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The Cultural Preparation Process Model and Career Development

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### Abstract

In this chapter, the dynamics of a culturally-mediated model of career development is articulated and it is proposed that the manner in which individuals and groups are prepared by their cultures explains their engagement with work and career. Based on constructs drawn from a wide range of disciplines, five interlinked propositions are posited which together describe the cultural preparation process model. The model proposes that while the socializing forces of enculturation create a cultural preparation status equilibrium in relation to career development, the forces of acculturation alter this equilibrium. An illustration of how the model could be applied is provided with constructs from Asian thought and suggestions are made for an alternative formulation of career development. It is highlighted that while guidance pertaining to work, occupation, and career may be a universal requirement spanning many cultural groups, the idea of career itself may need to be redefined keeping the notion of cultural preparation status in mind. The cultural preparedness model is offered as a framework that would allow the context to define career development.

*Keywords:* career beliefs, cultural learning, culture, global trends, indigenous, preparedness, role allocation, social organization, socialization, value attribution, work ethic

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## Introduction

David Greybeard settled down to another work day. He set himself up at his workstation and prepared and meticulously checked his work tools. Once all was ready, he carefully began a complex activity. Eyebrows knitted in concentration and hands steady, he deftly but slowly manipulated his work tool. Holding steady for a while, manipulating occasionally, and sometimes even jiggling the instrument, he exerted skilled and concentrated effort. After a while he very gently retracted his tool and grunted with satisfaction. His efforts were rewarded. His grass-stalk tool was teeming with the termites he so loved. Popping them into his mouth and glancing at Goliath, his associate who was performing a similar operation nearby with a leaf-tool, Greybeard resumed “termite fishing” once again. David Greybeard and Goliath are chimpanzees from the anthropologist Jane Goodall’s Kasakela community inhabiting the Gombe National Park near Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania (Goodall, 1986). Chimpanzees were using tools at least 4,300 years ago which included tool kits, as well as compound tools having two or more working components (McGrew, 2010). Do Greybeard and Goliath’s endeavors and the similar efforts of these phylogenetic neighbors of ours qualify as “work?” What *is* work? And how does it characterize the human being?

I attempt to address these questions by focusing on two objectives. The first is to articulate the dynamics of a culturally-mediated model to propose that the manner in which individuals and groups are prepared by their cultures (cultural preparedness) explains their engagement with work and career development. The second is apply the model to understand concepts and constructs from Asian epistemologies.

## Cultural Learning

Humankind has given itself the name *homo sapiens* implying that we as a species are capable of actions that transcend a merely need-based engagement with the surroundings. In

fact, by calling ourselves sapient we refer to ourselves as being wise, endowed with the ability to discern. It is this wisdom and intelligence that qualifies human beings' ongoing encounter with the environment. The human being is capable of directing effort, both intellectual and physical, toward constructions and fabrications, both material and nonmaterial, that can endure for durations of time beyond the phase of fabrication and construction. This is the human activity called work. Hannah Arendt (1958) names homo sapiens in this garb, as *homo faber*—human as a maker, the working human.

Human work began in a world that was wild, untamed, and perhaps hostile. Survival was likely the prime concern. Small bands of early humans would have secured ongoing safety and survival through generic work activities such as building shelters against the elements, hunting, and gathering food. These groups tended to be wanderers, following herds of animals and other sources of food and sustenance, and at the same time making discoveries that improved the quality of their lives as they trudged along. It is quite probable that during the initial stages in the evolution of work, work tasks were linked to the *identification* and *adaptation* of sources of security and sustenance (Marlowe, 2005). It also seems that at that time, work was a group activity (Gowdy, 1998). It is probable that individual members of the group had to learn to provide for and support the group's needs as quickly as possible. It also seems clear that work was not considered separate from daily life. Work was integral to existence (Barnard, 2004).

Developmental psychologists and anthropologists have pointed to two key differences between nonhuman primates such as Greybeard and Goliath and the human being which ultimately have an impact on orientations and definitions of work. The first difference is the distinction seen between human and nonhuman *learning*. Tomasello (1999) has referred to the kind of learning found among nonhuman primates as *emulation learning*, which "focuses on the environmental events involved—results or changes of state in the environment—rather

than on the actions that produced those results" (p. 510). By contrast, Tomasello has described human learning to be *imitative learning*, which means "reproducing an instrumental act understood intentionally." Through the capacity for *joint engagement*, human infants are able to use adults as reference points and thus "act on objects in the way adults are acting on them" (Tomasello, 1999, p. 513). The human infant is, therefore, able to identify others as "intentional agents... who have goals and make active choices among behavioral means for attaining those goals" (Moore & Dunham, 1995, p. 76). This capacity for imitative learning brings us to the second distinction between the non human primates and human beings, which is the ability to represent experiences *symbolically*. This enabled the human being to not only invent but to preserve learnings for others to learn from. It is this feature of the human being that lays the foundations for *cultural learning*. This is a distinctive process whereby the learner is not only learning about things from other persons but is also learning things through them and at the same time becoming a vehicle for the transmission of these learnings to others (Tomasello, 1999). It is this capacity for cultural learning that transforms the human being's engagement with work into a manifestation of culture. It is this unique and distinguishing quality of human learning that underlies the *cultural preparation process model of career development* that is described in this chapter.

### **Work as Culture**

A significant milestone in the evolution of work was perhaps triggered by the Neolithic Revolution—circa 10,000 to 5000 BCE (Scarre, 2005). Humankind gradually decreased its itinerant search for food and began to domesticate plants and animals. Hunter-gatherers, on different parts of earth, began to make the transition to agriculture and to establishing themselves in a specific location (Scarre, 2005). This transition perhaps presaged the imbuing of work with cultural overtones.

Anthropologists describe culture as human phenomena that cannot be attributed to genetic or biological inheritance, but reflective of a cohesive and assimilated system of learned behavior patterns which characterize the members of a social group (Hoebel, 1966). Other features of culture include the symbolic representation of experiences and the distinct ways in which groups of people classify and represent their collective experience (Geertz, 1973; Liu & Sibley, 2009). By Neolithic times, humanity had evolved three distinctive features: (a) the ability to create and use symbols including linguistic symbols and their derivatives, such as written language and mathematical codes; (b) the ability to create tools and instrumental technologies to meet the requirements of specific tasks; and (c) the ability to create and participate in complex social organizations and institutions (Tomasello, 1999). Since it was a fundamental and dominant activity, it is likely that work began to be characterized by each of these features.

In this regard, the impact of the Neolithic Revolution on work was profound. It led to a tremendous diversification of work skills. The development of agriculture led to a number of cultural innovations and shifts in social dynamics (Pringle, 1998). The settling down of groups in specific locations led to the gradual transformation of human beings from nomadic groups into sedentary societies. Villages were established which grew into towns and later into cities. By this time, people had developed the ability to wrest the land from the wild, tame it, and make it arable. Given the massive investment of effort and the highly satisfactory returns on this investment, people became attached to certain locations and land increased in its value. Property ownership became increasingly important and acquired the status of being a highly valued possession (Scarre, 2005). If identification and adaptation of sources of security and sustenance were key work tasks of the nomadic period, the importance of *organizing*, *preserving*, and instituting *order* and *continuity* became important now (Scarre, 2005). With the passage of time, a complex of other occupations began to



evolve which included trade and business, construction and architecture, administration and management, law and governance, protection and security, health and medicine, industry and technology. It is possible that systems emerged to classify workers according to ability and status. Specializations began to evolve and thus emerged occupational categories such as fishermen, farmers, cattle breeders, weavers, healers, traders—a list that will continue to grow for as long as human needs exist.

