

**TITLE**

Career anchors of social enterprise managers in the UK-an empirical analysis

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# **Title: Career anchors of social enterprise managers in the UK – an empirical analysis**

## ***ABSTRACT***

This paper examines the dominant career anchors of third sector social enterprise managers and the relation of their career anchors with the job environment. The research found that autonomy career anchor was ranked significantly higher than any other career anchor, which suggests that social enterprise managers have a higher need for a job environment that allows them to set their own work pace and develop expertise. The findings make an important contribution to new knowledge and provides an empirical support for the use of Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchor model as a tool to measure social enterprise managerial career anchors in the third sector.

A mixed method research design was employed. A survey and semi-structured interviews were conducted with forty social enterprise managers working in the UK. The paper concludes with implications for theory and practice.

*Keywords: Career anchors; career management; career needs; social enterprises; managers;*

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the dominant career anchors of small social enterprise operational managers. A career anchor is described as the constellation of self-perceived attitudes, talents, values and needs that develop over time. It guides and influences the individual's selection of specific occupations, work settings and his/her career paths (Schein, 1978, 1990). It discusses the distribution of Schein's (1978, 1990) eight career anchors amongst small social enterprise operational managers; and the relationship between social enterprise manager's career anchors and their job environment. Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchor model is chosen for the purpose of this research, because the model has proved to be regarded as being valuable in other managerial studies (Kniveton, 2004; Garavan et al., 2006; Guan et al., 2013) that seek to understand the career anchors of managers in the private and public sectors.

To date there have been no studies, which have explored whether small third sector social enterprise operational managers identified with one or more career anchors, so the research objectives are:

- i. To identify the dominant career anchors of social enterprise operational managers (using Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchor mode
- ii. To explore if there is a relationship between social enterprise operational managers' career anchors and the job environment

Small social enterprises are seeking ways to develop appropriate and effective strategies to enable them to reduce operational manager's turnover (Crain, 2009; Hopkins, 2010; Venter and Sung, 2011; Mayhofer, 2012). There is evidence that changes in Government policies have had some negative effect on small social enterprise organisations. The UK Governments' austerity programme, reduction in public sector funding are affecting several some third sector social enterprises as they face further financial challenges associated with the austerity programme (Kane, 2014; Jones, et al. 2015, Clayton, 2015). The average UK third sector manager earnings is 22.5 per cent lower than a public sector manager earnings and 27.8 per cent lower than a private sector manager earnings (XpertHR, 2013, NVCO, 2013). These factors have contributed to an increase in managerial turnover from 12.8 per cent in 2008 to 14.7 per cent in 2013 (NVCO, 2014). Small social enterprises are seeking ways to develop appropriate and effective strategies to enable them to reduce operational manager's turnover (Crain, 2009; Hopkins, 2010; Venter and Sung, 2011; Mayhofer, 2012). Managerial turnover in small organisations is a serious management challenge for these organisations (Garrett and Pavan, 2012; Skagert et al., 2012).

Organisations with high managerial turnover suffer from low employee morale (Kim and Lee, 2007, Eby et al., 2010; Knight et al., 2011) it compromises the efficiency and quality of service delivery to clients (Maher, 2009; Parry and Kelliher, 2011; Eby et al., 2012) and may reduce the organisation's capacity to meet its contractual arrangements with their funders (Eby et al., 2010; Cortis et al., 2011).

Furthermore, managerial turnover is considered as inimical to small social enterprises; due to its direct costs, such as replacement costs involving advertising

the post, administration of the recruitment process and the time spent on new employee inductions; and indirect costs, such as reduced organisational performance level, the loss of organisational knowledge and implementation of evidence based practice for treating clients (Carroll and Rounsaville, 2007; Kim and Lee, 2007; Eby et al., 2011). The increase in managerial turnover demands that small social enterprises develop more effective approaches that will enable them to understand managerial needs and in turn reduce managerial turnover.

Therefore, the identification of the career anchors of operational managers could be useful for small social enterprises with limited financial resources that are seeking to develop managerial retention strategies that are not linked to high salaries and annual bonuses.

