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A Follow-up Study on the Career Orientations of Japanese and Canadian Students*

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This study compares the career orientations of Japanese and Canadian students about to make their way in today's changing workplace. An instrument based primarily on Schein's (1990) Career Anchor questionnaire was applied to a total of 727 business students in the two countries. Discriminant analysis of the data showed the Canadians were more oriented towards achieving general management success than the Japanese. The Japanese had greater aspirations to job security. The women in each group both tended to seek a greater work-personal life balance, and were less rooted than their male counterparts, who had greater entrepreneurial intentions.

1. Introduction

Japan's traditional management practices have been credited with contributing to that country's rapid economic growth through the late 1980's. This management system though has never been static, it has evolved through continual adjustments to new economic, social, and competitive priorities (Mroczkowski and Hanaoka, 1988). Increased global competition and the bursting of the bubble economy have prevented most Japanese firms from continuing their traditional growth strategies (Economist, 1999).

The current economic situation is having a significant effect on Japanese Human Resource (HR) policies. Reduced promotion opportunities and increased layoffs are causing companies to alter their management systems, encouraging workers to take greater individual responsibility for their careers and to expect compensation based more on performance than years of service (Chiba, Iikubo and Sawaji, 1997; Hutton, 1998;). This suggests a convergence of Japanese and North American employment practices is underway. Our study therefore asks: Are Japanese and Canadian recruits oriented towards careers in a flexible economy?

2. Background

Research on Japanese career paths, as well as the work conducted on the idea of career anchors (Schein, 1990) informs this inquiry. Sasaki (1990) described

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career paths¹ of Japanese employees as being generalized and cross-functional. This traditional career path begins with employees being recruited from leading universities into the corporation. They are then transferred through different departments every three to four years, with some employees eventually being promoted to upper management, while others are seconded to a subsidiary or forced to retire. This research typically is framed by the firm's point of view, as it focuses on the development of human capital deployed by companies (e.g. see McMillan, 1989: pp. 171–198).

Career Anchors are factors or motives that lead people to choose one type of career over another early in their work life (Schein 1990). The key implication is that individuals with differing orientations are suited to different career paths. Schein's (1990) work over several years identified eight *Anchors*. In our study we use four of these, *General Management*, *Entrepreneurial Creativity*, *Security / Stability* and *Lifestyle*, as well as two of our own, *Income* and *Rootedness*. The four Schein scales used were the only ones that provided reliable measures, as described in the Methods section below. The *Income* scale was added in the wake of subject debriefing sessions held as our earlier study was conducted (Tiessen and Firkola, 1998). We included *Rootedness* due to Hiranos (1994) recommendation it be added to Schein's inventory because in Japan willingness to relocate is considered a factor in promotion decisions and thus affects an employees career. All six scales are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Career Anchors Used in this Study

Anchor Name	Reflects aspiration to achieve :
<i>General Management</i>	High management positions
<i>Income</i>	High income
<i>Entrepreneurial Creativity</i>	Individual outlet for creativity, including own business
<i>Security / Stability</i>	Long term employment and provision for retirement
<i>Lifestyle</i>	Balance between work and personal life
<i>Rootedness</i>	Geographic stability

Two recent studies have used Schein's (1990) *Career Anchor* questionnaire to examine career practices in Japan from an individual perspective. Hirano's (1994) study of Japanese retail managers developed a *Career Anchor* contingency model which contends that the type of organizational structure is related to the individual's orientation. Sakakibara et al. (1993) compared the *Career Anchors* of students en-

¹ A "career path" is the pattern of sequences and roles an employee moves through, usually related to work experience, during his / her working life (Walker, 1980).

tering Japanese companies with those starting to work at foreign affiliated firms. The results indicated that those joining a Japanese company tended to place more emphasis on stability, while those joining foreign affiliated companies emphasized the autonomy, independence, and technical ability *Career Anchors*.