The point being made here is that from the Neolithic times, work was slowly transformed from a raw and primal engagement with the surroundings, to an activity that was characterized by the codification of experiences through symbols, the organization and classification of work activities into occupations that were governed by hierarchies, and the transmission of these learnings to others through the process of cultural learning. Work began to be characterized by customs, laws, value attributions, social standards, religious beliefs, and traditions (Scarre, 2005). It has also been observed that populations that were able to organize work around a central principle (for example, principles emanating from religion) were more prosperous (e.g., Bellwood, 2004; Childe, 1936; Pringle, 1998). Hence, work as a human activity became deeply embedded in human culture.

### **Work and Global Transformations**

As we have just seen, a reciprocal relationship seems to exist between the nature of work and co-occurring cultural and economic transformations. Molded by ideologies, shaped by the tenets of a variety of philosophies, and transformed by revolutions, the meaning and purpose of work has undergone significant changes over time. With a view to illustrating the link between global trends and work culture, three significant aspects of the history of work, namely, the Protestant Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, and globalization are now briefly discussed.

#### **The Protestant Reformation**

Discontent with the Church, its creeds, and unreasonable doctrines led to massive political upheaval in Europe during the 16th century. This protest movement that aimed to reform the Church was later called the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther's reformatory theology went against the prevailing feudal social order—priest, noble, king, and peasant—and declared that all were equal in the eyes of God. The Reformists emphasized that work was a “calling” and Luther preached that work was a channel of service to God. Luther confronted the prevalent dogma that one form of work was superior to another and proclaimed the usefulness of all professions. The Reformists encouraged the creation of wealth through hard, honest labor. This fundamental divergence from accepted beliefs created new understandings that redefined attitudes toward work which later came to be called the protestant work ethic (Weber, 1905/1958). Doing one's best, persisting toward work goals, postponement of need gratification, working hard with sincerity, involvement, and passion, achieving financial and economic success, were all linked to social acceptance and ultimately to salvation. This new work ethic which gave moral approval to making a profit by working hard, rational calculation and planning spread all over Europe and England and was later carried to America (Yankelovich & Immerwahr, 1984). Today, Western work behavior continues to be significantly influenced by these social cognitions.

### **The Industrial Revolution**

The Industrial Revolution which occurred almost in parallel with the Reformation is another important milestone in the evolution of work in the West. Until now, production was small scale and much of it was undertaken through direct, skilled, physical effort. The Industrial Revolution transformed the concept of production. New inventions such as the flying shuttle, the spinning jenny, and the steam engine facilitated the application of power-driven machinery to manufacturing. Goods could now be produced at greater speed, in larger quantities, and at significantly lower costs. By the beginning of the 18th century, the use of

machines in manufacturing became widespread across England and Europe. Until the Industrial Revolution, most of Europe's population was rural, and work behavior was governed by feudal systems. However, by the mid 19th century, people broke away from this social order and lived in cities as independent workers. An immediate outcome of this change in production methodology was that the skilled artisans of the older order gradually found themselves to be redundant as machines began to mass produce the products they formerly handcrafted. This pattern of emergent methods rendering older methods "redundant" is seen all through the history of work.

### **Globalization**

The human being's sojourn on this planet began as a nomad who moved from one place to another seeking greater security, food, and comfort. This tendency continued and the history of human beings travelling from one location to another for the exchange of goods, services, and ideas is an ancient one. Advances in modes of transport and communication have hastened the pace and quality of these exchanges, and today we refer to this international exchange/transfer of resources and ways of living as globalization. Giddens (1991) defines globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (p. 64). I now highlight three aspects of globalization that are related to work and cultural preparedness: international trade, the emergence of a global workforce, and the new international division of labor.

**International trade.** The practice of trading goods and services across international borders is also an ancient one. The Silk Route is an example of a network of trade routes that stretched for nearly 4,000 miles linking China, the Afro-Eurasian landmass, and Asia to Europe. While traditional trade focused on the buying and selling of goods that were not available locally, a key distinguishing feature of contemporary, globalized, international trade

is the seeking of trading opportunities that have a cost advantage. In the globalized world, therefore, the exchange of goods and services can occur not merely because they are not available locally, but because it is cheaper to procure it from elsewhere. This has had a profound impact on local workforces, leading to loss of jobs at some locations and an unprecedented increase in job opportunities at other locations.

**Global workforce.** One of outcomes of the globalization of trade is the emergence of a global workforce: the extensive, international pool of workers employed mainly by multinational companies connected across nations to a global network of job tasks and work functions. As of 2005, the global labor pool of those employed by multinational companies consisted of almost 3 billion workers (Freeman, 2008). A key qualifying feature of this workforce is its skill for using communication technologies to interact with professional colleagues in other global locations.

**The new international division of labor.** This feature of globalization emerges when manufacturing and production are no longer restricted to local economies. With an eye on lowering costs of production and increasing profits, companies relocate production processes and outsource them to locations that offer cost advantages. While this division of labor benefits the outsourcing company, it does not benefit the individual worker in such companies who is laid off or retrenched. For example, between the years 2000 and 2007, a total of 3.2 million manufacturing jobs were lost in the United States due to outsourcing (Crutsinger, 2007). On the other side of outsourcing pipeline is the recipient country—usually a developing country offering cheap labor—where a massive increase in jobs is seen. A significant proportion of the recently seen economic growth and increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) seen in these countries is related to this new international division of labor (ILO, 2013).

**The impact of globalization on work behavior.** These processes impact the interface between culture and work behavior in many ways. This form of globalized trade requires cultural realignments and usually it is the recipient (developing) country that is required to realign. Let us take the example of the business process outsourcing industry (call centers) in India as an example. This is an industry that has created millions of jobs and is described as an engine of economic development for this country. Seen from another perspective, working in a call center requires the worker to undergo an acculturation process (discussed in a later section), that could include change of name, alteration of English accent, and imbibing and developing fluency with cultural phenomena (e.g., ways of greeting, language usage, festivals) to suit the client country (Upadhyia & Vasavi, 2006). Most of these jobs require the worker to also rearrange sleep-wake patterns to suit the availability of clients across the seas. Further analysis of this phenomenon points to the creation of a cultural dissonance within the individual. An Indian call center, for example, is structured to mimic the culture of the client country: Accents, the identities, and lifestyles all are molded to resemble those in the client country. But in reality, the culture of these workers is completely different and sometimes contradictory to the client country (Nadeem, 2009). The psychological fallout of this kind of forced acculturation has been observed and ranges from psychosomatic illnesses and loss of self-esteem to strained friendships and marital discord (e.g., Arulmani, 2005; Upadhyia & Vasavi, 2006).

### **Work as Socialization**

A key construct in theories of psychology and sociology, socialization has been defined and described from multiple viewpoints. In summary, socialization refers to the lifelong process whereby a society, directly or indirectly, formally or informally, transmits to its members, the norms and customs by which it characterizes itself and through the processes of cultural learning forms and shapes individual members to conform to its conventions

(Durkheim, 1893/1984; van de Walle, 2008). The global trends and transformations described in effect underlie a global socialization process. Embedded within the construct of socialization are two constructs: *enculturation* and *acculturation*, which are of relevance to the idea of cultural preparedness being developed in this chapter.