### **Literature Review**

A career anchor is described as the constellation of self-perceived attitudes, talents, values and needs that develop over time. It guides and influences the individual's selection of specific occupations, work settings and his/her career paths (Schein 1978, 1990). The career anchor model was developed from Schein's (1978) longitudinal research of 44 male alumni from a Masters programme at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The original aim of Schein's (1978) research was to improve the understanding of managerial career management. Each of the alumni's career history was tracked for a 10 year period. Schein (1978) used in-depth interviews to explore each individual's career motivations, job histories, values, work attitudes, ambitions and future plans. Based on the data collected in this initial study of 44 alumni, Schein (1978) suggests that individuals have differing career interests, which he labelled 'career anchors'. Schein (1978) identified five types of career anchors: technical, general management, security/stability, entrepreneurial and autonomy. After conducting further research on managerial career anchors, Schein (1990) added three more career anchors: service and dedication, challenge and lifestyle. Schein's 1998, 1990) eight career anchors as summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: A summary of Schein's (1978, 1990) eight career anchors**

Career Anchor	Career anchor descriptions
Technical	<p>The individual seeks the opportunity to apply his/her skills in a technical or functional area of competence and seeks the opportunity to advance in the functional and specialist area of his/her job. The individual is not averse to management roles, but general management roles that take him/her away from his/her area of expertise would not be of interest. These individuals place value in getting opportunities for learning and development, as they are keen to continuously improve their skills in their area of expertise.</p>
General Managerial	<p>The individual seeks the opportunity to move upward into a general management position in the organisation. This career anchor involves: analytical competence: the ability to identify and solve problems; interpersonal competence: the ability to lead, manage and supervise others and emotional resilience: the capacity to bear high levels of responsibility and the ability to exercise power and make difficult decisions.</p>
Security/Stability	<p>The individual seeks long-term employment security, long-term attachment to one organisation; he/she is willing to conform and to be fully socialised into an organisation's values and norms; he/she feels this will guarantee/assure his/her security. The hierarchical vertical promotion level that the individual achieves is less important than the security that the organisation can offer. Preferred recognition is for loyalty and steady performance in an organisation.</p>
Entrepreneurial	<p>The individual seeks the opportunity to develop or create a project or enterprise that is entirely his/her own idea. The individual is motivated by the need to generate ideas and develop projects with which to identify rather than managing existing organisation's projects. He/she is constantly looking for ways to improve the organisation and project activities.</p>

Autonomy	The individual seeks the opportunity to work in organisations where he/she can set his/her own work schedules free from organisational constraints. He/she is willing to trade off high income and opportunities for promotion to have more flexibility and freedom in defining the pace of his/her work.
Challenge	The individual seeks constant stimulation and difficult problems they can tackle. The individual feels successful when he/she is able to solve problems that others cannot solve. The individual sets high standards for him/herself and prefers to be surrounded by like-minded people.
Lifestyle	The individual seeks the opportunity that allows him/her to integrate personal needs, family needs and a balanced work and career lifestyle. They seek flexibility in an employment relationship and are happy to work for a long period within an organisation that offers flexibility and understanding of the kind to which they aspire.
Service/Dedication	The individual seeks the opportunity to pursue work that achieves personal value such as helping others and contributing to causes which meets his/her values and skills. They want recognition and support both from his/her professional peers and higher levels of management.

Source: Schein (1990)

Schein (1978, 1990) contends that he chose the term career anchor because he believed that an individual's talents, values and motives pulls the individual to a specific career path like an anchor. Schein (1978, 1990) contends that an individual's career anchor 'evolves' through testing oneself in a variety of work settings and jobs until the individual has a clearer understanding of his/her talents, needs and values. Schein (1978) describes career anchor as consisting of three important components:

- i. perceived talents and abilities based on self-assessment on actual successes in a variety of work settings;

- ii. perceived motives and needs based on opportunities and experiences gained through self-diagnosis from undertaking a variety of job assignments or projects and feedback from others; and
- iii. perceived attitudes and values based on actual encounters between an individual and the norms and values of the employing organisation and work settings (Schein, 1978).

