers, particularly researchers in management, for a long time (Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1996; Nicholson, 2000). The importance for organizational career management is the recognition that there are strong non-monetary factors which affect work and career satisfaction, and career anchor provide a way of understanding these motivators of career decisions. Many organizational career programs assume that employees are motivated by the prospect of promotion, but while there is evidence to suggest that employees promotion aspirations are often underestimated (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995) there is also considerable evidence for differences in motivation. Barth (1993) put forward the organizational benefits of recognizing other motivators as firstly, being a greater understanding of why quality staff choose to leave the organization and secondly, the ability to target career management systems more effectively and increase job satisfaction through more constructive discussions with employees who might be dissatisfied. If employees remain in a job that is not congruent with their career anchor and repress their motivations, they seek to achieve the missing elements of their anchor through outside work interests or by withdrawing commitment, which has obvious implications for organizations (Barth, 1993).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Career

A common view in the growing literature on careers is the notion that careers have an external as well as an internal dimension. The external career concerns the series of positions or offices which an individual holds (Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1996; Nicholson, 2000), while the internal career concerns the internal values, interests and motives held by an individual. A foundational model for understanding individuals' internal careers is Schein's career anchor theory.

Schein (1987) defines a career anchor as: that one element in our self-concept that we will not give up, even when forced to make a difficult decision.

Schein's (1987) seminal work on career anchors suggests that there are eight major types of career anchors that drive individuals' career decisions. These anchors are:

- (1) Security and stability (the desire for security of employment and benefit);
- (2) Autonomy and independence (the desire for freedom to pursue career interests that is free of organizational constraints);
- (3) Technical/functional competence (the desire for enhanced technical competence and credibility);
- (4) Managerial competence (the desire for managerial responsibilities);
- (5) Entrepreneurial creativity (the desire to create and develop new products and services);
- (6) Service and dedication to a cause (the desire to engage in activities that improves the world in some ways);
- (7) Pure challenge (the desire to overcome major obstacles and solve almost unsolvable problems); and
- (8) Life style (the desire to integrate personal and career needs) (Schein, 1987).

Schein's career anchor theory is founded on the premise that congruence between individuals' career orientation and work environment will result in job satisfaction and increased commitment while incongruence will result in job dissatisfaction and turnover (Feldman & Bolino, 1996). Although Schein's career anchor theory has received empirical support (Igbaria et al. 1991; Petroni, 2000), there have been several critiques. While the work of Schein provides a sound starting point for developing an understanding of the nature of individuals' internal careers, it may not capture the unique career experiences of individuals in different national contexts. The dominance of the Anglo-American perspective in the career literature may well have marginalized the significance of non-Western-based factors in our understanding of career development. As a result, we know relatively little about the dimensions of, and importance attached to, career anchors that exist among individuals in developing countries such as Iran. In order to fill this research gap, first section of paper addresses the following research questions:

What are the different dimensions of career orientations that exist among Professional (IT and Finance) workers in Iran?

2.2 Career success

Career success has been defined as "the positive psychological or work related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences" (Judge & Cable, 1995). Career success can be further sub-divided into two different components: an intrinsic component and an extrinsic component. The intrinsic component of career success can be defined as "an individual's subjective reactions to his or her own career, and is most commonly operationalized as career or job satisfaction". Intrinsic career success also can include time for outside interests and feelings about occupational environments (Heslin, 2005; Ng et al., 2005; Ballout, 2007).

From an extrinsic perspective, career success is evaluated "with the use of external or objective reference points or norms". Extrinsic career success is relatively objective and observable and most often refers to independently recognizable career accomplishments. This typically consists of highly visible outcomes, such as pay and ascendancy (Seibert et al., 2001).

2.3 Person-Environment (PE) fit and Career Success

In organization studies, fit or congruence between what individuals prefer and what organizations provide underlies various organizational structuring, motivation, and job-design theories. The degree of person-environment (i.e., P-E) fit is usually assumed to predict attitudes, behaviors, well being, as well as work outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover, and performance. The more congruent one's preferences are to what one receives (i.e., high P-E fit), the more satisfied the individual will be. This assumption pervades P-E fit theories. The P-E fit phenomenon can take on many different forms, for example, person-job, person-organization, person-group, person-supervisor, and person-vocation fit, among others. The general assumption underlying P-E fit theory is that positive attitudes and behaviors are a function of the compatibility of the individuals to their environments (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

While previous career literature has been useful in identifying several categories of influences on career success, little research on the effect of person-environment fit on career success has been conducted (Ballout, 2007). This leads to the proposition that employees' perceptions of career anchor- job fit will have positive impact on their career success.