### **Enculturation**

The process by which a person adapts to and assimilates the culture in which he or she lives has been described to be enculturation (Grusec & Hastings, 2007). Enculturation is the anthropological description of the processes of socialization. This term has been adapted for the purposes of this writing: While socialization is the broader construct aimed at “socializing” the individual to conform, enculturation is used here to describe socialization with reference to more specific and circumscribed phenomena. Within the cultural preparedness model described later in the chapter, enculturation is depicted as the process by which people learn the obligations of the culture that enfolds them, assimilate the values of that culture, and acquire the behaviors that are suitable and obligatory in that culture—for specific practices. Therefore, for example, while the practice of greeting another person is an aspect of socialization, greeting a younger person, a peer, and an elder in differing ways would be an aspect of enculturation. Hence, enculturation in this description has greater specificity to particular groups and to particular practices.

**An illustration.** From the work behavior point of view, understanding that one day one will become a worker and preparing for this role, could be an aspect of socialization. Enculturation on the other hand would be seen in the transmission of beliefs pertaining to preparing and qualifying for work. Arulmani (2010b) reported, for example, that Indian young people from lower socioeconomic (SES) homes, in comparison to their peers from higher SES backgrounds, tend to lay a lower emphasis on qualifying for work. In this

illustration, enculturation has differentially socialized lower and higher SES youth in the value they learn to place on formal preparation and qualifications to become a worker.

Keeping the central point of this chapter in mind, namely, cultural preparedness, it is underscored that the forces of enculturation prepare the members of a culture to engage with each other, their surroundings, and other communities, and to global trends in a unique and distinctive manner.

### **Acculturation**

If enculturation describes endogenous processes that influence culture and cultural preparedness, acculturation describes how cultures are influenced by exogenous processes when societies come into contact with each other, which in turn influences cultural preparedness. One of the earliest and most widely-used definitions of acculturation has been articulated by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936), when they described acculturation as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (p. 150). Usually, acculturation occurs such that it is the minority/submissive group that is required to espouse the living patterns of the dominant group. But by definition it is possible that acculturation can be reciprocal, whereby the dominant group imbibes the behavior and values of the minority group.

As with globalization, the notion of acculturation is perhaps as old as humankind's ability to voyage and travel and thereby meet and engage with other cultures. Ancient Sumerian inscriptions from nearly four thousand years ago show that with a view to protecting traditional ways of life and cultural practices, rules pertaining to trade and contact with foreigners were formed to mitigate the forces of acculturation (e.g., Gadd, 1971). The ancient Greeks also do not seem to have favoured acculturation and Plato himself expressed the concern that acculturation would lead to social disorder (Rudmin, 2003). The overall

pattern seems to be that while some cultures made significant efforts to protect themselves against the effects of acculturation, others sought to engage and gain from reciprocation. Hence, voyaging with the intention of conquest and colonization began to characterize the intentions of certain civilizations (e.g., Britain, Spain, and Portugal). Gradually, acculturation became a forced requirement of the victims of conquest. Moving to another aspect of cultural contact in the contemporary context, the issues that surround migration (both as a result of distress and upheaval, as well as for professional and other reasons) have brought the dynamics of acculturation into even sharper focus (this is discussed in greater detail in a later section). It is also clarified that the position taken in this chapter is that acculturation can occur without actual physical contact between members of a culture. Globalization coupled with advances in information and communication technologies has brought the values and ways of life of Western cultures to the doorstep of groups in other parts of the world. It has for many reasons (economic incentives being salient here), become necessary for these other groups to accept Western values. The notion of career itself is an example. It originated in a Western, industrialized culture but has today become a reality in many other cultures around the world.

Numerous theories of acculturation have been propounded. In summary, acculturation has been described to be manifested as: *integration* (retaining heritage culture and identifying with the host culture), *assimilation* (orientation towards the host culture and away from the heritage culture), *separation* (orientation towards the heritage culture and away from the host culture), or *marginalization* (affiliating to neither culture) (Sam & Berry, 2010).

**Acculturation as cultural imperialism.** The nature of acculturation could be visualized as lying along a continuum characterized by the nature of influence exerted by one culture on the other. At one end, acculturation could be entirely reciprocal whereby both cultures are mutually influenced. At the other end, driven by motivations such as *cultural*



*imperialism* and *ethnocentric* orientations, acculturation could be deliberately designed such that the dominant culture unidirectionally transfers its values and norms to a less dominant one. Cultural imperialism is defined as the “creation and maintenance of unequal relationships between civilizations favoring the more powerful civilization” (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 44). Cultural imperialism is a hegemony that can manifest itself in several ways, such as an attitude, a formal policy, or even military action (Sarmela, 1977; Xue, 2008).

The point being made here is that acculturation has a critical influence on cultural preparedness. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections, if enculturation creates a certain status or quality of cultural preparedness, the necessity for acculturation causes shifts in cultural preparedness, which may or not be beneficial to the culture that is required to acculturate.

### **Work as Career**

The purpose behind performing a set of activities defines whether an activity is work or career. Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani (2004) provide an example that illustrates the difference between work and career. Shanthi and Sukumar plant a garden. Both these persons expend energy and effort in caring for their gardens and making them fruitful. However, these two people are quite different in their motivations for gardening. Shanthi has not studied agricultural science but has inherited a large piece of land and loves plants. She planted a garden with a view to earning from the produce of her garden. She has been able to successfully sell her mangoes and carrots and greens to make a profit. If her garden does not do well, her income would be affected. Sukumar on the other hand loves plants and watching things grow. He too devotes every spare moment to his garden and directs a great deal of effort toward his plants. “Every spare moment” is the phrase that distinguishes these two ardent gardeners from each other. Sukumar is a stockbroker. His garden is his hobby. Unlike Shanthi, he does not require his garden to be financially viable. In fact, he proudly

gives his fruits and vegetables away as gifts! In physiological terms, both Shanthi and Sukumar are at work, expending effort, in their gardens. But in psychological terms, gardening is *work* for Shanthi but a *leisure time pursuit* for Sukumar.

Career is an artifact that has emerged within the broader framework of the human activity called work. Work is as old as the history of mankind. Career, on the other hand, is a relatively newer construct whose emergence coincides with changes in the evolution of work. These changes throw up work roles that require specialization in a particular skill-set and the commitment to meet the demands of these specialized work roles. The modern concepts of specialization and the focused development of specific work roles distinguish career from work. To illustrate, Ravi is introduced into the gardening example. Ravi has just completed a degree in agricultural science and chose to specialize in organic farming and agricultural management. He does not have his own land and is looking for opportunities to offer his services as a consultant. Shanthi's garden in the meanwhile has flourished and she now wishes to retain the services of a professional to take her initial work to a more productive level. Shanthi interviewed Ravi, assessed his skills, and employed him to manage her garden. Gardening to Shanthi is work and perhaps in the broadest sense it is also her career. Ravi's approach to gardening, however, would be characteristically different. He brings schooled skills and professionalism, into this area of work. As a professional he will expect his work roles to grow, he will specialize further, aim for promotions, and set higher career aspirations. He is free to choose to continue to work for Shanthi or seek other avenues to maximize what he gains from his career as a gardener. Ravi is a "career gardener."