3. Research Propositions

Our study compares the career orientations of Japanese and Canadian women and men students at a time of dynamic change. Japanese career paths have been different from those of Canadians. However, given the rise in global competition, firms are facing similar business environments, more flexible economies. We pose three broad propositions to investigate if the attitudes of potential employees reflect the changes in the business environment. As we frame each proposition, the overall assumption we make is that student orientations are influenced by traditional practices.

Research has shown that both national culture and gender affect work practices and employee attitudes (e.g. see Hofstede, 1980; Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). The rich literature on Japanese management highlights many differences and has linked them to Japan's culture and postwar economic conditions (Keys et al., 1994). Similarly, research on attitudes in both Japan and the "West" suggest that women tend to take a different approach to their jobs. A significant difference arises from the conflict between home and work faced by many women in both countries (Swanson, 1992; Iwao, 1993). *A priori* we believe that country-level factors, which exert large influence on gender-roles, would exert a larger effect, leading to our first proposition:

P1: Nationality affects student career orientations more than gender.

Japanese firm personnel policy in large organizations traditionally has had three characteristics: (1) lifetime employment, (2) seniority-based promotion and (3) a perception of the organization as a family or community (Axel, 1995). These policies have led to an implicit employer-employee agreement: the firm offers job training and security in exchange for the employee's long term, diligent commitment. This commitment is reflected in the long hours workers devote to their companies². In North America, financial incentives are used to reward senior executives to a greater extent than in Japan. For example, US consulting company Towers Perrin reported that in 1996 CEOs in America earned 24 times the pay of the average

² Though the official number of hours worked per year in Japan has fallen to about 1,950 hours, similar to U.S. levels, it has been estimated that Japanese dedicate an additional 400 hours per year to unreported *service overtime* (Pollack, 1995).

manufacturing employees' wages while in Canada the ratio was 13 : 1 and Japan 9 : 1 (McFarland, 1996).

These practices are linked to Japan's supposed cultural characteristics, especially its high levels of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980). This hinders the expression of new ideas and the tendency to take chances (Herbig, 1995). Together, these factors support our second proposition :

P2 : Japanese students are more oriented towards *Security* and *Rootedness* and less oriented towards *General Management*, *Income*, *Entrepreneurial Creativity*, and *Lifestyle* than Canadian students.

The third proposition recognizes that some gender issues do cross cultures, though there may be differences in degree. As mentioned above, women in both Japan and Canada acknowledge a self- or society-induced conflict between work and home (Swanson, 1992 ; Iwao, 1993). This could lead some to make career decisions which reflect a balance between both worlds. If a woman establishes a household, she may wish to minimize disruptions associate with moving, for example.

Another common issue, and not unrelated, issue is the "glass" (or "paper" in Japan) ceilings which limit their promotion in company hierarchies (Lam, 1992 ; Iwao, 1993 ; Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). In Japan, the numbers of women managers have grown since the mid-1980's (Wakisaka, 1997). Further, there is recent North American evidence suggesting that links between gender and salary and job levels are weak (Hurley, Fagenson-Eland and Sonnenfeld, 1997 ; Lee and Menon, 1998). However, we contend that women in Japan and Canada still have less opportunities to take on senior responsibilities than men. These restrictions on career progression and mobility are not (or may not be) desired, but may shape student career orientations.

A *priori* we did not hold positions on relative Entrepreneurial and Income orientations. An OECD survey of data found that women controlled 30% of Canadian and 23% of Japanese enterprises (OECD, 1997), but that figure reached 51% for Canadians under 25. A recent study of US high school students found the female group were less interested in starting businesses than the males, but this sample may not be comparable to Canadian and Japanese management students (Kourilsky and Walstad, 1998). With respect to *Income*, we believed national practices would result in similar income-orientations. Taken together, the extant research and our assumptions led us to propose :

P3 : Women students are more oriented towards *Lifestyle* and *Rootedness*, and less oriented towards *General Management* than men students.