H1: career anchor- job fit is likely to be positively related to career success.

2.4 Mediating variables: perceived organizational support and psychological contract

The relationship depicted above might be better represented through a mediation model. To study the employee-employer exchange, two important frameworks have been increasingly, but not exclusively, adopted by scholars, namely perceived organizational support (POS) and psychological contracts (PCs) (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000). PC is defined as an employee's belief regarding terms and conditions of an exchange relationship with their organization (Rousseau, 1998) such as 1) Wages based on time on job, rank or performance, or 2) Compensation and training in exchange for loyalty, performance etc.

According to the authors, PCs consist of sets of individual beliefs or perceptions regarding reciprocal obligations. The individual nature of psychological contracts is their defining attribute which makes them conceptually different from both a formal and implied contract, as it considers an individual's beliefs of the terms and conditions of an agreement between the individual and his/her employer. Unlike formal employee-employer contracts, PC is inherently perceptual and therefore an individual's interpretations of the terms and conditions of the obligations within the contract may not be similar to the other individual (Kickul et al., 2004). Thus, the content of PCs may include any item that might be exchanged between the organization and the employee (e.g., compensation, training, support, in exchange for loyalty, performance). PC research has explored the employer-employee exchange relationship by investigating consequences of perceived contract fulfillment or breach (the extent to which an employee believes that their employer has fulfilled or failed to fulfill one or more of its promised obligations) on employee attitudes and behavior. Prior studies have reported a positive relationship between perceived contract fulfillment and employees' organizational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005).

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to an individual's perception concerning the degree to which an organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (i.e. the degree to which the organization is committed to its employees) (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Eisenberger et al. (1986) used a social exchange framework to argue that employees who perceive high level of support from their organizations tend to feel obligated to the organizations which in turn makes them more committed to their organization.

POS focuses only on the employer's side of the exchange as perceived by the employees, whereas PC includes an employee and employer perspectives, as PC is about an employee's perception of the reciprocal obligations between that individual and the employer (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005).

Past research has suggested that organizational-level factors need to be taken into account when investigating the antecedents and correlates of career success. In this study we analyze how Perceived organizational support and Psychological contract relate to career success (Ng et al., 2005). Hence, we propose that:

H2: Perceived organizational support will mediate the relationship between career anchor- job fit and career success.

H3: Psychological contract fulfillment will mediate the relationship between career anchor- job fit and career success.

3.0 Research Approach

The research was conducted in two phases and adopted a mixed method approach, involving the use of semi-structured interviews (in the first phase) and questionnaires (in the second phase). The two methods are discussed in detail below. The research sample was drawn from IT and Financial workers in three Iranian public banks. Out of the 420 questionnaires that were sent out, 317 questionnaires (75 per cent) were returned.

3.1 The Qualitative Method

This section sets out to explore the career anchors that exist among IT and Financial workers in Iranian public banks and also to establish the strongest anchors in this context. The qualitative approach involved interviews with 9 IT and 12 financial workers between June-August 2010. Participants' age ranged from 27-55 years. Their tenure in the industry varied from five to twenty years, while their educational qualification varied from professional certificate to Master's degree. An interview protocol was adapted from Schein's (1990) career anchor interviews. The interview questions are shown in Table 1. An Analysis of the qualitative data involved the use of a grounded theory approach which involved developing concepts, categories and theories that are "grounded" in the collected field data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first stage involved the verbatim transcription of interview data. Second, a coding scheme was developed to organize data and to segment and identify patterns of response. Different codes were subsequently developed to capture the motivations underpinning career/job changes. Finally, codes with similar characteristics were identified and where appropriate amalgamated to form categories. Any category that shared common elements with another was amalgamated to form a core category. At this stage, the data revealed 11 dominant categories representing the different career interests expressed by the participants: Economic stability, Geographic stability,

General managerial competence, Technical competence, Creativity, Autonomy, Challenge, Life style, True service, Halal income earning and Identity.

Table 1: Interview protocol

The interview protocol consisted of the following (repeated) series of questions	The interview also contained questions dealing with overall career goals and life plans. These included:
(1) What was your next major change in job or organization?	(1) As you look over your career and life so far, can you describe some times that you especially enjoyed (did not enjoy) and what made them enjoyable (not enjoyable)?
(2) How did this come about? What motivated the change?	(2) As you look ahead in your career, what things do you look forward to (want to avoid)?
(3) How did you feel about the change? How did it relate to your goals?	(3) What is the most important career need that you will not give up when forced to make a career decision?

