The Use of Psychological Assessment and Occupational Preferences

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Deanna Dunn

Thesis Advisor
Carl R. Summers

Ball State University

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Abstract

Based upon a literature review of Schein's (1978) previous work with career anchors, Summers (1979) developed the Career Anchor Analysis Survey. The survey was designed to assist individuals in making career choices. This discussion of the Career Anchor Analysis Survey firsts explains the background underlying the basis of the test. Next, a brief description of the test is given which further clarifies its organization. Finally, the results that the test has generated when administered to Ball State University undergraduates are given and discussed.
Throughout one's college career, he or she may often wonder what will happen after graduation. A main concern that arises frequently is centered around the area of a career. Should I continue my education? Should I search for a career out of my field? Should I settle for anything less than what I have always wanted to do? Schein (1978) devised a theoretical approach to place individuals in occupational categories that he called career anchors. The only problem with Schein's theory concerning occupational preferences is that it had no practical application because there was currently no way to measure one's career anchor; therefore, in order for the career anchor theory to be useful, a means to measure one's career anchor was needed. One possible way to approach this problem was to develop a scale that would force individuals to choose elements of the five anchors that Schein described. Accordingly, Summers designed the Career Anchor Analysis Survey which serves to overcome the measurement problem. Specifically, Summers devised a forced choice instrument to measure one's career anchor. Using the test, Summers collected the norms of a large sample collected at Ball State. The purpose of this paper is to show that the use of psychological assessment is often beneficial when one is trying to enter the workplace. I will first describe the basis of the test. Next, I will give a brief description of the test. Finally, I will explain the results that have been derived from the administration of the test to Ball State University undergraduates.

After a longitudinal study of a group of management school students and eventual graduates, the basic idea of the career anchor concept originated from the work of Schein (1978). Schein believed that a person's career anchor was made up of three distinct components taken together. These three components were one's self-perceived talents and abilities, self-perceived motives and needs, and self-perceived attitudes and values. Thus, the function of the career anchor according to Schein was "a way of organizing experience, identifying one's area of contribution in the long run, generating criteria for
kinds of work settings in which one wants to function, and identifying patterns of ambition and criteria for success by which one will measure oneself" (Schein, 1978). With this function of the career anchor in mind and the longitudinal data from the management school students, Schein sorted the basic career anchors into five categories.

The first of these basic categories was labeled as technical/functional. Persons in this anchor were not interested in moving up in the workplace as much as they were interested in feeling competent in their specific area of work. A promotion out of the specific area of work would not be a positive change to persons anchored in the technical/functional category. The preference is for excelling at a specialty. For example, a person who worked as manager of accessories at a large department store would not consider a promotion to store manager as positive. Instead, an individual in this anchor would rather manage accessories at two stores as a promotion to remain in the area of his or her specialty and to stay satisfied at work. Thus, the individual who is anchored in the technical/functional category tends to measure success and satisfaction by the feeling of competence in the area of specialty.

The second category of career anchors that arose was labeled as management. Unlike the technical/functional anchors, the students in this category were more concerned with the ultimate goal of management and had no exact particular area of commitment. As Schein discovered, the management anchors were "able to make decisions under conditions of risk and uncertainty, responsible for acting on whatever crises arose, being liable for the consequences of one's own decisions and for those of subordinates" (Schein, 1978). This group of anchors possessed a combination of skill, ability, and competency that allowed them to function successfully in the area of general management.

The third career anchor that arose from the longitudinal study was labeled as security and stability. Individuals in this anchor are more concerned with a steady, stable income, a
Career Anchors

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retirement plan, and a secure future. Often, a specific geographical location close to friends and family is also involved. As Schein pointed out, these anchors were either concerned with "stable membership in a given organization...or a feeling of settling down, stabilizing the family, and integrating oneself into the community" (Schein, 1978). Unlike the previously discussed anchors, promotions or speciality in a specific area was not the driving factor but rather the achievement of stable life tended to be the strongest drive.

The fourth career anchor was also unlike the previous groups. This anchor was labeled as the creativity anchor because this group possessed the need to create or build their own unique product. Although many individuals in the creativity anchor possessed some of the qualities of the earlier anchors such as the desire for growth or stability, the main desire was the creation of their own product. The creativity anchors were continually developing new projects or involving themselves in new ventures. Further, this group could function in many areas because they do not become fixated in any specific organization.

Finally, the fifth group of anchors that Schein described was the autonomous/independent anchor. This group possesses the need to "be maximally free of organizational constraints to pursue their professional or technical/functional competence" (Schein, 1978). Although these individuals often possess the stability or the technical desires of the previous anchors, their overriding need is independence. A career such as a college professor where one can establish his or her own work habits, pace, and schedule would be the career of choice for anchors in the autonomous/independent anchor.