All careers are forms of work, but the reverse may not be always true. As an area of human activity, work is more universal in what it encompasses. Career, therefore, is work imbued with certain characteristics: the exercise of volition, suitability, preparation, and ongoing development (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004). Career is a mechanism whereby

society draws upon the services of its members to contribute to its wellbeing, progress, and development. An individual's career, therefore, has its being in the dynamic interaction between the accumulation of personal benefits and the services he/she provides to society at large. Career development would suffer or even grind to a halt if this delicate equilibrium is upset. Drawing these points together, Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani (2004) defined career by distinguishing it from work as follows:

A career is characterized by the volitional direction of energy and specialized effort, toward meeting societal needs through a specific area of work, for which one gains not only material reward but also the opportunity for the realization of personal potentials.  
(p. 29)

### **Summary and Consolidation: Part One**

This writing has until now spanned a wide range of disciplines including biological and cultural anthropology, sociology and labor economics and discussed the following key themes and constructs:

1. Work as culture
2. The impact of global trends on work with specific emphasis on globalization
3. Enculturation and acculturation as specific aspects of socialization
4. Career as a feature of the broader construct of work
5. The human capacity for cultural learning as a mediating influence across each of these factors.

In the next section I will develop the notion of cultural preparedness. Three constructs: the individualism-collectivism continuum; value attributions, work ethic, and career beliefs; and the processes of role allocation will be used to understand how cultural preparedness is formed and shaped.

### **Work, Career, and Cultural Preparedness**

As already proposed, the forces of enculturation and acculturation work together to create a quality of cultural preparedness whereby the members of a culture are primed to engage with life in a particular manner. The learning that occurs between an individual and his or her culture is not only the result of interfaces with present members of that culture but is derived from a deep repository of experience that has accrued and matured over the ages. This interface creates a cultural preparedness *status* which is influenced by the following processes.

### **Social Organization: The Individualism-Collectivism Continuum**

One of the important influences on cultural preparedness is the manner in which a social group is organized along the individualism-collectivism continuum. Hofstede (1991) defined individualism as “pertaining to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family” and collectivism as pertaining to “societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (p. 51). The description of preagricultural societies at the beginning of this chapter pointed to the strong possibility that social delineations such as division of labor were minimal and conceptions of separate and unified selfhood were more or less absent (Westen, 1985). It was much later in human history when religions became more firmly systematized that human-divine and individual-environment distinctions began to emerge, leading for the first time to a clearly structured conception of the self (Bellah, 1964). In the West, it was perhaps the Protestant Reformation and the resulting development of the protestant work ethic (Weber, 1905/1958) that heralded the priority of the individual over the collective becoming a dominating Western doctrine (Allik & Realo, 2003). In contemporary, individualistic, secularized societies, the individual is seen as an indivisible, autonomous human being to whom a supreme value is attached and each individual is seen to

represent the whole of mankind (Allik & Realo, 2003). A further point of relevance is the apparent link between affluence and individualism. Hofstede (1980), in his study of 40 different cultural groups made the observation that with industrialization, urbanization, and growing affluence, societies tend to become increasingly individualistic, while traditional, less affluent, and rural societies tend to remain collectivistic. Summarizing the literature, the central features of individualism have been described to be a belief in personal uniqueness and independence while interdependence, duty to the in-group, and maintaining harmony are the main characteristics of collectivism (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

**Social organization and cultural preparedness.** For the cultural preparedness understanding of orientations to work and career, the individualism-collectivism description of social organization is significant. The protestant work ethic brought the individual and his or her productivity onto center stage in the West. The emphasis was and continues to be on the individual and his or her desires and attitudes. Although economic forces may not allow a full and free exercise of this value, freedom of choice and self-determination are deeply cherished by the Western worker. Conversely, work behavior in many collectivistic societies requires that the role of the individual be subordinated to the collective. Just as kinship influences had an effect on work behavior in the West during feudal, preindustrial times, ties with the community have continued to play a powerful role in the individual's orientation to work in collectivistic environments.

Drawing upon our earlier descriptions of imitative and cultural learning, the point emerges here that individualistic/collectivistic cultural environments could differentially shape the individual's conception of work, occupation, and career. If independent decision-making is not directly nurtured in collectivistic societies (as is probable), then it is also likely that the individual would have been enculturated to view self-assertion as being selfish, and divergence from family and parental directions as the equivalent of disobedience. The

possible difference between collectivistic and individualistic societies being highlighted here is that in collectivistic societies, it is more likely that decisions are made at the family/society level rather than at the individual level. A concrete example of this form of enculturation would be seen in the individual's expression of vocational interests, which is a central construct in career counseling. In a collectivistic context, the individual's articulation of vocational interests might in fact be an extension of the values and beliefs of the collective. In an individualistic situation, however, it is more likely that the individual has greater freedom to express personal, rather than community-approved preferences.

### **Value Attributions, Work Ethic, and Career Beliefs**

The manner in which phenomena are bestowed with worth, importance, or significance within a certain cultural group is another key influence on cultural preparedness. Philosophies tend to create mindsets and attitudes, which in turn could mold behavior. Mindsets engendered by social and moral frames of reference could give a particular coloring and interpretation to the meaning and purpose of work. We have used the term *social cognitive environment* to describe the milieu within which attitudes toward work, livelihood, and career are forged (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004). Within these environments, positive or negative values could be attributed to work in general, toward occupational clusters, or even to the process of career development.

Social cognitive environments foster the evolution of a *work ethic*: a set of social norms that describe a particular approach to work. For example, a certain work ethic may place a positive, morally-endorsed value on hard work, based on the belief that work has innate value and must be pursued for its own sake. Another social cognitive environment may promote a work ethic whereby some forms of work maybe attributed with a higher level of prestige than others. In other words, a work ethic is the result of a collection of social cognitions about

work, which is transmitted within the group through the processes of enculturation and cultural learning.

Social cognitions could guide and influence people's work behaviors and their orientation to career development. We have referred to these cognitions as *career beliefs*: "a conglomerate of culturally mediated attitudes, opinions, convictions and notions, which cohere together to create mindsets that underlie and influence people's orientation to the idea of a career and to their engagement with career development" (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004, p. 107). Career beliefs in fact reflect career stereotypes. Some examples of common career beliefs are: "Boys are better at mathematics and science than girls," or "It is the government's responsibility to give me a job," or "Immigrants are at a disadvantage in the job market." These beliefs affect the meaning and value attributed to work by an individual or a group. Krumboltz (1994) in his early work on career beliefs indicated that regardless of their accuracy, career beliefs exercise facilitative or inhibitive influences on individuals' decisions and actions as they attempt to develop and implement career goals. A further point to be noted is that patterns of beliefs may be internalized not only within the minds of individuals but also in the community as a whole and transmitted to the young in that community through a process of cultural learning (Arbib & Hesse, 1986). Career beliefs influence value attributions and their impact on the career development process can be marked and critical. Field experience and research has consistently demonstrated that the effects of career counseling are often insignificant when career beliefs are not accounted for (e.g., Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2005). Research has further indicated that "types" of career beliefs exist and the content of career beliefs can be thematically classified (e.g., Arulmani, 2010b; Arulmani & Nag, 2006; Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, Argyropoulou, Drosos, & Terzaki, 2012). Some of the most common belief themes that have emerged

during the course of our investigations in different cultural contexts are briefly described in Box 1.

Insert Box 1 around here.