4. Methods

The research propositions were assessed using data collected in the fall of 1998 from 727 Japanese and Canadian undergraduate business / management students about to begin their careers. Following, we describe the study sample, instrument design and scale refinement, analysis and limitations.

Sample

In all cases, the survey was applied during class time with a brief introduction which did not betray the study goals. The Japanese group ($n=391$) were at Hokkaido University in Sapporo ($n=112$) and Tohoku Gakuin University ($n=279$) in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture. The Canadian students ($n=336$) were at York University ($n=91$) and McMaster University ($n=245$).

There was a greater proportion of females in the Canadian (51%) than the Japanese (30%) samples. The Japanese group was younger (average age = 21.2 years) than the Canadian (22.2 years). This was because most of the Japanese group (82%) were in year three of their programs while virtually all the Canadians (96%) were in year four or higher. Third year courses were used for the Japanese sample because students in their fourth year are only required to take small seminar courses, and they are more likely found spending time on social and employment pursuits than in classrooms. *A priori* this was not expected to affect the research results because employment recruitment typically begins in year three in Japan and year four in Canada.³

Instrument Design

We used Japanese and English language versions of an instrument based mostly on Schein's (1990) Career Anchor self-analysis survey. Respondents were asked to indicate on 5 point scales, ranging from completely disagree to completely agree, the degree to which they agreed with items classified into Schein's (1990) eight categories of values, motives and needs, as well as the Rootedness and Income dimensions discussed above. Forty items were used, four items per category.

A key issue was the equivalence of the Japanese and English translations. Our approach used a process similar to back translation, as recommended (Sekaran, 1983). The Japanese instrument was constructed first by adapting Sakakibara et al's (1993) Japanese translations of Schein items. The Japanese survey was then translated into English. The English translation was thoroughly reviewed and modified by two professional bilingual translators.

3 This was tested for as described below.

Scale Refinement

The propositions were assessed tested by comparing Japanese and Canadian scores on additive scales measuring the students' orientations. The first step was to standardize each student's scores on all of the items. Therefore the mean score for each student on all 40 items was 0, with a standard deviation of 1. We did not follow Leung and Bond's (1989) suggestion of double standardization, which would then have us standardize these individual scores by item. This because, while like Leung and Bond (1989) we were interested in relative differences between the groups, we also wanted a clear indication of what matters most to Japanese and Canadian young women and men. A standardization procedure was used for two reasons. First, this approach aims to reduce bias associated with response sets and culture (Leung and Bond, 1989). Second, the resulting item scores reflect the students relative orientations to the anchors rather than their absolute opinions. This is consistent with the notion that the orientations involve tradeoffs.

Scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach alphas using the standardized scores. The four scales measuring Autonomy / Independence, Technical Functional Competence, Service or Dedication to a Cause and Pure Challenge were found to be unreliable so were not used in the analysis. This was not surprising given the cross-cultural sample and the rigor of the standardization procedure. To ensure the scale values were comparable for the ANOVA procedure described below, we divided each scale by the number of items used.

The scales used in this study are shown in Table 2, which also presents the computed Alphas. The Income, Security / Stability, Entrepreneurship and Rootedness measures were reliable, exceeding a "respectable" Alpha level, 0.70 (DeVillis, 1991 : 85). The General Management, Entrepreneurial Creativity and Lifestyle measures were judged, again using DeVillis' (1991) rules of thumb, as "minimally acceptable" (greater than 0.60). Though the questionnaire used four items to assess Entrepreneurial Creativity, two items was dropped because they significantly lowered scale reliability. This decision was based on data collected in the authors' earlier study (Tiessen & Firkola, 1998).