Source: (Schein, 1990)

3.2 The Quantitative Method

The quantitative method involved the use of questionnaires to collect data from IT and Financial workers from September- October 2011. This involved the examination of the relative strength of the different career anchors identified from interviews and also test of conceptual model (Figure 1) . This model illustrates that career anchor- job fit positively related to career success Furthermore the moderator role of psychological contract fulfillment(PC) and perceived organizational support(POS).

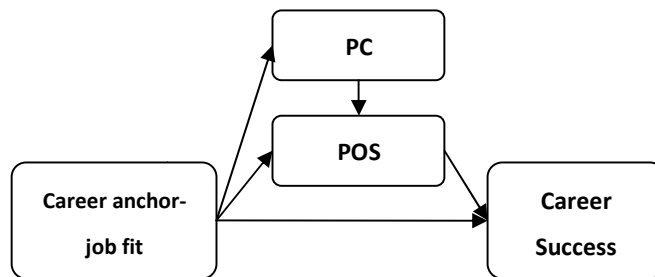


Figure1: The Research Model

3.2.1 Measures

The questionnaire was divided into six sections. The first section focused on demographic variables while other sections assessing the variables of research conceptual model .The second section focused on assessing career anchors of the respondents. The items that assessed career anchors were developed from the findings from the qualitative research. However, some standard items from previous research by Schein (1987) were also modified and included. The items that were adopted from Schein’s study were those items that tested the factors that collaborated with the factors we identified in the current. The third section focused on assessing Career anchor-job Fit. The fourth section focused on assessing Career success that includes objective and subjective dimensions. The objective success was assessed by compensation and number of promotions .The subjective success was assessed by questionnaire of Greenhouse(1990) ,the fifth section focused on assessing perceived organizational support(POS) by questionnaire of Eisenberger (1986), the sixth section includes psychological contract fulfillment was measured using a list of 15

inducements that are central to how employees evaluate their employment relationship. This instrument was developed from the Psychological Contract Inventory (Rousseau,1998).

The variables were measured on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from (1) “Of no importance/not at all true” to (5) “Extremely important/completely true”.

4.0 Research Results

4.1 Demographic profile

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents

	Frequency	Percentage		Frequency	Percentage
Gender			Profession		
Male	200	63/1	Finance	168	53
Female	116	36/6	IT	149	47
Missing	1	0/3			
Education			Bank		
Diploma	28	8/8	National Bank	147	46/4
Associate of arts	13	4/1	Agriculture Bank	121	38/2
Bachelor’s	168	53	Export development Bank	49	15/4
Master’s	99	31/2			
Missing	9	2/8			

4.2 Findings From The Qualitative Data

Eleven career anchors were identified in the first phase of the study. Nine Career anchors were similar to Schein’s work, and one Career anchor (Identity) was similar to Delong(1979) work, but in a departure from other works, a new career orientation “Halal income earning” emerged from the data. A number of participants focused on God satisfaction, ethics, eschatology and other religious matters in selection of career opportunities. This concept derived from religious beliefs and emphasis on Halal income earning in Islam. We defined this anchor as: accomplishment of work for God satisfaction.

Traditions in Islam clearly point out that it is the responsibility of a true Muslim to seek the wealth, which is Halal and make himself busy in benefiting from all lawful means at his disposal. So, when a Muslim intends to adopt a profession, start out a business, or seek an employment, then he must seriously think that if they are lawful for him.

A person is given strength and courage to carry out righteous deeds if he really eats Halal, which is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, “O Messengers eat from the good things and act righteously. Of whatever you do, I am fully aware.” (Al-Qur’an, 23:51)

These narrations clearly confirm the idea that the act of consuming lawful earnings is highly commendable and appreciable in the sight of Allah. On the contrary, consuming Haram is strictly prohibited and condemned in Islam. Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur’an, “O those who believe do not eat up each other's property by false means unless it is a trade with your mutual consent.” (3:29)

At another place in the Holy Qur’an Allah (swt) says, “And do not eat up each other's property by false means, nor approach the authorities with it to eat up a portion of a property of the people sinfully while you know (all that).” (2:188)

In brief, where the Holy Qur’an has urged the believers to seek Halal livelihood and look for a lawful source of income in order to achieve abundant blessings and great spiritual bliss in this life, it has also advised them in unequivocal terms about abstaining from the Haram way of life that has been outlined for them in the Shariah. The Holy Qur’an has clearly mentioned the evil results of consuming Haram and given clear details of the terrible and humiliating Punishment in the Hereafter for those earning wealth through unlawful means(Khan, 2010).