The first two components suggest that career path choices are based on experience in a work setting and anchored in a set of needs and motives which the individual is attempting to fulfil in his/her job (Schein, 1978; DeLong, 1982; Danziger and Valency, 2006). Schein (1978) suggests that each individual has only one true career anchor, which becomes clearer after the individual has developed a variety of skills and abilities gained through work experience and constructive feedback received from employers. The benefits to the individual are an enhanced self-concept, self-discovery and learning experience which enables him/her to make more rational and informed career path choices. Once the individual's career anchor is established, it guides and stabilises the individual's career paths and helps him/her to realise which values and motives he/she will not give up if forced to make a choice (Schein, 1978). The third component suggests that a career path is anchored in organisational values and norms where individuals react to these values and norms according to the different work settings and experiences (Schein, 1978; DeLong, 1982; Danziger and Valency, 2006). The main attribute at the centre of Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchor model is congruence. Schein's (1978, 1990) empirical evidence suggests that when individuals achieve congruence between their career anchors and work environment, they are more likely to achieve positive career outcomes from both an individual and organisational perspective.

Schein's (1978, 1990) empirical evidence suggests that when individuals achieve congruence between their career anchors and work environment, they are more likely to achieve positive career outcomes from both an individual and organisational perspective. From the individual's perspective, identifying a career anchor is useful, because it enables the individual to gain knowledge about their personal needs and criteria for choosing certain careers. As an individual develops an insight into his/her career anchors, this enables the individual to have meaningful conversations with their employers about their career needs (Schein, 1990, Feldman and Bolino, 1996;

Coetzee et al., 2007). Hsu et al., (2003) and Ferreira et al., (2010) suggest that when an individual's career anchor is compatible with their job role; their intention to leave the organisation is lower compared to when there is a lack of congruency.

From the organisation's perspective, identifying the career anchors of employees provides the organisation with greater awareness of employees' career needs and the ability to target career management more effectively, resulting in positive outcomes such as, organisational commitment, improved productivity and low staff turnover (Schein, 1990; Feldman and Bolino, 1996; Coetzee and Schreuder, 2008).

Schein (1978) suggests that each individual has only one true career anchor, which becomes clearer after the individual has developed a variety of skills and abilities gained through work experience and constructive feedback received from employers. However, Suutari and Taka's (2004) study of career anchors of 22 Finnish managers with global careers and Kniveton's (2004) study of career anchors of 540 managers in various industries in the UK, found that most managers in their samples had more than one career anchor.

Since the development of Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchor model there have been several managerial career studies that have identified the career anchors of managers in the private sector and the public sector settings. A sample of managerial career anchor studies identified is displayed in Table 1.

**Table1: A sample of managerial career anchor studies**

<b>Author (s)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Research sample</b>	<b>Dominant career anchor(s) identified</b>
Barth	1993	A study of career anchor of 4,000 US federal managers.	Technical
Beck and Lopa	2001	A study of the career anchors of 447 hotel managers in the USA.	Technical
Mignonac	2002	A study of 203 French private sector managers' careers within a multi-based site organisation.	Service/dedication
Carbery,	2003	A study to predict turnover	Technical



Garavan, O'Brien and McDonnell		cognitions of 89 hotel managers in the Republic of Ireland.	
Kniveton	2004	A study of career anchors of 540 managers in various industries in the UK private sector.	Service/dedication and general management
Suutari and Taka	2004	Study of career anchors of 22 Finnish managers with global careers.	Lifestyle and challenge
Garavan, O'Brien and O'Hanlon	2006	A study of career advancement of 337 hotel managers working in international hotel chains in Europe and Asia.	General managerial and service/dedication
Wong	2007	A study of the career choice of 117 Taiwanese managers in China	Lifestyle and entrepreneurial
Rasdi, Ismail, Uli and Noah	2009	A study of career aspirations and career success among 288 Malaysian public sector managers.	Security/stability and service/dedication
Guan et al.,	2013	A study of the role of organisational career management and career anchors	General managerial
Gubler et al.,	2015	A study of how career anchors differentiate managerial career trajectories	Managerial and Lifestyle

The articles included in Table 2 are peer-reviewed empirical career anchor studies, with only managers as their samples. This allows findings of the present research to be compared with previous studies.