**Value attribution and cultural preparedness.** The dynamics between the attribution of dignity to labor versus occupational prestige hierarchies permits us to understand value attribution and cultural preparedness. In the preindustrial period, work in the West was equated with toil and drudgery. Those who worked were relegated to the lowest classes of the social order (Tilgher, 1930/1977). As we have seen, the reformed work ethic drastically changed this attitude. Work regained dignity and was imbued with worth. As a result, the value of labor both in economic and social terms increased. The dignity and inherent value of labor is an attitude that continues to strongly influence Western orientations to work. A concrete manifestation of this work ethic is seen in the equanimity with which vocationally-oriented careers are accepted by certain cultures and accorded low levels of prestige by others. In India, the attribution of value to occupations has an interesting history. Initially, the person-centered *varna* system accorded the same level of dignity to all work roles. However, with the passage of time this system was gradually replaced by the caste system. Caste is linked to the migrations of a wide variety of cultural groups into the Indian geographical area and can be explained as an attempt to diminish the impact of acculturation and thereby maintain social power hierarchies to justify the subjugation of some groups by others. Each group that arrived in India, with its occupational specialization was placed in a separate sub-caste and thereby given a place and a position in the larger caste structure (Thapar, 1966). Over the centuries, the caste system grew into a vast network of sub-castes based on which a wide spectrum of occupational roles were classified. This complex of sub-castes based on occupational characteristics and work specializations began to control the social order. The perpetuation of the caste system was ensured when it was made mandatory



to inherit one's caste. Caste was determined by birth. Membership in a particular caste could not be assumed in any other manner. This division of people along caste lines into watertight compartments led to a high level of rigidity in occupational mobility. Movement across occupations was prohibited. The roots of caste run deep in the Indian psyche and have become intertwined with personal and occupational identity. A study that tested Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) on an Indian sample provides an interesting insight into the impact of caste on occupational orientations (Leong, Austin, Sekaran, & Komarraju, 1998). The findings indicated that congruence, consistency, and differentiation did not predict job satisfaction. Furthermore, the cultural frameworks within which the Holland instruments had been developed, did not allow for an easy fit into Indian ways of thinking. Leong et al. (1998) found, for example, that they could not use the VPI "as is," because it included occupations that would be considered too low in the caste and prestige hierarchy for some members of their sample to even consider. Although the overt influence of the caste system has begun to fade, this class and prestige based approach to work roles continues to have a subtle but strong influence on work behavior in the Indian situation.

The observation that can be made here is that the processes of enculturation and cultural learning could influence the manner in which members of different social groups approach or avoid aspects of work and career development based on the value and prestige attribution tenets and beliefs of their culture. The young in a culture would be enculturated through a process of cultural learning to view work and career along a hierarchy of prestige, status, and social acceptability.

### **Processes of Role Allocation**

Roles define the individual's relationship with a social group. They delineate obligations and describe expectations. The acting out of a role is controlled by a reciprocal give-receive dynamic between the individual and society and is characterized by culturally

defined norms, rules, and behaviors. A role may be ascribed, achieved, or assumed. An ascribed role is a set of obligations that are assigned to the individual by the group. This may or may not be on the basis of merit or justification and could even be forced upon a person (Biddle, 1986; Merton, 1957). A male, for example, may be ascribed the psychological role of mother on the death of the family's biological mother. An achieved role is voluntarily assumed by the person. It could reflect the person's effort, recognition of skills, manifestation of interests, and expression of abilities (Biddle, 1986; Merton, 1957).

Becoming the company's head of human resources is an example of an achieved role. Roles could also be arbitrarily assumed by a person, as is the case when an individual forces his or her leadership upon a group. Roles could vary in their permanence. The role of father, for example, is relatively more permanent than the role of birthday party organizer. Roles are in effect social positions and hence carry status valuations. The position of manager carries a lower status than that of the company director. Roles could also become interrelated through role sets that emerge from the status associated with the primary role (Merton, 1957). The community priest, for example, by dint of his status could also be the community's adjudicator and counselor. Many roles require qualifications. These may be culturally defined. For example, in certain cultures it is only the son who can light a family member's funeral pyre. Qualifications may reflect more formal stipulations. A doctor, for example, must study and be licensed to practice medicine in order to achieve the role of being a healer.

**Role allocation and cultural preparedness.** The process by which people are assigned, achieve, or assume occupational roles offers a pertinent platform to further describe cultural preparedness. Across civilizations, the initial approaches to the division of labor seemed to be governed by the principle that a systematic division of work into categories based upon the person's natural tendencies would contribute to order and progress in society (Tilgher, 1930/1977). While subtle variations could be described from one culture to another,

the allocation of work roles seems to have been characterized across civilizations by a high degree of *automaticity*. Skills and trades ran in families or within groups, and expertise related to a particular profession was transmitted from the adult to the young within the family or by apprenticeships offered through guilds of professionals (Thapar 1966). With the passage of time, person-centered methods for the division of labor were overcome by a variety of social, moral, and religious philosophies that defined the framework for occupational role allocation. During the Middle Ages, for example, the dogma that the individual's social position was determined by a divine, natural categorizing of all people characterized the social order. Common people were not expected to pursue work activities that would take them beyond their social class (Braude, 1975). This changed dramatically after the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution. Mobility across occupations became more of a function of the individual's effort and talents. On the other side of the world, the system of varnas in India, also allowed for occupational classification on the basis of the individual's nature. Within certain limits, people could move between varnas according to the quality and type of work they performed. The caste system, however, drastically changed this orientation and the work one was expected to perform was determined by the caste one was born into.

The following observation can be made with regard to the link between role allocation and cultural preparedness. The philosophic and cultural persuasions of a group could influence its orientation to occupational role allocation. The processes of enculturation and cultural learning could influence the freedom with which an individual is allowed to make occupational choices. In certain cultures, occupational roles may be ascribed and the individual may be expected by the larger group first to conform to the requirements of ascribed roles. It may also be expected that the achievement of a role is to be subsumed and accommodated under the ascribed role. The mediation of gender with occupational role

allocation provides a stark example. In certain cultures, the primary female role ascribed upon the female is that of wife and mother. The firm, cultural expectation is that any career role she wishes to achieve is subsumed under the primary ascribed role.

### **Summary and Consolidation: Part Two**

I have now laid out the various constructs related to the cultural preparation process model. In summary, these constructs can be classified into three broad themes:

1. Cultural and economic factors related to the evolution of work: work as culture, the impact of global trends on work, and career as a feature of the broader construct of work.
2. The socialization of work: enculturation and acculturation.
3. Three constructs that influence cultural preparation status: the individualism-collectivism continuum, value attribution, and the processes of role allocation.

Cultural learning has been presented as a mediating influence across each of these factors. I will now compose these constructs into a model that describes cultural preparedness.

### **The Cultural Preparation Process Model of Career Development**

The constructs described until now will be drawn together and presented as propositions that together describe the cultural preparation process model.

#### **Proposition 1: Global Trends and Transformations**

Global conditions, trends, and transformations form the backdrop against which human engagement with work and career occurs. These are major external factors that affect the individual/group but over which the individual/group has little or no control. These factors could include social philosophies, economic trends, political changes, technological advances, and natural phenomena.

#### **Proposition 2: Influences on Preparedness**

At the level of the individual/group, preparedness for career development is influenced by three key factors: patterns of social organization along the individualism-collectivism continuum, patterns of value attribution, and the processes of role allocation. These factors are in continuous and dynamic interaction with each other.