After a literature review of Schein's work with the concept of career anchors, Summers designed the Career Anchor Analysis Survey. Using the five various career anchors as the basis, a forty-eight item test was developed. By contrasting aspects of two different anchors using statements associated with those anchors, an individual must choose one statement over another. This forced choice technique is based on the fact that an
individual in a particular anchor will choose more statements associated with it. For example, the first question on the test states, "I like a job where I can lead people" or "I like a job where I can create new inventions". The assumption is that a person possessing the management anchor would choose the first statement whereas one anchored in the creativity category would choose the second statement. The forty-eight statements that make up the test are based on the descriptions of the anchors in Schein's work. After the test is completed, a score may be totalled by counting the number of items that the individual chose for each anchor. It would be expected that one who desires a very autonomous job where he or she sets his own schedule and workpace, for example, would have the highest score in this anchor. The test also allows individuals who are uncertain about what career direction to take at this time an opportunity to explore the possibilities in the area they scored highest in. Although Summers himself has stated that the test is not for long-term career predictions, it may be very useful for a beginning career choice.

As Crary, Pazy, and Wolfe point out in a discussion of the variability in the conception of self, "feelings, sensations, and images of ourselves are influenced by who we are, who we are with, and what we are doing" (Crary, Pazy, & Wolfe, 1988). It is due to these situational factors that Summers devised the test as a guide to a career rather than as a predictor of a career. Finally, to account for random guessing by some test-takers and to account for those individuals who try to please the experimenter and answer the way they feel is "correct", Summers also included eight "dummy" questions. These questions are a forced choice between statements that do not belong in any of the five anchors. For example, the first "dummy" question states, "I like a job that pays well" or "I like a job where I am part of a winning team". Neither of these statements belongs to any of the five anchors as Schein described them. Thus, the responses to them are not counted in the scoring of the test. A copy of the Career Anchor Analysis Survey is located behind
Appendix A. Obviously, the test is heavily based on Schein's work to allow individuals a fresh point of view when making career choices. Furthermore, it allows one to view what area he or she is most interested in.

Now that the basis of the Career Anchor Analysis Survey and the design of it are understood, I will explain the results that have been generated using Ball State University undergraduates. A table is listed on Appendix A that shows the percentiles that resulted for every score in each of the five anchors. It is quite obvious when observing the percentile scores that individuals with a high score in one anchor tend to have lower scores in the other four. This demonstrates rather well the fact that the test does indeed help to find the area of greatest interest. For example, individuals who scored a six on the technical/functional scale ranked in the 4.7 percentile whereas this same score is in the 66th percentile on the management scale. By looking at one's percentile rank, he or she could view his or her score relative to others for the area of greatest interest. Thus, these persons in the example would be much more interested in general management careers over careers that allow for the specialization of a particular ability.

Although the test often shows the one anchor of greatest interest, there are also cases where individuals score very similar in more than one category. An example would be a case with a score of nine on the management scale which is the 87th percentile and the 80.8 percentile on the creativity scale. Thus, these individuals who scored a nine on each of these scales would lean toward general management positions that allow for creativity or toward either one of these anchors in a career choice. Obviously, there are cases where more than one anchor could be used as a career guide. Another example of a case where an individual scored similarly in two categories could be the case of rather than only being involved in a secure job, one could also desire a creative position in a company. By reviewing the results, it has been shown that the Career Anchor Analysis Survey may be
quite helpful in discovering the area or areas of greatest occupational interest.

As earlier stated, it is often difficult to make career choices upon graduation from college. By reviewing Schein's work with the concept of career anchors and devising a test to discover the area of greatest interest, Summers has helped to make this task much less difficult. The underlying basis of the test, the design of the test, and the results of it all demonstrate that it is indeed possible to use psychological assessments to benefit individuals who are trying to enter the workplace.
Career Anchors

References


Career anchors

Appendix A

Percentile Scores of the Subjects on the Basic Career Anchors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Security</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>27.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<td>37.9</td>
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<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>78.6</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. I like a job where I can lead people.
   OR
   I like a job where I can create new innovations.

2. I like a job that pays well.
   OR
   I like a job where I am part of a winning team.

3. I enjoy the feeling of knowing what I am doing.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of knowing who I am and where I fit in.

4. I like a job where I can be my own boss.
   OR
   I like a job where I am part of a winning team.

5. I dream of being the best in my field.
   OR
   I dream of creating some new invention or writing a book.

6. I enjoy the feeling of receiving a big pay check.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of freedom in making my own decisions.

7. I like a job where I am part of a winning team.
   OR
   I like a job where I can excell in my field of expertise.

8. If I could have my own way, I would:
   Use all of my efforts to become the best in my field.
   OR
   Spend all of my life leading people.

9. If I could have my own way, I would:
   Live close to friends and family.
   OR
   Spend my life leading other people.
10. I like a job where I am part of a winning team.
   OR
   I like a job where I can lead people.