## **Methodology**

A mixed method research design was employed (Gray, 2013; Bryman and Bell, 2015), a survey and semi-structured interviews and was conducted with forty operational managers working in eight (randomly selected) social enterprise organisations in the UK to ascertain their dominant career anchor. The survey (containing 24 career anchor statements) were adopted and modified from Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchor survey. The survey were assessed on a five-point Likert scale that allowed operational managers to indicate the importance of each of the statements from (1) being "very low importance" to (5) being "very high importance". The reason for using the five-point Likert scale instead of a single item was due to the author operationally defining measurement of career anchors as the average of all items relating to each career anchor. This method is in-line with Kniveton's (2004) and Wong's (2007) approach in assessing managers' career anchors.

The semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for an in-depth understanding of the operational managers' interview responses in relation to their reasoning for their different rankings of the career anchor survey. By this approach, the author is using the quantitative data and the explanatory power of qualitative data to provide an original contribution to knowledge and understanding of the career anchors of small social enterprise operational managers (Maher, 2013). Each Interview lasted an average of 65 minutes. At the end of the interview the author gave participants the opportunity to indicate any additional information that they considered relevant to the research. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded with the permission of each participant. Non-verbal communication that could not be captured on the digital recordings such as, body language and gestures were recorded in fieldnotes (Saunders, et al. 2011; Bowling, 2014). A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package (Gilbert, et al. 2014; Sotiriadou, et al. 2014) NVivo 9 was employed to facilitate the data coding and clustering of themes. This helped to improve the rigour of the data analysis process by validating the researcher's own impressions of the data.

## **Findings**

Operational managers' self-assessed career anchors survey means scores obtained are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Operational manager's career anchors mean scores (N=40)**

Career Anchors	N	Mean
Autonomy	40	3.98
Technical	40	3.96
Challenge	40	3.87
Service/dedication	40	3.76
Security/stability	40	3.76
Lifestyle	40	3.55
Entrepreneurial	40	3.51
General management	40	3.35

The mean scores displayed in Table 2 ranged from 3.35 to 3.98. The study sample obtained the highest score on autonomy career anchor (mean 3.98) and technical career anchor (mean 3.96). Challenge career anchor (3.85) was ranked third. A closer examination at the results shows that service/dedication (mean 3.76) and security/stability (mean 3.76) were ranked jointly fourth; while general management career anchor (mean 3.35) has the lowest mean score.

Managers explained the reasoning behind their rankings of the career anchor survey. In discussing the responses obtained from the managers during the interviews', consideration of statements they made about the different factors that have influenced their career anchors were taken into account. Schein (1978, 1990) recommended follow-up interviews after the career anchor survey items have been ranked to confirm the dominate career anchor indicated by each manager. This approach is found to be an acceptable and reliable means of identifying the most dominate career anchor of each manager (Schein, 1978, 1990).

### **Autonomy career anchor**

Autonomy is the most dominant career anchor identified by the operational managers. Autonomy career anchor concerns individuals that have the desire to set their own work pace, work schedule and feels less satisfied with direct supervision from supervisors (Schein, 1978, 1990). The concept of autonomy has been found to have an influence on individuals' career anchor (Schein, 1990; Delong, 1982, Coetzee and Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007). Several operational managers' that ranked autonomy career anchors as 'very high importance', reported that having the

freedom to use their own initiative in developing and managing projects, was one of the main reasons they were attracted to work in small social enterprises. To illustrate this point, some operational managers reported:

“I like the flexibility of planning my work. Our services are client-led. This is important for our clients I like the freedom and independence I have to decide how to tailor services to meet client needs without interference from my boss” (Operational manager: 23: Weekend services Manager).

“The client work we do the freedom to choose how we work with clients. I have the freedom here to offer the number of counselling sessions in relation to the client's needs that gives me satisfaction” (Operational manager 25: Counselling manager).

These managers were primarily driven by the need to have the autonomy within an organisation to use their own initiatives to develop client's services. These views were expressed in the context of autonomy derived from having the freedom to develop client-centred services. These managers have the desire to develop and manage projects without direct intervention by line-managers.

### **Technical career anchor**

Technical career anchor is the second most dominant career anchor identified by the operational managers'. Technical career anchor concerns individuals seeking the opportunity to advance in the specialist area of their job rather than in general management (Schein, 1978, 1990). Reaching a general management position is not the individuals' ambition; it is only relevant if it enables them to pursue their field of expertise (Schein, 1978, 1990). Several managers considered achievement of technical expert status in their area of specialisation as their dominant career anchor. For example, some operational managers reported:

“I trained for years to get the Diploma [in counselling], so I want to stay developing the therapy side of things; I'm not interested in going into general management and income-generating activities” (Operational manager 25: Counselling manager).