**Proposition 3: The Mediation of Cultural Learning**

The human ability for cultural learning through the processes of enculturation and acculturation mediates the interaction between global trends and influences on preparedness.

**Proposition 4: Enculturation and the Emergence of Equilibrium**

The socializing forces of enculturation interact continuously and dynamically with global trends and the three factors that influence preparedness. This interaction could occur individually or severally between these constructs. This interaction places the individual/group in a unique state of equilibrium to engage with career development. Career beliefs are an outcome of this interaction and contribute to the maintenance of this equilibrium. This may be referred to as the individual/group's cultural preparation status equilibrium in relation to career development.

**Proposition 5: Acculturation and the Alteration of Equilibrium**

The socializing forces of acculturation interact continuously and dynamically with global trends and the three factors that influence preparedness. This interaction could occur individually or severally between these constructs. Acculturative forces could be consonant or dissonant with the individual/group's cultural preparation status. Consonance would mean that the acculturation supports, enhances, or further stabilizes the existing career preparation status equilibrium. Dissonance would mean that the forces of acculturation disturb the existing career preparation status equilibrium. An illustration of the model is provided in Box 2 in the form of a case study.

Insert Box 2 about here

### **Multiple Frames of Reference for Career Guidance Practitioners: Sensitivity to the Universal and the Particular**

This writing is located in the Indian/Asian context. However, the model that has been described has the potential to be used across other cultures. Also, an impression that may have emerged is that this writing juxtaposes Western and Eastern cultures. This is not the intention. It is well known, for example, that even within Western countries, subcultures exist that are strongly collectivistic in their orientation (Vandello & Cohen, 1999). I will now discuss a few specific ways in which the cultural preparation process model could be used across multiple cultures.

#### **Addressing Felt Needs**

The notion of career emerged at a time in history when ideas pertaining to work in the West had been transformed by highly influential developments such as the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution. It is important to note that this idea of choosing a personal career was not intrinsic to the cultural and economic environment that prevailed at that time in parts of the world that did not experience such transformation in orientations to work and career. In contexts where one's occupation was determined by birth and one's occupation was almost certainly going to be the family trade or industry, choice was not likely to have been a matter for deep consideration. So different was the Indian work milieu, for example, that one wonders if the idea of a career would have developed at all, had this cultural setting not come under the influences of colonization. The more recent forces of globalization have led to internationalizing the notion of career, and today work more strongly carries connotations related to gender, socioeconomic status, prestige, and self-actualization in many more parts of the world. Formal vocational guidance services have been described to be a part of economic development, where the division of labor that follows industrialization eventually extends to a point where traditional mechanisms of role allocation

start to break down and formal guidance services are required to supplement them (Watts, 1996). Career guidance and career counseling in developing world contexts are currently at this stage of development. However, a closer examination of orientations to work and career in developing world contexts reveals several paradoxes. At one level within developing world contexts—mainly urbanized locations, that have come under the influence of modernization—the personal career, as it has been described in this writing, has indeed become a reality. At another level—mainly rural locations where traditional cultures still thrive—work continues to remain linked to survival, carrying connotations of earning a livelihood to take care of one’s basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter and the notion of a personal career has not emerged. Guidance and counseling that can facilitate effective career development, therefore, assumes special characteristics, since as described in this chapter, undergirding these variations is culture and the attending processes of enculturation, acculturation, and cultural learning. While guidance pertaining to work, occupation, and career maybe a universal requirement spanning all cultural groups, the idea of career itself may need to be (re)defined keeping the notion of cultural preparation status in mind. For example, it may be that for cultures that engage with work from a livelihood perspective, career guidance ought to focus on *livelihood planning* (Arulmani, 2010a). The cultural preparation status model aims at providing a frame within which to identify felt needs in relation to career development.

### **The Practice of Career Guidance and Counseling**

Methods of counseling that were formulated in the West were fashioned by members of a particular culture in response to needs that emerged from that culture. These approaches were created by a people, and for a people, with specific cultural orientations. One of the reasons for the success of these approaches could be that both the creators of the service and the recipients of the service are culturally prepared in a closely similar manner to offer and

partake of the service (Arulmani, 2009). They share a comparable language of values and cherish a particular approach to life. Hence, conditions could be created and counseling techniques developed that were necessary and sufficient for that context (Arulmani, 2011a). Against the background of the arguments presented in this chapter, a critical question emerges here: Would the same conditions be necessary or sufficient for a people from a different cultural heritage? An individualistically-oriented counseling paradigm that celebrates the individual and his or her desires may not be effective with a collectivistic client group whose culture has prepared them over the ages, through a process of cultural learning, to view and interpret their life situation through an entirely different framework of value attribution. An important point to be noted is that Western ideas continue to dominate research in other parts of the world (Leong & Pearce, 2011). Observers of the Indian situation have pointed out that the empirical, mechanistic, and materialistic orientations of the West were imported into India as part of the general transfer knowledge “which in a way constituted an element of the political domination of the West over the third world countries in the general process of modernization and Westernization” (Sinha, 1993, p. 31). As a result, traditional, indigenous frameworks tended to be ignored and discredited and fell into disuse. This trend has also been seen in other Asian countries where modernization is often perceived as the wholesale adoption of Western models of science (Leong & Pearce, 2011). Having said this, accusing the West of being overbearing has become repetitive and these contentions have not really led to fruitful change. There is a deeper issue that must be addressed. The logical and empirical approach that characterizes the West fits well into a culture that is itself founded on materialistic individualism. The question is: Would the same approach “take” in a different soil? A purely empirical method may not suit collectivistic cultures that are rooted in intuitive and experiential approaches. Indeed, what is customary in one context may be experienced as contrary in another context (Arulmani, 2009).



Research into the impact and outcome of developmental initiatives has shown that interventions that are based upon worldviews that are dissimilar to the worldview of the group that the intervention is intended to serve, have insignificant community participation which affects sustainability and program effectiveness in the long run (Reese & Vera, 2007). The applicability of an intervention seems to be affected when “universal” principles are applied without adapting them to the “particular” characteristics of a specific setting (Griffin & Miller, 2007). The effectiveness of an intervention could be higher when the ideas and concepts that lie behind an intervention cohere with the history, values, and beliefs of a particular community (Arulmani, 2011a; Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007). Successful outcomes are not achieved merely by “respecting” others’ points of view. It rests also upon the inclination to enable a reciprocity of learning between the counselor and the counselee (Arulmani, 2011a). It is here, perhaps, that the notion of cultural preparedness could have relevance to planning and developing career counseling programs that are culturally resonant.

### **New Concepts and Viewpoints: Charting New Directions**

The importance of accepting the methods and approaches of non-Western epistemologies has been increasingly recognized. Pointing to traditional knowledge systems, the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS) (2001) in its position paper asserted that these epistemologies represent time-tested methods and systems which could guide the generation of hypotheses, the formulation of research designs, and the creation of methods and systems for practice. More importantly, not only has the relevance of these systems to local, particular contexts been highlighted, their potential for wider applicability has been underlined. Keeping this in mind, I draw upon non-Western epistemologies and discuss constructs that have relevance to an alternative formulation of career development. The objective of this final exercise is twofold. The first is to use some of these non-Western constructs to illustrate the application of the cultural preparation

process model and the second is to introduce ideas and interpretations into the career guidance and counseling literature that could be further studied and investigated.