4.3 Findings From The Quantitative Data

4.3.1 Construct validity of career anchors

The quantitative study enabled the strength of the identified anchors to be established. To this end, to test the construct validity of the proposed eleven-construct measurement model of career anchors, we employed confirmatory factor analysis using Lisrel software. The initial measurement model was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assure convergent and discriminant validity and unidimensionality. We purified the measurement scales by reviewing each construct that emerged from our analysis and, as a result, deleted indicators reflecting the “Geographic stability” construct, as it has a low loading on its construct.

4.3.2 Research model

With reference to the model shown in Figure 1, the Pearson correlations between the constructs (Table 3) suggested, a priori, that there were many significant relationships.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for satisfaction model variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1.Career anchor-job fit	2/86	0/68	1/00			
2.PC	2/82	0/75	0/269	1/00		
3.POS	2/73	0/68	0/392	0/787	1/00	
4.Career success	2/92	0/71	0/439	0/407	0/497	1/00

The theorized model fit the data, with a P value of chi-square 898/02 exceeding the minimum cut-off of 0.05, all the fit indices above 0.90 and a low root mean square residual (0.079), are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Fit measures for the model

NFI	BNNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI
0/94	0/95	0/96	0/83	0/80
NFI: Normed fit index ; BNNFI: Bentler non normed fit index ; CFI: Comparative fit index ; GFI :Goodness of fit ; AGFI : Adjusted goodness of fit index				

Table 5 show the direct and indirect effects of Career anchor-job fit on Career success.

Table 5. results about the relationships of research model(significant at p<0.01)

Independent variable	Direct	Mediation variable	Indirect	Overall
Career anchor-job fit	0.32	Pos	0.0988	0.418
Career anchor-job fit	0.32	Pc-Pos	0.124	0.443

5. Conclusion and Implications of The Study

This study was limited by the set of factors that were proposed to be linked to career success. Although there are many predictors that have been examined in previous models of career success, this study was just explored the impact of Career anchor-job fit, POS, and PC on career success.

Career anchors Drawing on institutional theory, which argues that societal context shapes behavior and decisions, this paper set out to explore the career anchors of individuals in Iran(as a Islamic society). According to this research ten career anchors among IT & financial workers were identified: Autonomy/independence, Economic stability, Technical competence, General managerial competence, Creativity, Service/dedication to a cause, Challenge, Life style, Identity, and Halal income earning. The dimension of career anchor as “Halal income earning” wasn’t recognized and discussed in other researches. This anchor is conceptualized in this manner: completion of the job for willingness of God. In comparison this anchor with literature of career anchors, can discuss following issues: First, recognizing a career anchor as “Halal income earning” is relevant and aligned with researchers literary works that emphasize on impact of societal institutions and national culture on shaping career anchor. While the work of Schein provides a sound starting point for developing and understanding of the nature of individuals internal careers , it may

not capture the unique career experiences of individuals in different national contexts (especially in Islamic and developing countries such as Iran) (Baruch,2004;Thomas & Inkson, 2006). One of purposes this research is filling this gap. The interest in this anchor is largely based on the religious beliefs and emphasis on Halal income earning in Islam.

Second, identifying a career anchor as “Halal income earning”, can know second inquiry of researchers that underline on linkage of Spirituality and work and its effect on career choice. These researchers look for more profound meaning of life and believe that these concepts have very important effects on individual work behaviors in organizations (Sheep, 2004; Kinjerski, 2008). But the concept of spirituality in Islamic opinion is different from the concept of spirituality in irreligious and western opinion. Islamic spirituality and ideality is God-based that is to say that(meaning that) the high aim is not access to metaphysics forces nor only desirable mental conditions rather pursue ascendancy truth and upper from all of universe and mean to all cosmology(Mazahery,2008). Third, results of this research can spot as second past research, since in qualitative analysis of interviews, following anchors that Schein(1990) and also identity anchor that Delong(1979) emerged.

This study indicated that career anchor-job fit variable significant related to psychological contract fulfillment and perceived organizational support and career success in employees of IT and financial departments in three public banks in Iran. When an employee has a good fit with a particular job, he/she is likely to engage in behaviors and create situations that support higher levels of job performance and achievements. Furthermore help to clarify the importance of psychological contract fulfillment and perceived organizational support in career success. Therewith denote importance of recognition and learning POS & PC and manners to improve them. Via improvement POS & PC can increase career success in employees and assist to productivity.