“My background is in counselling psychology so I want to focus on the client work not on marketing or fundraising activities. I came here for the client contact and not the pay packet or to take over the director's job. I truly enjoy working with clients” (Operational manager: 34: Services and counselling manager).

The evidence shows these managers that identified with technical career anchor were mostly clinical or counselling managers who frequently stated that they prefer to specialise in an area of counselling or therapy. Operational manager 25 and 34 pointed out that they are not willing to move up to general management positions now, or in the future, and that they want to stay in their present organisation working on developing a variety of specialist therapeutic services for clients.

Technical career anchor has also received high rankings in private and public managerial career anchor studies. The research findings support Beck and Lopa, (2001) and Carbery et al., (2003) research findings. The findings suggest that some social enterprise operational managers prefer to work predominantly in their area of specialism rather than in general management roles which are characterised by the desire to control, supervise others and gain greater power within the organisation.

### **Challenge career anchor**

Challenge career anchor is characterised by a strong desire to work on projects that are challenging and exciting (Schein, 1978, 1990). This career anchor was ranked third by the study participants. A number of operational managers stated that they were seeking the opportunities to work in challenging projects that will extend their skill base. The ranking of challenge career anchors by operational managers can be explained by the fact that several social enterprise operational managers are often motivated by intrinsic factors such as being involved in developing and implementing client services with limited resources which is challenging, but rewarding when it has been accomplished (Onyx and Maclean, 1996; Maher, 2009; Jager et al., 2012). Several managers expressed the willingness to sacrifice high pay rather than work in a mundane job that offers no challenge. Operational managers reported:

“Every day is different. We never have enough money to provide the services we want to provide. But we manage. It’s a challenge permanently. I like it here even with these challenges. I enjoy developing new services if and when they come along” (Operational manager: 18 Gateway manager).

“I like the challenge of my job, working here is a challenge. You need to be up for it, geared up to take every day as it comes and be able to manage issues and difficulties as they arise. It’s a skill I’ve developed working in this sector.

Juggling several balls and remaining calm. This is what I really enjoy about working here, you're never bored" (Operational manager 34: Services/Counselling manager).

Operational manager 18 elaborated her evidence by stating that she always looks forward to the challenge of developing a new service when new funding has been agreed. For example, she pointed out that she recently developed an aftercare support service for clients that have completed structured day-care programme. This evidence illustrates that some operational managers prefer to stay with organisations that offers them challenging work that will help them to enhance their skills and fulfil their career needs. The findings of this research are consistent with the research findings of Suutari and Taka (2004). They suggest that managers in their sample were often seeking to work in challenging projects.

### **Service/dedication career anchor**

Service/dedication career anchor primarily concerns individuals seeking to work for the greater good of the community and the need to improve society in general (Schein, 1978, 1990). Service/dedication career anchor was ranked fourth by operational managers. A possible explanation of service/dedication ranking by the sector operational managers' could be due to the UK economic financial situation. Government funding to the sector is decreasing (The Kings Fund, 2011; NVCO, 2015). As a result some operational managers are unsure where they will be employed in the next coming months. Most are ambivalent whether their present organisation will still have enough funding and income for them to be employed in the next coming year to provide services that they are dedicated to providing. For instance, one operational manager reported:

"We are constantly bidding for money in order to keep our jobs. Yeah, literally to keep our jobs. Don't know whether these services will be running next year. I'm committed to providing these services, they are needed. To see clients get better is personally rewarding. Our client numbers are increasing every week. So nothing will give me more pleasure than to stay here supporting our clients and that's what we are here for" (Operational manager: Counselling Manager).

Despite the uncertainty of the current economic climate, limited resources, some operational managers' recounted their dedication to working in their organisations in

order to make a difference and improve people's lives. These managers stated that they have chosen to work in a small social enterprise with a client group that is in need of support. For instance, another operational manager reported:

"It is the clients that matters err ... err and I want to make a difference, make a contribution to the community, supporting people who have been written off by society. I want to see our clients going back to college, living independently and getting jobs...all that stuff" (Operational manager 17: Services Manager).