### **A Nonlinear Approach to Career Development: Career Development as a Spiral**

This principle is drawn from the cultural constructs of *samsara and karma* described in Asian thought to symbolize the circularity of life (Arulmani, 2011a). From a Western, objective position circularity may be perceived to be fatalistic, evoking a sense of inevitability. However if the counselor pauses to understand *samsara and karma* from the cultural preparedness view point, their empowering of the individual to shape the future through actions executed thoughtfully and willfully in the present, would become visible. In this view, it is unusual for development to have a linear and sequential growth pattern. The application of the cultural preparedness model would reveal that these constructs point to an understanding of development that is nonlinear. Over time, one returns to where one started, but in a qualitatively different manner: One has learned from the wide range of incidents, encounters, and events that have occurred in one's life. Hence, development follows a spiral pattern whereby the individual moves to another plane in his/her development. The cultural preparedness understanding of these non-Western concepts yields a valuable principle for career development. The contemporary career development requirement of having to make career shifts could be viewed from the spiral perspective: One moves from the path that one was a part of, onto a related, but different path drawing upon the multiplicity of earlier experiences. These movements may not necessarily always point in the forward direction. The retrenched modern worker, for example, must have the ability to return to earlier learnings, let go of former (cherished) positions, and begin anew—on a different plane of development. Hence, in the Eastern formulation, career development is portrayed “not only as achieving mastery over age-specific developmental tasks but as overlapping movements whereby the individual's engagement with work is a continuous elaboration and construction,

characterized by adaptation, discovery and renewal” (Arulmani, 2011a, p. 84). This could be seen as the interplay between enculturation and acculturation, mediated by cultural learning against the background of global trends and transformations.

### **Dispassionate Decision-making: Managing Emotions**

At its depths, one’s career is deeply entwined with one’s feelings and emotions. Career successes bring joy and fulfillment while failures could bring despair and disillusionment. The notion of dispassionate decision-making is drawn from the *karmic* concept of *nishkama* which encourages the individual to practice detachment in the face of emotional arousal. The Eastern view would say that career success is related to dispassionate involvement. The principle focuses on restraint, flexibility, and self-mediation and could be applied to a feature of the contemporary economic situation: growth without development. A large number of jobs that are lost in one economy (e.g., UK, USA) migrate to other economies (e.g., Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam). This has led to an unprecedented increase in job opportunities in countries to which jobs migrate. Many economies that are the recipients of outsourced jobs were previously deficient of opportunities. As a result, career choosers rush to grasp new opportunities merely because they exist, placing a “good job” at the center of their decision rather than personal satisfaction (Arulmani, 2011a). A common trend in India, for example, is for young people to drop out of education to take up one of these outsourced jobs because of the high levels of remuneration that are on offer. However, it often not acknowledged that job offerings such as these are in effect a function of the short-term interests of employers, where “growth” becomes a double-edged sword—benefiting a few by exploiting many others (Arulmani, 2011b). We are today seeing the fallout (psychological distress, loss of interest, drop out) of people taking up jobs for which they have a low suitability. In other words, cultural preparation status equilibrium is disturbed. The cultural preparedness approach would respond to this paradox by developing career

guidance systems that foster the career development skill of dispassion: weighing up pros and cons and then accepting or perhaps even *rejecting* a possibility. Similarly, in contexts characterized by job loss, this principle would lead the counselor to help the individual to not only deal with the negative emotions resulting from job loss but also help him/her view the future with a sense of equanimity rather than eager anticipation or rising dread.

### **Career Development and Environmental Sustainability: Sensitivity to the Other**

Collectivism is one of the key constructs in the cultural preparedness model. This form of social organization is rooted in the concept of *dharma* which sets a code of behavior for “right living.” Central to the principles of *dharma* is the requirement that the individual is deeply sensitive to the “other.” Other here means other human beings as well as all manifestations of the animate and inanimate universe. Today, aspects related to environmental protection such as global warming, renewable energy, waste management, and transportation alternatives, impact the practice and development of all careers. At the same time, economic growth is firmly linked to consumption-oriented economic policies although it is clear that we are living on increasingly shaky ecological credit and rapidly depleting reserves of natural capital (Bissell, 2010). Included under this theme are the matters related to social justice and traditional ways of living. Our consumption patterns are such that we consume more than 25% of what the planet can replace, although more than one-third of the world lives below the poverty line (Chen & Ravallion, 2004). The manner in which we engage with our career development has a direct effect on environmental sustainability and social justice. Culturally-grounded career counseling can do much to address these issues if it orients itself to cultural preparedness. A further point that is relevant here is that today, traditional occupations vetted by age-old ways of working in harmony with the environment are no longer accorded prestige or status. These ways of life are increasingly deemed to be unconnected to the industrialized, market economy. Underlying a market-driven definition of

career is a singular promotion of the self, increasing consumption, and an unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. An application of the cultural preparedness model would help the individual to define the purpose and outcomes of his/her engagement with work. The integration of the principle of dharma into career, would view career development as a process whereby the realization of an individual's potential would support rather than exploit the environment.

### **Coping with Unpredictability: The Changing and the Unchanged**

Constructs in Eastern thought describe the cosmos as a paradox of change and constancy and explain that while appearances and external forms may change, the essence remains unchanged. This principle would apply to the reciprocal interaction between global trends and culture described by the cultural preparation model. The recent past has been witness to enormous changes in the world of work and the labor market. The traditional “9 to 5 job” is rapidly being pushed out of existence and the contemporary worker must perhaps consider 5 to 9 jobs in one lifetime! The de-linearization and de-synchronization of time and space in conjunction with developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) depict the creation of virtual workspaces (Tractenberg, Streumer, & van Zolingen, 2002). Indeed today, “geography has become history” resulting in the migration of jobs rather than people. A participant in the contemporary labor market, particularly in economically developed countries, must develop the career management skills of handling uncertainty and unpredictability. The cultural preparedness model presents the notion of cultural preparation equilibrium and describes how the forces of acculturation could be consonant or dissonant with this equilibrium. The application of this principle would mean sensitizing the worker and career chooser to the importance of finding the balance between what changes and what does not change. A very specific phenomenon that could illustrate this point is that of retrenchment which has become common place in a number of

economically developed countries. The gloom and disappointment that could follow in the wake of being laid off are profound. It is important to note that the requalification requirements that follow retrenchment could be culturally mediated. It is possible that requalification requires the individual to consider career options that do not fit into his/her cultural paradigm. A retrenched worker or someone who has been made redundant could initially hold the hope that he or she could easily obtain a similar job once again. Within an economic environment characterized by jobless growth (Arulmani, 2011a), the career counselor's role would be to help the individual assess the viability of such a hope. Perhaps, in such a situation, the instilling of hope may be related to widening the individual's horizons and addressing the necessity of a career shift. Such requirements could have strong cultural colorings. For example, a middle-aged worker who is attempting to retrain and build a new career would be at high risk to repeatedly experience despair when confronted by younger colleagues and new learning methods. A career guidance target here would be to help the career chooser identify aspects of his or her self that are stable and use that as the anchor to re-chart a career path. The career counselor's role here would be to understand the processes that affect the individual's cultural preparation equilibrium in order to help the person fruitfully re-engage with the world of work (Arulmani, 2011c).