This study, used a perceived measure of fit with IT and finance employees for examining job variables and internal career anchors interact to influence POS, PC, and P-J fit. Therefore it is suggesting to using actual fit for next research. In light of the PE fit studies, multiple perspectives and constructs of fit have emerged to include person-job (PJ) fit, person-vocation (PV) fit, person-person (PP) fit, person-group (PG) fit, person- organization (PO) fit and person-culture (PC) fit. Consequently, future research is needed to expand the various levels of PE fit for more complete understanding of the relationship between level of PE fit and career success.

References

- Ballout, Hassan, I. (2007). Career success: the effects of human capital, person-environment fit and organizational support. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol 22, No. 8, 741-765.
- Barth,T.J. (1993).Career anchor theory. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*,Vol.13,No.4, 27-42.
- Baruch, Y. (2004). *Managing Careers: Theory and Practice*. Prentice-Hall, Harlow.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., & Conway, N. (2005). Perceived organizational support and employee diligence, commitment, and innovation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.90, 774-781.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., & Kessler, I.(2000).Consequences of the psychological contract for the employment relationship: A large scale survey. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 37, 903-930.
- Delong,T.(1979).The career drives of graduate alumni : an empirical study. *Doctoral Dissertation*, purdue university, *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol.40,No.6, 3400A.
- Eisenberger,R, Huntington,R, Hunchinson,S, & Sowa,D. (1986). Perceived organizational support, *Journal of Applied psychology*, Vol.71, 500-507.
- Feldman, D.C. and Bolino, M.C. (1996).Careers within careers: reconceptualising the nature of career orientations and their consequences. *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 6 No. 2, 89-112.
- Herriot, P. and Pemberton, C. (1995).*New Deals: The Revolution in Managerial Careers*, John Wiley, Chichester.
- Heslin,P. (2005).Conceptualizing and evaluating career success. *Journal of organizational Behavior*,Vol.26, ,113-136.
- Igbaria, M., Greenhaus, J.H. and Parasuraman, S. (1991).Career orientations of MIS employees: an empirical analysis. *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 15 No. 2, 151-69.
- Judge,T. ,Cable,D. , “Boudreau,J. & Bretz,R. (1995). An empirical investigation of the predictors of executive career success. *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 48, 485-519.
- Khan ,Shoebullah(2010). *Earning Halal in Islam*. [Online] Available: www.islamitijara.com.
- Kickul, J., Lester, S. W., & Belgio, E. (2004). Attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of psychological contract breach: A cross cultural comparison of the United States and Hong Kong Chinese. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, No.2, 229-252.

- Kinjerski, Val. (2008). Four paths to spirit at work: journeys of personal meaning, fulfillment, well-being, and transcendence through work. *The Career Development Quarterly*, vol56, 319-329.
- Kristof-Brown, A.L., Zimmerman, R.D., & Johnson, E.C. (2005). Consequences of individuals' fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology*, 58, 281-342.
- Mazahery, S. (2008). schools of Theosophy. *Journal of AYINE SOLOOK*, Vol.2, 56-74.
- Ng, T., Eby, L., & Sorensen, K., & Feldman, D. (2005). Predictors of objective and subjective career success: A meta-analysis. *Personnel psychology*, Vol.58, No.2, 367-408.
- Nicholson, N. (2000). Motivation-selection-connection: an evolutionary model of career development. in Goffee, R.E. and Peiperl, M.A. (Eds), *Career Frontiers: New Conceptions of Working Lives*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Petroni, A. (2000). Strategic career development for R&D staff: a field research. *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 6, No 3/4, 1-12.
- Rousseau, D. M. (1998). Psychological and implied contracts in organizations. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, Vol. 2, 121-139.
- Schein, E.H. (1987). Individuals and careers. in Lorsch, J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Schein, E.H. (1990). *Career Anchors: Discovering Your Real Values*, Pfeiffer and Company, San Diego, CA.
- Seibert, S.E., Kraimer, M.L. and Crant, J.M. (2001). What do proactive people do? A longitudinal model linking proactive personality and career success. *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 54 No. 4, 845-74.
- Sheep, M.L. (2004). Nailing down gossamer: A valid measure of the person-organization fit of workplace spirituality. In D.H. Nagao (Ed). *Best paper proceedings of sixty-third annual meeting of academy of management*.
- Sparrow, P. and Hiltrop, J.M. (1996). *European Human Resource Management in Transition*. Prentice, London.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.
- Thomas, D.C. and Inkson, K. (2006). *Careers across cultures*. in Gunz, H. and Peiperl, M. (Eds), Sage Publications, New York, NY.