These operational managers expressed strong commitment to their organisation's work that contributes to a cause that is purely targeting the needs of a vulnerable client group. They stated that they were attracted to their present organisation, because they identifies with the organisation's style of service provision. These organisations provide services that help client's recovery and self-help. This demonstrates that despite the sector's financial difficulties, several operational managers are not deterred by these difficulties and are willing to stay in the sector working for an organisation's 'cause' which they believe in.

### **Security/stability career anchor**

Security career anchor is characterised by the desire to remain in an organisation that offers financial and job security (Schein, 1978, 1990). Operational managers that ranked security/stability career anchor fourth jointly with service/dedication career anchor. The reason for this research finding is likely to be due to the present job environment of social enterprise operational managers. The rapid changes in the UK government's proposed reduction in public sector funding and austerity programme (NVCO, 2014; Jones et al., 2015) is effecting small social enterprises and impinges on the career needs of individual managers. Therefore, some managers identifies with more than one career anchor in order to cope with the changes occurring in the sector and to remain employed.

Despite the sector's funding difficulties, these operational managers stated that they were motivated to work for an organisation that accepts and values their skills and personal contribution. One possible explanation for the ranking of security/stability career anchor by several operational managers can be interpreted in the light of Maslow (1943) hierarchy of needs. For these operational managers, security is defined not in monetary term; but according to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs

theory. Maslow (1943) defines security as an individual having a sense of belonging and acceptance from an organisation, social group or colleagues. Therefore, for these operational managers acceptance within the organisation and confirmation that their views are taken into consideration within the organisation's decision making processes offers them a sense of security. Operational managers reported:

“I have never felt part of a team anywhere else I've worked before I came here. We are a small organisation and we meet regularly to discuss issues. What I've to say is taken into account here that has helped my confidence big time. I feel settled and secure here. It gives me a sense of belonging ... security.” (Operational manager 9: Projects manager).

“I've been here a long time. I like the stability of knowing what I am doing. I feel more effectual here with my nursing training. My skills, knowledge and experience are required here in this role. I'm valued here” (Operational manager 15: Nursing and Clinics manager).

These operational managers view of security is linked to being part of a team, being valued and working in an organisation where they felt needed and consulted by the organisation before decisions are taken. These factors are important to these operational managers and it makes them feel secure. However, there were operational managers who felt less secure working in small social enterprises due to a perceived lack of job security and less favourable employment conditions, but felt needed by the client group and that made them to feel secure. For instance, one operational manager reported:

“I need a job with a future, a job that is secure with a permanent contract with incremental pay, things like that which we don't have here. But you know what, I enjoy working with the clients ...I gain immense job satisfaction working here ... that's why I stay” (Operational manager: 13: Team manager).

The evidence suggests that limited resources have impacted on the job security of the managers. However, some social enterprise managers have found ways of developing a sense of security in their jobs as demonstrated by evidence above from operational managers.

### **Lifestyle career anchor**

The lifestyle career anchor is characterised by the desire to balance work and non-work commitments (Schein, 1978, 1990). The study operational managers ranked



lifestyle career anchors sixth. A possible explanation of lifestyle career anchor ranking by these operational managers could be that UK social enterprise managers' are used to having work/life balance as part of their employment conditions. Work-life balance was launched as a major UK government campaign in 2000 (DFEE, 2000). The right to request flexible working was introduced by section 47 of the UK Employment Act 2002. Since then successive UK Governments have extended the right to wider categories of employees. On 30 June 2014 the Children and Families Act 2014 extended the right to all employees (Pyper, 2015). This is aimed at encouraging workers and managers' in all sectors to adopt flexible working arrangements such as, flexi-time and compressed hours to help employees to have a better balance between the demands of their jobs and other aspects of their lives. Several operational managers recounted how having flexible working hours have enabled them to manage the demands of their job and family needs. Some operational managers reported:

“I can work my hours to fit around family life. It's local and convenient and fits around the family. I do some of my hours from home ... and you have to get the work done. That suits me” (Operational manager 21: Counselling manager).

“My wife was going back to work after our second child started full time school. This job was part-time, so it suited our family situation. The job is local and suits our family arrangements so I stay” (Operational manager: 22: Projects manager).