To assess the possible bias associated with the large proportion of third years in the Japanese sample, t-tests were performed comparing the mean scale scores of the Japanese third and fourth year students. This analysis revealed some significant differences ($\alpha=0.05$) between junior and senior students. The fourth year students exhibited more *Entrepreneurship*, but were less oriented towards *Security* and *Income* than their younger colleagues. ANOVA analyses comparing only Japanese fourth year students ($n=69$, 10 women and 59 men) with the Canadian women and men showed the ranks of mean group scores on the *Entrepreneurship* and *Income* orientations were the same as when computed using the full Japanese sample. However, the *Security* score ranking in this analysis was Japanese men, Canadian

Table 2. Scale Items and Alpha Reliability Coefficients

Scales	Items
<i>General Management</i>	1. I want a job in which I can lead or manage other people.
	2. I would like to reach a high level executive position.
	3. I would like a job in which I am in charge of the entire organization.
alpha=0.66	4. I think success in a job is reaching a very high level executive position in an organization.
<i>Income</i>	1. I wish to earn as high an income as possible.
	2. The most attractive jobs to me are those that have the highest income.
alpha=0.70	3. When I search for a job, a high starting salary is very important to me.
	4. I think success in a job is earning a very high income.
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	1. I would like to start up my own business.
	2. I am always looking for ideas that would allow me to start my own enterprise.
alpha=0.81	
<i>Security / Stability</i>	1. I wish to work for a company that can offer a secure job with a good salary and pension.
	2. I hope to work for a company that will provide long term stability.
alpha=0.73	3. I want to work in a company that can offer lifetime employment.
	4. I would like to spend my whole career in one organization.
<i>Lifestyle</i>	1. I hope to have a job which allows me to keep a balance between my work and private life.
	2. I think a balance between my work and private life is more important than receiving a high ranking position in a company.
alpha=0.61	3. Success is maintaining a balance between one's work and private life.
	4. I would rather leave my organization than be in a job that would cause me to sacrifice my private life.
<i>Rootedness</i>	1. I would rather stay in the place I have settled in than accept a promotion or transfer which involves relocation.
	2. I would rather stay where I reside than relocate for a promotion.
alpha=0.83	3. If possible, I would like to work for an organization that will allow me to stay in one geographic area.
	4. It would be better not to be promoted and not have to move, than to move to receive a promotion in a company.

women, Canadian men and Japanese women, respectively in this sub-analysis. This differed from full sample order, Japanese women, Japanese men, Canadian women and Canadian men. The ten Japanese women seniors appeared to differ from the others.

As expected, and consistent with our previous study, there were significant positive and negative correlations between the scale values. This indicates that the students saw perceived tradeoffs between orientations. The correlation table is presented in Appendix 1.

Analysis

We tested the propositions two ways, (1) using simple ANOVA and (2) by performing discriminant analysis. The ANOVA analysis simply compared the mean Anchor scale values between the study's four groups: female Japanese, male Japanese, female Canadians and male Canadians. This was a first pass analysis which allowed us to highlight the relative importance of the anchors, and to examine how the groups differed in terms of each individual dimension.

The discriminant analysis procedure provided more integrated tests of the propositions. The analysis generated coefficients for the six variables maximizing the Mahalanobis distance (D^2) between the groups. We used a stepwise procedure which allows us to infer the degree to which variables help differentiate between the groups (Hair Jr. et al, 1992). Variance inflation factors (VIF) for the independent variables were computed before conducting the analysis. Their low values suggested that the generated coefficients could be interpreted with reasonable confidence (Hair Jr. et al, 1992).

Limitations

The study's results are intriguing on several accounts. But cross-cultural research poses several research problems (e.g. see Sekaran, 1983 and Nasif et. al. 1991) which must be acknowledged. Two key issues are the lack of instrument and response equivalence which can lead to biased comparisons between samples from different cultures. However, as discussed above, the use of back-translation, equivalent survey administration procedures and standardized item scores aimed to limit bias.

The representativeness of the samples though could be questioned on two accounts. First, a typical criticism of student samples, as used in this study, is that they are not representative of the populations of interest. However this research which looks at the perspectives of those launching their careers, the samples are appropriate. Second, the samples, later year students at Hokkaido and Tohoku Gakuin Universities and McMaster and York can not unequivocally be considered representative of Japanese and Canadian. However, using groups matched in terms of

their demographics and current situation though was a good second choice in light of limited resources (Sekaran, 1983).