11. I enjoy the feeling of leading others toward a common goal.
    OR
    I enjoy the feeling of knowing what I am doing.

12. I like a job where I can be my own boss.
    OR
    I like a job where I can create new innovations.

13. I dream of creating some new invention or writing a book.
    OR
    I dream of owning my own business or becoming my own boss.

14. If I had my own way, I would:
    Put all of my efforts into becoming my own boss.
    OR
    Live close to friends and family.

15. I like a job where I can lead people.
    OR
    I like a job where I can be my own boss.

16. If I had my own way, I would:
    Live close to friends and family.
    OR
    Use all of my efforts to be the best in my field.

17. I dream of becoming a great leader.
    OR
    I dream of creating some new invention or writing a book.

18. If I could have my own way, I would:
    Spend my life creating things or ideas.
    OR
    Live close to friends and family.
19. I dream of being considered the best in my field.
   OR
   I dream of becoming a great leader.

20. If I could have my own way, I would:
   Spend my life making money.
   OR
   Use all of my efforts to be the best in my field.

21. I like a job where I am part of a winning team.
   OR
   I like a job where I create new innovations.

22. I enjoy the feeling of leading others toward a common goal.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of freedom in making my own decisions.

23. If I had my own way, I would:
   Put all of my efforts into becoming my own boss.
   OR
   Spend all of my time creating things or ideas.

24. I like a job where I can excell in my field of expertise.
   OR
   I like a job where I can lead people.

25. I dream of owning my own business or becoming my own boss.
   OR
   I dream of becoming a great leader.

26. I dream of working without fear of being laid off.
   OR
   I dream of becoming a great leader.

27. I enjoy the feeling of creating something new and exciting.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of freedom in making my own decisions.
28. I like a job where I can be my own boss.
   OR
   I like a job where I can excel in my field of expertise.

29. I dream of a job with high social importance.
   OR
   I dream of becoming a great leader.

30. If I could have my own way, I would:
   Spend my life leading people.
   OR
   Put all of my efforts into becoming my own boss.

31. I dream of working without fear of being laid off.
   OR
   I dream of owning my own business or being my own boss.

32. I dream of a job where I can make a lot of money.
   OR
   I dream of creating some new invention or writing a book.

33. I enjoy the feeling of knowing who I am and where I fit in.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of leading others toward a common goal.

34. If I had my own way, I would:
   Use all of my efforts to become the best in my field.
   OR
   Put all of my efforts into becoming my own boss.

35. If I had my own way, I would:
   Use all of my efforts into becoming the best in my field.
   OR
   Spend all of my time creating new things or ideas.

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36. I enjoy the feeling of receiving a good pay check.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of knowing what I am doing.

37. I dream of working without fear of being laid off.
   OR
   I dream of creating some new invention or writing a book.

38. I enjoy the feeling of knowing what I am doing.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of creating something new and exciting.

39. I enjoy the feeling of freedom in making my own decisions.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of knowing what I am doing.

40. I dream of working without fear of being laid off.
   OR
   I dream of being the best in my field.

41. If I could have my own way, I would:
   Spend my life leading people.
   OR
   Spend my life creating new things or ideas.

42. I enjoy the feeling of creating something new and exciting.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of leading others toward a common goal.

43. I like a job where I can excel in my field of expertise.
   OR
   I like a job where I can create new innovations.

44. I enjoy the feeling of knowing who I am and where I fit in.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of creating something new and exciting.
45. I dream of owning my own business or being my own boss.
   OR
   I dream of being the best in the field.

46. I enjoy the feeling of knowing who I am and where I fit in.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of freedom in making my own decisions.

47. If I could have my own way, I would:
   Spend my life making money.
   OR
   Spend my life creating new things and ideas.

48. I enjoy the feeling of leading others toward a common goal.
   OR
   I enjoy the feeling of receiving a good pay check.
SCORING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CAREER ANCHOR ANALYSIS SURVEY

Step 1: Totals

Add all of the boxes marked with an "x". If they do not equal 48, check to see that all of the pairs are marked with one "x" per pair.

Step 2: T-Score

Add all of the boxes marked "x" in column A. This is your Technical Anchor score (T-score).

My T-score is ________

Step 3: M-Score

Add all of the boxes marked "x" in column B. This is your Management Anchor score (M-score).

My M-score is ________

Step 4: C-Score

Add all of the boxes marked "x" in column C. This is your Creativity Anchor score (C-score).

My C-score is ________

Step 5: S-Score

Add all of the boxes marked "x" in column D. This is your Security Anchor score (S-score).

My S-score is ________

Step 6: A-Score

Add all of the boxes marked "x" in column E. This is your Autonomy Anchor score (A-score).

My A-score is ________

* The last two columns are "dummy" questions used in designing tests. You do not need to count them.

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