These managers reported that they were drawn to small social enterprise organisations that allowed work/life balance to take place. Flexi-time was frequently mentioned by operational managers as a positive and an important non-financial benefit of working in their respective organisations. Operational managers stated that organisations offering flexible working arrangements, demonstrate that these organisations are able to reconcile their personal needs with the organisational needs. These operational managers also suggest that the availability of flexible working options was an important factor that attracted them to work in their present organisation and has encouraged them to stay working in a small social enterprise.

## **Entrepreneurial career anchor**

Entrepreneurial career anchor is characterised by a strong desire to be creative and to establish projects (Schein, 1978, 1990). An entrepreneurial career anchor was identified primarily by operational managers who expressed the need to be given the opportunity to develop projects or expand existing projects. The research findings show that entrepreneurial career anchors was ranked sixth. It is not surprising as entrepreneurial activities are usually associated with general manager's role in the sector (Harrow and Mole, 2005; Jager, et al., 2012). However, some operational managers stated that they were motivated by the desire to initiate new services and were passionate about looking for new ways to design and develop services that meets client needs. To illustrate this point some operational managers reported:

“The thing I enjoy about working here is that we are a progressive team. Every time we take on new clients we look at developing services to meet each individual's need. I enjoy developing new services to meet our clients' needs” (Operational manager: 17 Services manager).

Operational manager 17 reported that she enjoys working in small enterprises where she has been given the opportunity to develop a variety of projects and new services for clients. She joined her present organisation for such opportunities and loves every day of working in a small social enterprise in the sector.

## **Managerial career anchor**

Managerial career anchor is characterised by the desire to move upward into a general management position in the organisation (Schein, 1978, 1990). The low ranking obtained for managerial career anchor suggest that social enterprise operational managers have a higher need for a work environment that allows them to develop expertise than to advance to take on general managerial responsibilities. However, some operational managers expressed an interest in achieving promotions in general management of the organisation's activities. They reported:

“My long term plan is to complete my MBA [Masters in Business Administration] which will help me to progress in my career. I want to become a CEO [Chief Executive Officer] in a couple of years” (Operational manager 3: Services manager).

“I’ll like to move forward, move up. But I am tinkering with the idea of going for general management like a CEO [Chief Executive Officer] route. I enjoy strategic work. Let’s see what opportunities come up at the right time along the way and see what suits me. I’ll like to move up” (Operational manager 11: community Inclusion manager).

Operational managers 3 and 11 clearly want to advance to a position of higher levels of general management positions. They were motivated and interested in progressing upward within the organisation and achieving a general managerial position that involves having overall responsibility for the organisation’s developments and activities. The findings diverges from Kniveton’s (2004) and Gubler et al, (2015) study samples that ranked managerial career anchor higher than this study’s ranking.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this research revealed that operational managers identified with Schein’s (1978, 1990) eight career anchors. It is important to point out that the findings will be discussed based on the overall mean scores of each career anchor by the study sample (n=40), not based on the individual operational manager’s mean scores of each career anchor. The reason for this is, because the focus of the research is not based on individual operational managers. It is instead based on exploring the dominant career anchors of small social enterprise managers and how their career anchors are influenced by organisational factors and the environment in which they are employed.

The order of importance of the eight career anchors is: autonomy, technical, challenge, service/dedication, security/stability, lifestyle, entrepreneurial and general management career anchors. The most striking result of the findings is that the third sector operational managers’ rankings of autonomy are higher than in previous managerial career anchor studies such as, Beck and Lopa, (2001), Kniveton, (2003) Suutari and Taka, (2004), Wong, (2007); Rasdi et al., (2009). The findings highlight the importance that third sector operational managers assign to having autonomy in their job role. Another difference between the findings of this research and previous managerial career anchor studies, is that the research ranked the general management career anchor lower than other career anchor studies (such as, Beck