5. Results

The results overall showed support for P1, that the students' career orientations were related more to their country than their gender. Most of these specific orientation differences were as proposed in P2, though there were surprises. The males and females within each country overall had different career orientations, however the differences were not all as anticipated by P3.

ANOVA

The ANOVA analysis shows strong support for the overall propositions: the Japanese and Canadians had different relative career orientations, and the women and men differed. Table 3 shows that the *Lifestyle* Anchor was most important for all the students in both and this was more important for the women than the men. The Japanese overall were more oriented towards *Security*, and less towards *General Management* than the Canadians. Neither the Japanese nor the Canadians were oriented towards *Entrepreneurship* or *Rootedness*, though the Japanese were less entrepreneurial and more rooted. Overall, the students were not oriented towards seeking high incomes, and this tendency did not differ significantly between the groups.

Table 3. ANOVA of Anchor Scores by Group

	All	J Women	J Men	C Women	C Men	Significance
<i>General Management</i> ¹	-0.2645	-0.8045	-0.4188	-0.0303	0.1286	0.0000
<i>Income</i>	-0.1988	-0.2610	-0.1900	-0.2559	-0.1114	0.1031
<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	-0.5224	-0.8198	-0.5503	-0.6095	-0.1789	0.0000
<i>Security</i>	0.1360	0.4347	0.3516	-0.0909	-0.1974	0.0000
<i>Lifestyle</i>	0.3735	0.4960	0.2959	0.4733	0.3144	0.0003
<i>Rootedness</i>	-0.6657	-0.4510	-0.4552	-0.8828	-0.9420	0.0000

Note:

1. All scales were divided by the number of items comprising them.

Discriminant Analysis

Table 4 shows the F statistics between the groups' career orientations as measured by our scales. The relative sizes of the F statistics suggest that the largest differences were between the Japanese and Canadian students: Female Japanese were "closer" to their male counterparts than to female Canadians. Further, Japanese male-female differences were greater than Canadian ones.

Table 4. Pairwise F Statistics Between Pairs of Groups (Group Centroids)

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Japanese female	0			
2. Japanese male	12.05	0		
3. Canadian female	40.12	35.65	0	
4. Canadian male	54.92	41.32	5.77	0

The analysis produced three canonical discriminant functions, two of which were statistically significant ($\alpha=0.01$). As seen in Table 5, the Function 1 accounted for the bulk, 86%, of the differences between the groups, while Function 2 picked up 13%. The third function accounted for less than 2% of the differences and was not significant.

Table 5. Canonical Discriminant Functions

Function	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Significance (X^2)
1.	0.5561	85.88	0.000
2.	0.0823	12.71	0.000
3.	0.0091	1.41	0.087

The function coefficients of the two significant equations (Table 6) when viewed with the group centroids (Table 7) allow us to, with normal caution (Hair et al, 1992, pp. 106–107), examine which independent variables contribute most to differentiating between the students. Large absolute values of function coefficients are linked to larger effects. It is important to note first that one of the independent variables, Income, did not differ significantly between the groups, so did not appear in the final discriminant functions. This surprising outcome was contrary to our *a priori* propositions.

Table 6. Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

	Function 1	Function 2	Function 3
General management	0.8457	0.5102	0.6441
Entrepreneurship	-0.0134	0.7882	-0.5647
Lifestyle	0.3616	-0.3989	0.1962
Security	-0.5281	0.4352	0.2698
Rootedness	-0.0727	0.6928	0.4743

Table 7. Canonical Discriminant Functions Evaluated at Group Means (Centroids)

	Function 1	Function 2	Function 3
Japanese female	-1.0362	-0.3971	-0.1127
Japanese male	-0.5092	0.2636	0.0543
Canadian female	0.6582	-0.3198	0.1062
Canadian male	0.8936	0.1683	-0.1202

Function 1 acted mostly to separate the groups by two country. The coefficients suggest the two largest differences are the greater Canadian predilection towards *General Management*, and the Japanese orientation towards *Security*. Both results were expected, as mentioned above, given current personnel policies in the respective countries. The slightly greater Canadian orientation for a balance between private and working life (Lifestyle) was also expected.