### **Conclusion**

Greybeard and his friend Goliath gave this chapter its start and raised the question of whether the work habits of these chimpanzees are any different from human work. The key difference that has been drawn out is the human being's capacity for and reliance on cultural learning. Indeed, this human characteristic is central to the cultural preparation process model described in this writing. The cultural preparedness paradigm asks researchers and practitioners regardless of their cultural backgrounds to appreciate that culture through a complex and enduring process prepares individuals and groups to engage with work,

occupation, and career in a certain manner. The model proposed in this writing juxtaposes broad global changes and trends against cultural processes and uses cultural learning to describe the resulting transformations. This is not a new concept and indeed the evolution of work has been characterized all through its history by the reciprocity of interactions between broader external processes and cultural practices. What could be comparatively new is the introduction of cultural learning into understanding career development. As we have seen, career itself is a culture-bound concept with specific historical and economic connotations. Yet cultural definitions of career are vague or mere adaptations of existing definitions. Outside the context in which the notion of career emerged, the question what *is* career, remains poorly addressed. This has led to the imposition of a definition of career onto contexts where such a definition maybe culturally alien. The cultural preparedness model offers a framework that would allow the context to define career development.

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Box 1.

*Career Belief Themes*

**Proficiency Beliefs**

These beliefs describe the willingness to submit to the rigors of a formal training program and spend resources (time, effort, and finances) to achieve the distinction of being formally qualified as per the norms of a given educational system. An example of a common proficiency belief we have documented amongst Asian young people from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds, for example, is that “going to school is a waste of time, since this does not lead to a job anyway.”

**Control and Self-Direction Beliefs**

These beliefs reflect the individual’s sense of control over his or her life situation and the orientation to directing his or her life. Mindsets in this category are linked to the career aspirant’s belief that he or she can deal with the exigencies presented by life situations. An example of common belief amongst Asian girls from less privileged homes is reflected in this statement: “I have many responsibilities at home and I cannot say what will be expected of me. So I cannot make a plan for my career”.

**Common Practice**

Common practice and unwritten norms shape the career preparation behavior of a community in a certain way. In middle-class India, for example, it is expected that a “bright” student would take up either medicine or engineering as a career. Young people strive to fit into this expectation. The following statement made by a 17-year-old boy reflects this belief theme: “It is expected in my family that I take up the sciences and study engineering. Boys are expected to take up engineering”.

**Self-Worth**

This theme is related to one’s belief in personal ability for career preparation. A section of high school students in India commonly say, “I keep on failing in Mathematics and Science. I am not talented enough to get a good job.” This statement reflects the career chooser’s belief in relation to academic performance and career preparation.

**Persistence Beliefs**

All careers are punctuated by barriers and difficulties. This belief theme reflects the willingness to stay at a task and attempt to overcome hurdles that mark progress toward the completion of that task. The content of persistence beliefs reflect a sense of purposefulness and resolve to strive for positive outcomes in the future. The following statement is an example reflecting low persistence: “I joined a course in basic computer skills for beginners. The course is so hard. I find it boring. I feel this course is not suitable for me and I want to stop”.

**Fatalism**

The content of these beliefs portray a sense of resignation and a passive acceptance of one’s life situation. Fatalistic beliefs are colored by pessimism, a sense that nothing can be changed, and that matters are preordained by more powerful forces. The following statement displays fatalistic content: “Life situations are such that one cannot “choose” a career. We are just given something. Then fate takes its course”.

*Note.* Adapted from “The Career Belief Patterns Scale: Version 2 [Monograph],” by G. Arulmani, and S. Nag, 2006. Copyright 2006 by The Promise Foundation, Bangalore, India.

## Box 2

*The Cultural Preparation Process Model as a Framework for Observing Career Development: An Illustration*

Shama was an 18-year-old Indian girl from a traditional Hindu middle-class, urban family. She was in Class 12, the final year of her higher secondary education. She had the option of taking up the sciences, humanities, or business studies streams of specialization. She did visit a career counselor (the author) who recommended the humanities for her<sup>4,6</sup>. But her family<sup>1</sup> preferred that she take up the sciences since they wanted her to become a medical doctor<sup>3</sup>. Her brother had already taken up a course in engineering as per the family wishes<sup>5,6</sup>. This is also what Shama's grandparents<sup>1</sup> wished for her<sup>5,6</sup>, since medicine would give her respectability in society<sup>2,8</sup>. Also, her family felt that since she was a girl<sup>3</sup>, medicine was a suitable career for her<sup>5,6,8</sup>. Shama obtained 85% in her higher secondary exams<sup>7</sup>. Her performance on the entrance exam to medical school was also similar. She and her family were disappointed since a much higher score is required for entrance into medical school. They visited the career counselor again and were advised once again that Shama switches to humanities and aims for careers in social work or psychology<sup>4,6</sup>. Shama wanted to make the switch but her parents and extended family<sup>1</sup> were of the opinion that the humanities did not lead to prestigious careers<sup>2</sup>. Also, careers based in the humanities required long term study which in the opinion of the family was not suitable for a girl<sup>3</sup> since she must get married<sup>3</sup> at a suitable age<sup>8</sup>. Further, a degree in medicine would make her more attractive in the marriage market<sup>3</sup>. Since Shama did not make it to the merit list<sup>7</sup>, her family took up the option of negotiating a "management seat" for her which meant paying the college a large sum of money<sup>7</sup>. Finally a seat was secured for Shama in a second grade medical school and Shama joined the course. Five years later she completed the course and passed with a second class. Her family was overjoyed. Their son was an engineer and their daughter was a medical doctor! Now she was ready to be married<sup>3</sup>. A suitable match was found and soon Shama was a married woman! She was lucky because her husband, who was a mechanical engineer working in the computer industry, was willing to allow Shama to continue with her career<sup>3</sup>. Shama tried to find a job but with only a bachelor's degree in medicine she couldn't find a suitable job<sup>7</sup>. The kind of positions that her family wanted for her required a master's degree. Shama was not interested in studying further. A sudden turn of events led to her husband's company having to downsize<sup>7</sup>. His job was threatened since the business process industry of which he was a part was starting to move away from India, to cheaper markets<sup>7</sup>. This confronted the family with a financial crisis because they had taken a number of loans to finance the apartments they had bought, their car, their insurance schemes, and many other investments<sup>7</sup>. Shama and her husband had planned to start a family but since his job was no longer secure, they had to postpone their plans<sup>4</sup>. Shama decided to find a job, any job that would avert the financial crisis that loomed before them<sup>4</sup>. Shama's grandfather was upset that she was not starting a family<sup>1</sup>, but there was no choice. Shama took up medical transcription, a job that required her to convert voice-recorded reports dictated by medical doctors in the USA into text<sup>4,7</sup> through the internet. She was sad that she couldn't practice medicine although she was a fully qualified medical doctor. But at least she had a job, a well-paid one, and one that could be adapted to the demands of the new opportunity<sup>4</sup>.

Note. Adapted from "Unpublished Clinical Records (2000 to 2006)," by G. Arulmani, 2006, The Promise Foundation, Bangalore, India.

Aspects of this illustration that carry apparently sexist and other stereotypes are intentionally retained with a view to providing an example of underlying cultural processes.

<sup>1</sup>collectivist orientations; <sup>2</sup>value attribution; <sup>3</sup>role allocation; <sup>4</sup>acculturation; <sup>5</sup>enculturation;

<sup>6</sup>cultural learning; <sup>7</sup>global trends and transformations; <sup>8</sup>career beliefs