and Lopa, 2001; Kniveton, 2004). This may have been an artefact of their samples and public and private sector contexts (where their studies were conducted). The differences in findings support the notion that career anchors evolve through the interplay between individuals and their environments (Baruch, 2004; Coetzee and Schreuder, 2008). Therefore, it is important that future research take into account a contextualised approach rather than assume that the importance attached to a career anchor by managers in one sector will reflect the importance of that career anchor in other sectors. The findings also revealed that some participants identify with more than one career anchor. Therefore, for those with multiple career anchors, an important factor for organisations to consider is whether it is possible to develop career paths that are congruent with the operational manager's dominant career anchors.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to explore the dominant career anchors of small social enterprise operational managers; and identified that small social enterprise operational managers possess a variety of career anchors. Most importantly the research found that autonomy career anchor was ranked significantly higher by social enterprise operational managers' than in any previous managerial career anchors studies reviewed. The high ranking obtained for autonomy career anchor suggests that small social enterprise operational managers have a higher need for a job environment that allows them to set their own work pace and develop expertise rather than take on general managerial responsibilities. Consequently, managerial career anchor received the lowest ranking.

It is important to note that social enterprise operational managers held a variety of career anchors largely in line with the findings from previous managerial career anchor studies (Suutari and Take, 2004; Wong, 2007; Rasdi et al., 2009; Guan et al., 2013). As a result it is suggested that the study add further support for the use of Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchors as a measure of managerial career anchors. The results of the distribution of operational manager's dominant career anchors rankings shows that service/dedication and security were ranked jointly fourth; which suggest that some operational managers identified with more than one dominant career anchor. These operational managers indicated the same ranking (5.00) for

two or more career anchors. Consideration was given to incorporating secondary career anchors scores (4.00 and above) for all operational managers into the analysis, in order to determine their dominant career anchor; but this did not solve the issue (of multiple ties) which can occur for any level of career anchors ranking. Operational managers that ranked more than one career anchor as 5.00 were identified as having more than one dominant career anchor.

Therefore, Schein's (1978) claim that individuals will only identify with one career anchor was not supported by the research findings. The reason for this present research finding is likely to be due to job environment within which operational managers are working. There may be other reasons for this findings, such as the rapidly changes in government austerity measures that impinges on the career motives and needs of individual operational managers. Therefore, some operational managers identifies with more than one career anchor in order to cope with financial difficulties and public policy changes occurring in the sector in order to remain employed.

Also, the identification of the dominant career anchors of social enterprise operational managers was not always consistent with the findings of other managerial career anchors studies (such as, Beck and Lopa, 2001; Kniveton, 2004; Gunn et al.2013) which suggest that managers are not a homogeneous group. The research findings have implications for theory and practice.

### **Implications for theory and practice**

The research has contributed to the literature by providing a detailed examination of the career anchors of small third sector social enterprise operational managers. It makes an important contribution to the field of managerial career anchors in small social enterprises by identifying operational managers' dominant career anchors. Schein (1990) added that when individuals achieve congruence between their career anchor and work environment, they are more likely to achieve positive organisational outcomes, which include an intention to stay. This is significant for small social enterprises seeking to retain managers, not through the promise of high salaries and annual bonuses but rather through providing opportunities that will enable operational managers to develop projects and have independence in managing these projects.

An additional contribution of the research is that it addresses an important gap in the career anchor literature by providing empirical support for the use of Schein's (1978, 1990) career anchor model as a tool to measure managerial career anchors in third sector social enterprises.

It is important that career management of social enterprise managers in the future takes an individual and contextualised approach to understanding each manager's career anchor and needs. This suggests that there may be a need for social enterprise organisations to analyse manager's career anchors individually. Knowledge of each manager's career anchor may make it possible to match manager's career needs and values with the organisation's objectives and needs. This may require restructuring of managerial roles and responsibilities to accommodate managerial staff's career anchors. For instance, if having job role autonomy is important to a manager, the organisation may need to factor this into its work design. This highlights the need for organisations to review their approach to career management interventions to accommodate a range of managerial career needs.

### **Future Research**

Future studies should explore the influence of other factors such as family (parents and grandparents), ethnic background and social class on the career anchors and of the third sector social enterprise managers. Such a study will further extend the knowledge on the influence that social structures and family relations might have on managers' career anchors. Future studies concerned with examining the relationship between managers' career anchors and demographic factors such as gender, age and educational qualifications. This requires larger sample size which may allow the researcher to identify further results (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002; Field, 2009).

Also, expanding the research across several countries might help to understand how public policy and third sector contextual factors in other countries influence the career anchors of managers.

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