Discriminant Function 2 separated the males and females in each country. The largest coefficient was on the *Entrepreneurship* scale, indicating that the males were relatively more oriented to starting a business or working for oneself than their female colleagues. This was a difference we did not predict. The analysis revealed other unexpected female-male differences. Notably, the females were relatively less *Rooted* and less oriented to *Security* than the males in their classes. The females in both countries though were less likely to aspire to *General Management* positions.

6. Discussion

The Canadian and Japanese students in our study differed significantly in their career orientations. These differences exceeded the variations associated with gender: Japanese males and females are more like each other than males or females in Canada. That said, it is interesting that a balance between work and one's personal life is the most important orientation of all the students. The results have several key implications for cross-cultural researchers and international managers.

First, the method used confirms the validity of our previous work conducted only on Hokkaido and McMaster students (Tiessen and Firkola, 1998). Widening the sample to include another university in each country, and adding the gender dimension to the analysis increases the generalizability, and depth of our findings. Finally the standardization method again worked well, revealing results that would not have been apparent if raw item values were simply summed and compared.

Overall, the findings suggest that Japanese students may not yet be poised to adjust to the potential shift in that country's business climate. The Canadians for their part, while ambitious and flexible in terms of job security may have difficulty reconciling these orientations with their desire for a work-personal life balance, and a

relative lack of entrepreneurship. The relative unimportance of the drive for maximum income though does suggest these recruits may, at least in the short run, forgo high pay to achieve other goals.

The well-educated and disciplined Japanese students can be a great resource to Japan's firms. The companies who wish to tap this talent will have the task of encouraging more flexibility, ambition and entrepreneurship in their young employees. The students themselves may be frustrated if the world does not pan out as expected. The Canadian students, in terms of their ambitions, appear both entrepreneurial and ambitious. This suggests they will not be as fulfilled in larger organizations which are clogged with baby boomers (Foot and Stoffman, 1996).

It is notable that cultural factors at the national level appear to exert more influence on career orientations than gender. However it does appear that young women in both countries are more concerned with achieving a balance between their work and personal life than men. The interesting result that the males tended to be more *Rooted* and *Security*-seeking suggests women may, in fact, be better adapted to life in the flexible economy. However, given their relatively lower *Entrepreneurial* and *Managerial* aspirations, women may prefer to take part as contract employees, rather than founders.

7. Conclusion

Young Japanese and Canadian business students are facing uncertain employment climates and career paths. For the Japanese, this is the first time since the oil shocks of the 1970's. Canadian students in their early twenties have only known a "boom" in the past two or three years. That young Japanese are primarily looking for job security, perhaps more so because it may be disappearing, suggests that a change of attitude has not yet occurred. The experience of downsizing and contracting in Canada during the 1990's may have caused Canadians to accept the changes. For the Japanese, only now starting the process, the adjustment may not yet be made.

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Appendix 1 : Pearson Correlations Between Anchor Scales

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. <i>General Management</i>	1.00					
2. <i>Income</i>	0.26**	1.00				
3. <i>Entrepreneurship</i>	0.11*	-0.04	1.00			
4. <i>Security</i>	-0.27**	-0.01	-0.45**	1.00		
5. <i>Lifestyle</i>	-0.40**	-0.40**	-0.12**	-0.04	1.00	
6. <i>Rootedness</i>	-0.51**	-0.23**	-0.28**	0.23**	0.21**	1.00

Notes : *Two-way significance $\alpha=0.01$ **Two-way significance $\alpha=0.001$